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CREDITS

SUMMARY

EDITORIAL

Angela Ulacco
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

The current volume of the Plato Journal is published in the new format and in accordance with the guidelines that have been introduced in the previous volume. Like the preceding issue, the current issue of the Plato Journal is available both in electronic and printed versions. Furthermore a new online platform is available for the submission of papers. As a result of these changes and in continuity with its tradition the Plato Journal constitutes an attractive channel for the promotion and the dissemination of excellent work in the study of Plato and of the Platonic tradition. Volume 14/2014 contains six articles, three of which are on Plato's *Symposium* and represent revised versions of papers presented at the X Symposium Platonicum in Pisa in July 2013. The volume also contains articles on the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, the *Republic* and the Myth of Er, and on the *Ion*, along with two reviews on recent publications. As for the section on the *Symposium*, we start with an article by Menahmen Luz (University of Haifa) on 'The Rejected Versions in Plato's Symposium'. Luz focuses on Apollodorus' prelude to the *Symposium*. He argues that the rejection of earlier accounts of Socrates' participation in the Symposium can be sub-textually regarded as a rejection of a previous literary version. The second article, by Anne Gabrièle Wersinger (Université de Reims/ CNRS Jean Pépin), addresses 'Le sens de la « kuèsis » dans la perspective des mythes de la gestation (Banquet 201d-212b)'. According to Wersinger, Diotima applies the desire to become pregnant to both men and women in order to convey the idea that creation cannot be reduced to the begetting of novelty, but takes time, as does maternal gestation. The section on the *Symposium* ends with an article by Gabriele Cornelli (Universidade de Brasília) on 'Socrate et Alcibiade'. According to Cornelli, in describing the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, Plato uses a clever dramatic construction in order to 'rewrite' this relationship and then deepen his 'J'accuse' against Alcibiades.
In the article 'The Secret Doctrine and the Gigantomachia: Interpreting Plato's Theaetetus-Sophist' Brad Berman (Portland State University) argues, on the basis of parallels, that the passage from the *Theaetetus* on the 'secret doctrine' and the *Sophist's* 'battle between gods and giants' are related to one another by their comparative sophistication and they have to be read together.
In the article on 'Cephalus, the Myth of Er, and Remaining Virtuous in Unvirtuous Times' Paul DiRado (University of Kentucky) focuses on the Myth of Er and with the discussion in the Republic between Cephalus and Socrates on the problem of a conventional virtue. According to DiRado Socrates recommends the study of philosophy because it can ground conventionally acquired virtue and because it is capable of shaking the moral complacency that afflicts the conventionally virtuous. Aaron Landry's paper 'Inspiration and Τέχνη: Divination in Plato's Ion' draws attention to the fact that in Plato's *Ion* both inspiration and technê present an appeal to

divination. Landy (Humber College) investigates the related passages in order to show how these two disparate accounts can be accommodated. We close the volume with two book reviews written by young scholars of the University of Roma La Sapienza: Giulia De Cesaris on C. Huffmann (ed.) 'A History of Pythagoreanism' (2014) and Maria Luisa Garofalo on B. Levin 'Plato's Rivalry with Medicine. A Struggle and its Dissolution' (2014).

As this brief survey shows, the volume is a collection of strong papers and book reviews, presented by both prominent and young scholars. They have been submitted to a double-blind peer-review process and display a diversity of approaches and methodologies. This volume is the first one under my editorship and the assistance of Luca Pitteloud (Universidade Federal do ABC (UFABC - São Paulo), Brasil), though it could not have been published without the help of Francisco Gonzales (University of Ottawa), who for a long time has directed the journal in an exemplary way and has guided it through the transition to its new format. He is warmly and sincerely thanked for his dedication to the journal. I would also like to express sincere gratitude to Irmgard Männlein-Robert (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen) who contributed enormously with her suggestions and her experience in designing the new Plato Journal. And some very promising young scholars working in the field of the Platonic studies helped us with the editorial revision of the papers: Chad Jorgenson (Université de Fribourg), Pauline Sabrier (Trinity College Dublin), and Nicholas Riegel (Archai UNESCO Chair, University of Brasília). I would like to thank them here for their assistance. Finally, I would like to sincerely thank our colleagues who have to remain anonymous for their precious help in reviewing the submissions to the journal.

PAPERS

The Rejected Versions in Plato's *Symposium*

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ABSTRACT

Apollodorus' prelude to Pl. *Symp.* is a complex rejection of earlier accounts of Socrates' participation in a symposium. This can be examined contextually as a literary mannerism, or sub-textually as a rejection of previous literary versions of this *topos*. Neither approach contradicts the other, but scholars have found difficulties in finding any earlier author who could have been rejected. Recently, it has been argued that Xen. *Symp.* preceded Pl. *Symp.* acting as a catalyst for Plato's work. However, if neither was the first on a sympotic theme in a Socratic dialogue, we need not presume that Apollodorus referred to Xenophon, but rather that both responded to an earlier author. Scholars suggest various candidates although none has been proven. However, one source has not attracted attention: two anecdotes recorded in PFlor 113 where Antisthenes depicts both Socrates and himself as critical of symposia in general. The conclusions of my paper are that the contents of these anecdotes can be seen as the raw kernel out of which both Xenophon and Plato could have responded

Keywords : Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, sympotic genre, chronological priority

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W.K.C. Guthrie once described the introductory narrative of Plato's *Symposium* as 'extraordinarily complicated'.[1] That is to put it mildly as the complexity of its opening pages resembles a set of Chinese boxes each interlaced and set inside its predecessor. There Apollodorus alludes to a multiplicity of differing accounts of Socrates' participation in Agathon's symposium, quite clearly rejecting some in favour of others. In retelling his final version of the event to an unknown companion, he records a previous conversation with his friend, Glaucon, who had also questioned the accuracy of earlier versions:[2]

> 'For someone else who had heard about it from Phoenix the son of Philip had told me (*viz.* Glaucon) about it and said that you (*viz.* Apollodorus) also knew about it for in fact he did not have anything clear to say about it himself'. (172b3-5).

With this Apollodorus agreed:

> 'I also said, Your narrator does not seem to have given you a clear account of anything of it at all if you think that the meeting took place in recent times'. (b8-c2).

Apollodorus, however, had received a more original account though not from Socrates himself:

> 'but from the very person who had told it to Phoenix, some Aristodemus or other from the deme of Cydathenaeon [...] and he himself had been present at the meeting [...] nonetheless, I questioned Socrates afterwards about a few things that I heard from the latter and he affirmed that it was as he had related'. (173b1-6)

Here, we can discern four if not five separate layers of narration.[3] In the following paper, I shall first discuss viable ways of interpreting these literary maneuvers: first, on a dramatic level as a rejection of solely imaginary versions of the event – and then on a sub-textual level as a rejection of previous versions composed by authors other than Plato.[4] I will then briefly examine previous suggestions concerning who such rivals authors could have been. Finally, I will reopen the case for considering Antisthenes as an early author in the sympotic genre preceding both Plato and Xenophon, but differing from them in compositional and dialogic style.

1. CONTEXT AND SUB-TEXT

If we are to accept Apollodorus' account literally, it would require us to believe that not only a previous version, but a number of previous versions existed prior to his own description of Agathon's *symposium*. From the point of view of the drama of the situation, all of these were apparently oral accounts. Many scholars have been happy to regard this involved prelude as a mere literary 'mannerism' demonstrating Plato's determination to foreswear any historical reality behind his composition.[5] However, while not denying that an element of this motive lies behind many of his dialogues and to a great extent also Plat. *Symp.* itself, this alone does not explain the extraordinary lengths to which he went in the present instance, nor the fact that this is the only case where a character in his dialogues alludes to rival versions of the same conversation.[6] Were their sole justification a form of literary and historical *Distanzierung*, the multi-nested preambles of Plat. *Symp.* would be an act of over-kill even by the author's own standards. In fact, as Apollodorus quite clearly states, some of these versions of the event were blatantly wrong (172b, 173b). We

are thus dealing not only with an act of dissociation from the veracity of the text, but with a dismissal of alternative versions where Apollodorus is no mere mouth-piece even for Aristodemus' account of the feast since Apollodorus boasts of his fine 'scholarship' in checking the details of the story with Socrates himself (172c, 173b). That the complexity of a multi-layered introduction to Plat. *Symp.* was a conscious and intentional plan may be seen from the way in which the author develops the introduction's inner logic. Apollodorus' remarks are a *prima facie* admission that at least two earlier, rival versions were meant to have existed as far as the drama was concerned, but that each was deemed worthy to be dismissed:

> 1. The rejected faulty version of Phoenix and his unnamed audience;
> 2. And the first 'version' passed on by Aristodemus later to be collated with Socrates' recollections and related by Apollodorus as a revised version.

Another approach is to understand Apollodorus' introduction not on a dramatic level in reference to imaginary oral accounts of Agathon's symposium, but on a sub-textual level and in reference to rival literary accounts of Socrates' participation in a *symposium* that, on this hypothesis, are rejected in the opening narration.[7] Neither explanation necessarily precludes the other in principle since Apollodorus' outburst in the introduction could have simultaneously served as a dramatic backdrop for any philosophical and literary references to be made in a conjectural subtext. However, on the dramatic level, all of the differing versions if not contradictory accounts mentioned by him are meant to refer to one and the same event at the house of Agathon. Formally speaking, any alternative literary accounts implied in the introduction would have had to concern not just Socrates' participation in any *symposium* whatsoever, but one convened at Agathon's house for that specific celebration. Nonetheless, given that we have Xenophon's totally different treatment of Socrates' appearance at Callias' symposium composed within the same broad era as Plato's composition[8] – as well as fragments of other writers from that period [9] - we see that the literary and philosophical *topos* of describing Socrates' participation in a variety of imaginary symposia was well established during Plato's life time though not necessarily in relation to one and the same event as that hosted at Agathon's house.[10] However, we should note that the first philosophical use of this *topos* was confined to a coterie of specific disciples of Socrates and written up during a specific time-period during the first half of the 4th century BC. We are thus speaking of a literary *topos* that would at any rate have been subject to change, interchange and dispute among those of his disciples who conjured up the philosophy of a sympotic event and the life of the master.

2. RIVAL COMPOSITIONS

The debate over whether Apollodorus' remarks should be understood on a sub-textual level in reference to rejected literary versions of different Socratic *symposia* is thus not necessarily precluded by the previous argument albeit that it still requires objective substantiation. However, any hypothesis that Plato also meant to 'reject' previous literary accounts necessarily assumes that earlier 'rival' versions had existed prior to Plato's composition. Yet, many have naturally assumed from the polish and perfection of his *Symposium* masterpiece that he was the prime inventor of the genre of

Socratic symposia. In order to explain common phrases and recurring allusions in the symposia compositions of both Plato and Xenophon,[11] the traditional view has been to regard Plato not only as '*il miglior fabbro*', but also as the original with Xen. *Symp.* generally regarded as the poorer imitation.[12] More recently, however, the case for Xenophon's chronological priority and even originality has been defended, sometimes with surprising vigour.[13]

Laying aside arguments based on the subjective evaluation of the originality and priority of either author, we are on surer ground when we attempt to correlate them on the basis of historical evidence.[14] Most often cited are references made in Xenophon concerning Theban and Eleian military unit(s) based on the lover-beloved principle of the 'Sacred Band' and parallel to a similar idea mentioned in Phaedrus' speech in Plato.[15] Aside from the issue that Plato no less than Xenophon may be accused of introducing into a Socratic conversation anachronistic references to military units that were organized on this principle only after 379/8 BC, the nature of their correlation lies in the details of their description.[16] Xenophon refers to the existence of these units as an historical reality albeit in a Socratic dialogue:

> 'Yet Pausanias, the lover of the poet Agathon, defended those who wallow in lack of self control, saying that even a military unit would also prove most valiant if it were comprised of lovers and beloveds! For, in his opinion, he said, these would be at any rate ashamed to desert one another [...] and he also adduced proof from the Thebans and the Eleans who would acknowledge this while, he claimed, that though they slept with their beloveds, the latter were nonetheless marshalled alongside them in the fray'. (Xen. *Symp.* 32-34).

By contrast, Plato's character Phaedrus describes a similar unit only as a theoretical possibility still yet to be actualized - and thus makes an anachronistic slip only implicitly:

> 'If then there could be some means for a city or an army to be comprised of lovers and beloveds, then it would be impossible for them not to manage a city better for they would abstain from all shameful deeds while at the same time esteeming one another - and were they to do battle alongside one another, such (troupes) would vanquish almost all men even when few in numbers. I assume, therefore, that a manly lover would be less given to break rank or throw away his weapons in the sight of his beloved more than before all other men - and would often thus chose to give up his own life'. (Plat. *Symp.* 178e).

Dover followed, by many other scholars, reasonably concludes that we should give Plato's work a date *prior* to the actual establishment of these units whereas Xenophon's recognition of their reality should be dated to sometime afterwards.[17] On the other hand, those who still insist on predating Xen. *Symp.* to Plat. *Symp.* have to explain allusions in the former reflecting Platonic dialogues written subsequent to it.[18] They are thus obliged to speculate on the publication of Xen. *Symp.* in two editions: an earlier one supposedly provoking Plato into producing his own *Symposium* in the late 380's - and a later one incorporating substantial changes in response to Plato and presumably written in the 370's sometime after the organization of the 'Sacred Band'.[19] Consequently, these scholars conclude that the butt of Apollodorus' rejection of previous descriptions of Socrates' participation in a *symposium* was

really a shorter first edition of Xenophon's work that served as a catalyst for Plato's decision to write a composition of this type at all. Since our present Xen. *Symp.* viii-ix conflates and also responds to the speeches ascribed to Phaedrus and Pausanias (Plat. *Symp.*, 178a-180b, 180c-185c), they suggest that those chapters were added later in a revised edition of this work written after the historical formation of the 'Sacred Band' in 379/8 BC.[20] In this edition, it is argued, Xenophon deliberately questions the morality of the speeches formulated in Plato's intervening works.[21]

Many scholars have been reluctant to accept many of these complicated conjectures,[22] but even granted the possibility of a revised edition of Xen. *Symp.*, there is no direct proof that an earlier edition was what inspired Plato to compose a sympotic dialogue.[23] For the present paper, however, it is not at all required that a final choice be made between either theory when we examine whether there could have been a philosophical precedent for the works of both Plato and Xenophon to which either was likely to respond. If such a precedent existed prior to Plato's composition, it would not be necessary to assume that he was replying to Xenophon whether we consider the latter to precede him or not. Although older scholars considered the possibility of a yet earlier philosophical work in this genre a serious issue, supporters of Xenophon's originality have denied that there was any description of a dialogic symposium associated with the Socratic circle prior to Xenophon's own composition.[24] Nonetheless, over the years, various attempts have been made to identify some earlier author who could have served as the butt of Plato's references whether or not he also served as a source for Xen. *Symp.* as well.[25] However, those scholars who admit that Apollodorus' remarks are an implicit rejection of an earlier sympotic composition are in no way agreed even concerning the question: to which author(s) Plato would have likely referred? With the controversy over the likelihood of Xenophon examined above, two other hypotheses can be discarded more briefly:

1. Bury suggested Plato's contemporary, the sophist Polycrates, who was notorious for his attack on Socrates' memory and his criticism of the latter's relationship with Alcibiades.[26] However, while the section describing Alcibiades' participation in the *Symposium* could well contain elements of a reply to Polycrates' fictitious *Categoria* of Socrates, the sophist's speech could not serve even as a rhetorical precursor for Plato's dialogic composition and is unlikely to have passed as a symposium with or without Socrates and Alcibiades.[27] Thus, without denying the position that Polycrates occupied in Plato's 'black book', his writings could not be described as a rival version of Socrates' participation at a symposium that regularly circulated among Socrates' companions as is implied in Apollodorus' preamble.

2. The same may be said of the dialogues of Aeschines of Sphettus. Latterly, it has been suggested that his theory of Socratic *eros* was both original and innovative in its time influencing both Plato and Xenophon.[28] Yet, while not gainsaying Aeschines' philosophical importance, the fragments of his dialogues do not indicate a sympotic gathering in any way. Aeschines is thus unlikely to be intended by Apollodorus as one who circulated an account of Socrates' participation in a symposium even though Aeschines'

> *Alcibiades* and *Aspasia* dialogues were likely to have been read by both Plato and Xenophon while authoring their own compositions.

While the last two candidates are unlikely objects of Apollodorus' rebuttal, the case for Antisthenes is somewhat stronger. Although he is not named in Plat. *Symp*,. he is a major participant in Xen. *Symp*. [29] Furthermore, he was a Socratic thinker said to be directly involved in philosophical disputes with Plato himself (*DL* VI. 7-8). An older theory thus saw his lost *Protrepticus* as somehow fulfilling a role in this respect.[30] This composition is listed as part of a series of discussions on the moral virtues apparently belonging to the same period as the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon.[31] From its meager fragments we may gather that it was a work in dialogic form, possibly sympotic in character and featuring Socrates as a conversant.[32] However, evidence for its sympotic character is limited to a single late tradition: a reference to the βομβυλιός ('wine-sipping' jug) whose 'form' and 'Idea' were discussed in Antisthenes' *Protrepticus*.[33] Obviously, this is not sufficient proof in itself that the latter was sympotic rather than simply a discussion of sympotic accessories. However, whether or not the *Protrepticus* was sympotic itself, more compelling evidence for some composition written by Antisthenes in this genre has been overlooked in this context.

ANTISTHENES AS AUTHOR OF A SYMPOTIC DIALOGUE

The 2nd CE *Papyr. Flor. 113* preserves large sections of a lost, partly sympotic, dialogue concerning success and failure in the arts, sciences and philosophy.[34] It is part of this context that two obviously parallel anecdotes are related. Each describes a philosopher who failed to influence his pupil when absent from his presence at some sort of *deipnic* event.[35] The first anecdote records a conversation held between Socrates and a critic concerning his failure to make Alcibiades a better person in spite of his lengthy study under him for what Socrates 'would teach him by day, others unravel it at night', presumably at some social coterie:[36]

> (19) καὶ οὐκ ἀπὸ τρόπου δέ μοι | (20) δοκεῖ ὁ Σωκράτης εἰπεῖν πρὸς | τὸν λέγοντα ὅτι «᾽Αλκιβιάδην, | ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐ δύνασαι βελτ{ε}ί-|ω ποιῆσαι τοσούτον χρόνον συ{ν}-| σχολάζοντα» - «ἃ γὰρ ἄ[ν], ἔ̣φη, τὴν | (25) ἡμέραν διδάξω̣, ἕ̣τ̣ε̣ροι τὴν νύ|κτα ἀναλύουσιν».

The composition immediately continues with a similar report concerning Antisthenes that a favourite of his was being successfully feted by rivals out 'to catch him' with a fish dinner. In reply, the philosopher claimed that that is no naval victory for them: 'I am indeed not beaten at sea for the lad may think that it is worth requesting (fare) like that, but I am a person who withdraws from those sort of things'.[37]

> φα̣σὶ δὲ καὶ Ἀν|τισ[θένη] μειρακίου τινὸς ἐρᾶν | κ̣αί τι̣ν̣ας βο̣υ̣λομένους θη|ρεύειν αὐτὸ ἐπ̣ὶ̣ δεῖπνον παρα- | (30) τιθέναι λοπάδας ἰχθύω̣ν̣ καὶ | δὴ εἰπεῖν τινας πρὸς Ἀν̣τισθέ|ν[η διό]τ̣ι̣ παρευημεροῦσιν αὐ|τ[ῷ οἱ ἀ]ν̣τερασταί» - «καὶ μά[λ]α, | [ἔφη οὐ θα]λ̣αττοκρατοῦμαι δῆ·[38] | (35) [ἀλλὰ γ]ὰρ ὁ μὲν ἀξιοῖ α̣ὖ̣τ̣᾽ α[ἰ]τεῖν | [ἐγώ·δ᾽ ἀπέ]χεσθαι τῶν τ̣[οιούτων].

In regards to their presentation, these anecdotes purport to be vignettes of two separate

philosophical conversations: one held between Socrates and an unnamed critic - and the other between Antisthenes and unnamed friends. However, the anonymous author of *Papyr. Flor 113* regards them as a single, continuous and unbroken argument.[39] If we first compare them structurally and then conceptually, we will indeed find that the anecdotes comprise a philosophical unity.

Structurally, both describe a philosopher who has been informed only indirectly of a pupil's participation in a detrimental social event.[40] In each case, the philosopher had vied with rivals for the attention of that pupil, but failed to inculcate his moral teaching when the pupil had been seduced into participating in it. Thus, when Socrates explains why he had proved incapable of making Alcibiades 'a better person', he compares the situation to that of Penelope and the rival suitors of the Odyssey: others unravel the web of his (*viz.* Socrates') day-time teaching by night.[41] In the second anecdote, it is explicitly stated that those who tried to seduce the lad with a fish dinner were Antisthenes' 'rival suitors' (οἱ ἀ]ν̣τερασταί). It is true that, in the case of Alcibiades, it is not specifically stated that he slipped away to attend a *deipnon* as in the case of Antisthenes' favourite. However, since Alcibiades is said to have met 'others' (in the plural) at night, the anecdote imagines him participating in a sympotic-like meeting with a number of suitors (*erastai*) rather than in an assignation with a particular person alone.[42] Conceptually, we also find the same presuppositions and argument in both anecdotes. Socrates admits that he taught (διδάξω̣) Alcibiades previously and since the latter had not become 'a better' person (βελτ{ε}ί-|ω), we may infer that part of this teaching was in respect to moral themes. Furthermore, since Socrates specifically employed the allegory of Penelope's web, this must have touched on some aspect of *eros*, faithfulness and self-restraint, to be later undone by Alcibiades' participation in nocturnal tryst(s) with suitors of his own. In Antisthenes' case, there is criticism both of the *deipnic* event itself and also of its influence on the lad's moral values, here contrasted with his own: the lad considered these feasts of high value (ὁ μὲν ἀξιοῖ α̣ὖ̣τ' α[ἰ]τεῖν) while Antisthenes would personally withdraw from the likes of them ([ἐγώ·δ' ἀπέ]χεσθαι τῶν τ̣[οιούτων]). Moreover, since the *anterastai* at least partially 'succeeded' with the lad - it can be argued that Antisthenes was critical not just of the lad's consent to a sympotic dinner, but also to their erotic overtures.[43] Although it is not stated that he had previously attempted to teach him moral values as said of Socrates and Alcibiades previously, it must be surmised from Antisthenes relationship as his previous *erastes* that he had ample opportunity to do so – and, as a Socratic philosopher, would have been expected to do so.[44] If these conclusions are correct, then both anecdotes also have the same philosophical purpose: the teaching of moral values, specifically self-restraint, but also the failure of a Socratic philosopher to instill it in certain pupils. Their unity of structure and philosophy would thus suggest that both anecdotes derive from the same tradition if not the same source.[45] There both Socrates and Antisthenes feature in a reference to some *deipnic*/sympotic gathering, but do not participate in it personally. Each philosopher criticizes the spirit of such a gathering as counter to his teaching. They thus both exemplify the failure of philosophical (*viz.* Socratic) *eros* to inspire virtue in a 'failed' pupil who had been seduced by such events.[46]

This construction clearly differs from that of our surviving *Symposia*. In Xenophon, both Socrates and Antisthenes feature as active participants with the emphasis placed on the

success of Socrates' philosophy of education accomplished through *eros* particularly in the discussion between Socrates and Antisthenes himself (*Symp.* IV. 42-44, VIII 5-6). In Plato, of course, Socrates is even more of a key figure in the drama, but one whose philosophy of *eros* is depicted not just as an apparent success - at least in the eyes of his many disciples (*Symp.* 173b-c) - but also as a failure in the case of Alcibiades (212c-215a, 216d-218e).[47] Moreover, in one further characteristic, the account in our papyrus anecdotes belongs to a completely separate treatment of this theme: not only are Socrates and Antisthenes absent from the *deipna* themselves, but the atmosphere of the latter were obviously not meant to be conducive to philosophical discussion. In fact, their spirit is explicitly described as counter to it. By contrast, the works of Plato and Xenophon in this genre have Socrates transform the sympotic *deipnon* into a more worthy place for philosophical discussion rather than stand outside of it in criticism.

The relationship between these traditions is no accident. It should not be forgotten that in addition to its narrative and gnomic value concerning Antisthenes and his milieu, the second anecdote has long been accepted in standard collections of Antisthenes' fragments as at least indirectly derived from his lost dialogues if not an actual extract from one of them.[48] This is also apparent from its argumentation concerning: the mistaken value of luxury (*ll.* 34-35), the role of *eros* in education (26, 33, 35), philosophical abstinence (36), and the moral invulnerability of the true philosopher (34).[49] Furthermore, if we accept that the criticism in the anecdote is aimed at the lad's indiscretions with the *erastai* no less than his eagerness to join their *deipnon*, then its assumptions concerning *karteria* and self-restraint recall topics widely ascribed to Antisthenes himself.[50] This is true despite Antisthenes' personal appearance in the second anecdote where he would have to be imagined speaking *in persona*. From what we learn from his fragments, his dialogues were indeed interrupted by personal remarks made by the author himself ('Antisthenes said' or 'I myself saw').[51] While this may generally recall the more personal style of Xenophon when re-handling his own Socratic material rather than that of Plato, Xenophon is not so much a direct participant in his *Symposium* but speaks as one who introduces it, or presents it to the reader.[52] Some, moreover, have also found key concepts and metaphors associated with Antisthenes' philosophy in the discussion of the first anecdote as well.[53] In addition to its general character as a Socratic dialogue critical of Alcibiades' sexual habits, the specific *cento* on Penelope's web is well within the context of Antisthenes' catalogued works.[54] We have already seen how both anecdotes have a unity of philosophical and dramatic purpose, so that it is not surprising that Antisthenean philosophical notions have been associated with the first anecdote as well. Nonetheless, whatever conclusions we draw concerning the Antisthenean origin of the latter, it is unlikely to have referred to the same event as the second anecdote. The two must refer to two imaginary, but separate *symposia/deipna*: Alcibiades' nocturnal coterie and the *deipnon* attended by Antisthenes' friend.[55] This in itself does not necessarily contradict the hypothesis that both are derived from the same source since it is well known that Antisthenes' writings were episodic in structure often composed of short dialogic vignettes.[56] At any rate, even if we accept only the second anecdote as derived from the works of Antisthenes, it is in itself a short vignette and was unlikely to have been much longer in its original. As such, its construction does not rival or even take into account the more complete and dramatically

complex works written in this genre by Plato and Xenophon. There is thus the distinct possibility that Antisthenes' sympotic vignette(s) preceded their more polished compositions as the rough diamond out of which this *topos* was reset. As conjectural as this may seem, it may perhaps be also surmised from the single historical reference made in the second anecdote that needs to be re-examined in this context. In response to the story about the fishy dinner with his rival suitors, Antisthenes uses the highly unusual passive form 'I am beaten at sea (θα]λ̣αττοκρατοῦμαι)' (*ll.* 33-34).[57] As an expression, it is known only from a fragment of the comedy, *Sicily* (or *The Sicilians*), attributed to the late fifth century dramatist, Demetrius (I) – they (the Spartans) 'could no longer be beaten at sea (μηκέτι θαλαττοκρατοῖντο)'.[58] The latter referred to Athens' naval concessions to Sparta in 404 BC as well as to the loss of her navy and destruction of her walls mentioned in the previous lines. Recent scholars have thus understood the reference in our second anecdote as an Antisthenean parody.[59] However, if the play was presented shortly after the restoration of democracy at the end of 403 BC,[60] for Antisthenes' *cento* to be clearest to his readers, his reference to such a specific line in a lesser known comedy would work best before rather than after the suggested dates for the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon (385/4-378 BC).

If this is the case, then we can understand why Apollodorus' prelude to Plat. *Symp.* (172-173b) is a rejection of previous accounts of Socrates' criticism of sympotic events. He will give a 'detailed' account of the latter's participation in one (173b), where Socrates turns such an event into a positive and philosophical discussion (c). Thus, Plato's dramatization is not only more polished and complex than that of Antisthenes, but also allows Socrates to turn a symposium into a philosophically educative meeting. In both, the *eros* of the philosopher is the starting point of education – and in both there is an account of a pupil who fails to be worthy of him once outside his immediate influence. Whatever we conclude concerning Antisthenes' role as an author of a composition on this theme, Apollodorus' rejection of previous accounts of a Socratic *symposion* is ostensibly aimed at previous treatments of this *topos* including some presumably circulating at least orally in the Socratic circle. In this respect, Xenophon's contribution is no less interesting. In contrast to our two anecdotes, he is interested in depicting Socrates 'at play' (*Symp.* I. 1) and participating in such social events. While he has Plato's compositions before him in at least one edition, his award of an active place for Antisthenes in his work utilizes the latter's written philosophy for his account of him, while ironically turning him into an active participant in a philosophical symposium of his own (IV. 34-44, VIII.4-6). It is at least feasible that Antisthenes' criticism of anti-philosophical *symposia* can be seen as the raw kernel from which the two later authors reworked this *topos* in the particular way they did.

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NOTES

1 Guthrie 1975, 366. I would like to thank Prof. Susan Prince for enabling me to use proofs of her edition of Antisthenes' fragments. In the following, all translations are my own.

2 It is a moot question whether this Glaucon is meant to be identified with Plato's older brother of that name (Rowe 1998, 127; Nails 2002, 154 ('Glaucon IV'), 154-156, 314).

3 1. The original account related by Aristodemus to Apollodorus and Phoenix (*Symp.* 173 b1); 2. that given by Phoenix to an unknown source (172 b); 3. that source's garbled redaction passed on to Glaucon and company (172 c3-6); 4. Apollodorus' own 'researched' version describing the drama set out in the written dialogue. Moreover, if this Glaucon is Plato's brother (above, n. 2), from a sub-textual point of view, he could be supposed to be Plato's immediate source for the events in the written dialogue. It could thus be plausibly argued that we distinguish between the dialogue as orally narrated *to* Glaucon by Apollodorus and: 5. Glaucon's possible report of this to Plato. However, for the following argument, this last option can be ignored.

4 Although we know of an historical basis for Agathon's dramatic victory in 416 BC plausibly entailing a symposium hosted by him (Dover 1980, 8-10), my discussion relates only to its imaginary treatment in Socratic literature.

5 Cf. Rowe 1998, 127 (that Plato aims at verisimilitude and explanations of the polished nature of his account); Corrigan 2004, 7-12 (either as a means to distance his account from any claim of historic accuracy - or as a means to conjure up the Socratic spirit and the interest in late 5th century Athens); Rosen 1968, 12-16 (to draw out the comparison of the *Symposium* with the *Republic*).

6 The introduction not only envelops four versions of the same conversation (above, n. 3), but is also multi-layered, dramatizing a conversation held with Glaucon, that simultaneously unfolds a revised version of Aristodemus' account. Other dialogues are much simpler, comprising two-fold accounts: the relation of Plat. *Phaid.* with its opening and closing addresses to Echecrates (57a-59c, 117b-118a), *Theaetet.* opening as a conversation held between Euclid and Terpsion (142a-143c) though based on notes made of Socrates' conversation with Theodorus and Theaetetus (143d-210b) and *Parm.* opening with a preamble on how Socrates' conversation came to be recorded and transcribed (126a-127d).

7 See the scholars noted in Thesleff 1978, 167-168, but latterly in: Huss 1999, 14 n. 5; Danzig 2005, 331.

8 Laying aside for the moment the question of the 'inter-relationship' of Plato and Xenophon and the exact dates of their compositions (Huss 1999, 13-15, 16-18), both works belong to the 1st half of the 4th century whichever of the two was prior.

9 Scholars suggested Antisthenes' *Protrepticus* (*SRS* II VA fr 63-67, 175), but there is further evidence to be examined below.

10 Scholarship adopts a similar view of Xenophon's imaginary and inventive account of Callias' symposium (Huss 1999, 18-24) even though ostensibly introduced by himself (*Symp.*I.1-2).

11 Setting aside speculation on general responses of either to the other (Waterfield 2004, 98-107; Dornsteiff 1942, 112; von Fritz 1935, 20-21, 43-45), linguistic and philosophical comparisons have be made between specific passages (107-110), and importantly their *Symposia*: Thesleff 1978, 158-163 (disc. pp. 164-168) and Huss 1999, 449-455 (disc. pp. 13-55), who compare Xen. *Symp.* viii 1-39, IX 1, 7 to Plat. *Symp.* (172-178, 185c, 190a, 213), *Phdr.* (239c-240d. 251d-254a).

12 Cf. Huss 1999 on Plato' chronological priority and literary genius in contrast to such a '*mittelmaesigen Autor*' as Xenophon (14-15) who at the best composed a later 'pastiche' out of bits and pieces of various dialogues and other Socratic writers (18) – or as a 'bit of a plodder' in contrast to Plato (Waterfield 2004, 79-80). More recent

opinion has somewhat toned down this judgment of Xenophon's lack of innovation (Chernyakhovskaya 2014, 6-7) although this does not dispute his borrowings from a variety of authors, particularly Plato, Antisthenes and Aeschines.

13 Aside from the chronological issue (Thesleff 1978, 167-168 on the priority of Xen. *Symp.*), more recent scholars see this as part of a reciprocal process involving the influence of not only Xen. *Symp.* on Plato but also Xen. *Mem.* (Danzig 2005, 348 n. 42). A more balanced appraisal of Xenophon's recreation of Socrates in: Chernyakhovskaya 2014, 4-7.

14 Esp. Dorion 2011, 1-23 (on Xenophon's innovative ability in his dramatizations); Danzig 2005, 340 (Xenophon as a more diverse innovator while Plato was 'exclusive' composing only speeches and dialogues).

15 Xen. *Symp.* viii. 32-35; Plat. *Symp.* 178e-179b. The former mistakenly ascribes them to Pausanias rather than Phaedrus (Danzig 2005, 331-357), but the reference is similar (Hindley 2004, 347).

16 See esp. Brisson 2006, 236-238 & n. 44; Nails 2002, 222. There are further anachronisms in Plat. *Symp.* (Dover 1980, 10) and Xen. *Symp.* (Anderson 1974, 66 n. 1).

17 Dover 1965, 12-15: while dating Plat. *Symp.* 193 by reference to Mantineia raises 'problems', the historicity of the *Sacred Band* is 'firmer ground' for a date of 385/4-378 BC (also Dover 1980, 10). Other 'echoes' of Plat. *Symp.* in Xen. *Symp.* in: Huss 1999, 449-453 (appendix of parallel refs.); Waterfield 2004, 109-110.

18 Although the stylometry and chronology of Plato's dialogues are still vacillating problems, the dating of the *Phaidr.* as subsequent to Plat. *Symp*, is still widely upheld and reaffirmed by computer analysis (Brandwood 1992, 113-115; Ledger 1989, 209-210). Huss 1999, 453-455 lists detailed passages in Xen. *Symp.* viii parallel to Plat. *Phaidr.* 238-241, 252, 256; Kahn 1998, 393-401 lists parallel throughout Xenophon.

19 In his analysis of Xen. *Symp.* VIII as a revised rebuttal of Plato, Danzig 2005, 331-357, expands on the arguments of Thesleff 1978, 167-168 denying Xenophon's use of Platonic compositions outside *Symp*. and *Phaidr.* On the other hand, von Fritz 1935, 44 sees Plato as beyond Xenophon's understanding with the simpler dialogues of Aeschines as much closer to him.

20 Even those who accept the hypothesis of a multi-layered Xen. *Symp*., do not all accept its priority to Plato (Hindley, 2004, 141& n. 59), but insist on the structural unity of Xen. *Symp.* as contradicting its appearance in two editions with the difference between caps. I / VIII explained by the extent to which Xen. relied on Plat. *Symp*. when constructing it (Huss 1999, 14 & n. 6).

21 That Xenophon's discussion of *paiderastaia* is a deliberate 'sanitization' of Plato's discussion, see: Danzig 2005, 331-357; Kahn 1998, 400; Dornseiff 1942, 112. For an earlier contrary argument, see: Hindley 1994, 348-349, who finds in Xenophon's works less 'rigorist views' of the *erastes-eromenos* principle even in military affairs, while the solution in von Fritz 1935. 22-23 is to emphasize the discrepancy between teaching and action.

22 Huss 1999, 17-19 sees Xenophon as merely conflating whatever passages he found in his library; and Dover 1965, 14 describes him as 'a creative writer' drawing on whatever material he found.

23 Whatever we think of Xenophon's innovations in *historiography* and of his contribution to *literature* (above, n. 14), Huss is correct to judge his *philosophical* writings as 'pastiche' (above, n. 12). Although Danzig has argued for Xenophon's philosophical response to Plato's *Symposium* (above, n. 21), this is in reference to his conjectured second version and not to the hypothetical first shorter edition to which Plato is here supposed to reply and where it is claimed that he imitates Xenophon's sympotic framework.

24 Thesleff 1978, 158 basing himself on Athen. V 216 c-f (c. 56) that no other composer of a dialogic symposium in the Socratic genre existed before Xenophon and Plato although in actual fact Athenaeus merely states that Xenophon created Pausanias' speech on *paidika* (216c) whose details are not in Plato nor any known work of Pausanias (f). Latterly, Danzig 2005, 335 understood that Athenaeus also hints at two editions of Plato's work (πλὴν εἴτε κατέψευσται τοῦτο Ξενοφῶν εἴτ› ἄλλως γεγραμμένῳ τῷ Πλάτωνος ἐνέτυχε Συμποσίῳ, παρείσθω).

25 See: Huss 1999, 13 n; Giannantoni *SSR* IV 1990, *nota* 30 (pp. 285-294). Obviously, there was a long tradition of descriptions of literary symposia (Gera 1993, 139, 152-154), but we are here speaking of the 'Socratic' symposium and the contribution of 'Socratic' writers to that specific genre (Dover 1965, 15-16).

26 See Bury 1973, xvii- xix. However, Polycrates' choice of style was set rhetorical pieces, not dialogue like the *Symposium* (Nails 2002, 252-253).

27 On the arguments for/against his influence on Plato and Xenophon, see: Dodds 1985, 28-29; Kahn 1994, 105-105. On sections of the *Symposium* recalling Polycrates, see also: Rowe 1998, 136.

28 Kahn 1994, 30-32, 87, 89-94; on Aeschines and Plato's *Men.,* see: Bluck 1964, 117-120; on Aeschines and Xenophon: von Fritz 1935, 43-44.

29 His extended speeches in Xenophon (*Symp.* IV. 34-44, VIII.4-6) 'affinity' with the depiction of Socrates' self-restraint (*karteria/enkratia*; Kahn 1998, 30-32.

30 *SSR* II 1990, VA 63-67; on the older theories see: Giannantoni in *SSR* IV 1990, 290-294.

31 Dated alongside Gorgias' *Helena*, Isocr. *Ad Nicol.* 39, 45-46 and Xen. *Symp.* and Plat. *Symp.* (Giannantoni in *SSR* IV 1990, 290-294), it was part of a series: '*On Justice and Courage, Protrepticus* I-III, *On Theognis* IV-V' (DL vi. 14). On the series, see: Prince 2015, 44, 123, 137-139; Goulet-Cazé 1999, 695 n.5; Giannantoni *ibid.* 285-286, 288.

32 Prince 2015, 244, 336, 386 (that at least part of it is to be characterised as sympotic), 63, 244-245 (that Socrates was one of the speakers).

33 On the *Protrepticus* and the jug's *eidos* see: Poll. 6. 98, 10. 98-99; *vet. schol. in Apoll. Rhod.* II 569-70 (*SSR* II 1990, VA 64); on its *idea* in Athen. xi.784d

(from an unspecified Socratic dialogue without ref. to Antisthenes or the *Protrepticus*). Xen. *Symp.* II. 26 has been compared (*SSR* II 1990, VA 67; Prince 2015, 244-250; Huss 1999, 170).

34 *Papyr. Flor.* 113 = Mertens-Pack^3 no. 2584, last edited in: Comparetti 1910, no. 113 pp. 19-26. Misinterpreted as a dialogue (or dialogic diatribe) *de suadendo* (Croenert 1908, col. 1201; Koerte 1920, 23), the section on philosophical persuasion is just one analogy closing a detailed discussion of success and failure in medicine and the arts (col. I-II). Although the latter does not indicate the dramatic context, the continuation in col. III 12-13 is a moralising discussion of/at some sympotic event (Luz 2015, 312).

35 Gallo 1980, 229-235; *SSR* II VA fr 175; Guida 1989, no. 18 2T; complete text and translation in: Luz 2015, 197-198.

36 col. II *ll.* 19-26; Funghi – Caizzi 1999, pp. 718-720.

37 col. II *ll.* 26-36; also Prince 2015, 565-567; Luz 2015, 302 n. 37; Brancacci 2004, 226-232; Guida 1989, no. 18 2T; Decleva-Caizzi 1966, fr. 192 & n. There is a play on ἀπέ]χεσθαι meaning not only 'withhold from' in a moral sense, but also 'withdraw/keep my distance' in the context of the sea-battle allegory.

38 Although Guida reads [ἔφη θαλ]αττοκρατοῦμαι ('he said, I am beaten at sea') on ground of line spacing, digital magnification of Comparetti 1910 Tavola III (Luz 2015, n. 37) justifies: Gallo 1980, 239; Decleva-Caizzi 1966, fr. 192; *SSR* V 175.

39 He cites the two anecdotes in reply to the claim: 'that you maintain that they (philosophers) can persuade by a strict method' (λέγεις σὺ ὅτι αὐτοὶ μεθόδω<ι> πείθειν μάλιστα δύνα|νται; col. II *ll.* 17-18).

40 Col. II *ll.* 20-21 (δοκεῖ ὁ Σωκράτης εἰπεῖν πρὸς | τὸν λέγοντα), 31-32 (καὶ | δὴ εἰπεῖν τινας πρὸς Ἀντισθέ|ν[η). In the case of Alcibiades, it explicitly stated that his nocturnal activities were detrimental to his becoming a better man, but similarly Antisthenes' favourite sought a dinner from which the philosopher would withhold himself.

41 Cf. col. II *ll.* 25-26 'they unravel by night' (τὴν νύ|κτα ἀναλύουσιν) with Penelope unraveling the web by night (νύκτας δ' ἀλλύεσκεν … καὶ τήν γ' ἀλλύουσαν ἐφεύρομεν) while the suitors (μνηστῆρες) party below (*Od.* 2.105-109; 19.150; 24.140-145). Allegorically, Alcibiades and his nocturnal suitors unravel the web of his studies completed 'over such a long a time' (*ll.* 23-24: τοσούτον χρόνον), presumably to be redone like Penelope 'only unwillingly and by compulsion' (καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλουσ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης, *Od.* 2.110). Although the role of a faithful Penelope would suit Socrates, here he presumably stands in the wings like Odysseus.

42 Formally speaking, not every *deipnon* was a symposium, but since the latter often included a preliminary *deipnon* (Xen. *Symp.* II 1; Plat. *Symp.* 174a), not too fine a distinction should be drawn between them in a Socratic context.

43 They thrived successfully about him (παρευημεροῦσιν αὐ|τ[ῷ) or surpassed Antisthenes in success (παρ' εὐημεροῦσιν αὐ|τ[όν). To do this they presumably plied the lad not only with 'a fish supper' at the *deipnon* stage, but also with wine at the *symposion* stage. The anecdote is thus a sign that Antisthenes disapproved of both the event itself and their success with his ward.

44 Since he loved the lad (ἐρᾶν) and had rival *anterastai*, he must have been a sort of *erastes* himself, albeit on a philosophical level rather than in a physical sense (Prince 2015, 565-567).

45 On the unity of both anecdotes, see: Brancacci 2004, 228; Luz 2015, 310 and n. 74.

46 Partly in Plutarch: that Alcibiades slipped away (to other suitors) although still pursued by Socrates (*Vit. Alc.* 6). In his lost *Alcibiades*, Antisthenes charges him with having been the 'common' *eromenos* of the whole of Greece (*SSR* VA fr. 199), which is less praise of his external virtue (Prince 2015, 682) as a damnation of his sexual appetite and impropriety (Wohl 2002, 130-132, 147-149, 163-164).

47 In *Papyr. Flor. 113*, the four Socratic analogies immediately preceding the two anecdotes (col. II *ll.* 1-17) do discuss success as well as failure so that it is feasible that our two anecdotes were also followed by discussion of the success of philosophical persuasion in the following lacuna if not in the sympotic discussion of col. III 12-13.

48 Prince 2015, t. 175 pp. 565-567; *SSR* II 1990, VA 64; Decleva-Caizzi 1966, fr. 192 & n.; also the papyrological evidence in Guida 1989, no. 18 2T.

49 Luz 2015, 310 n. 74; Brancacci 2004, 226-232 (cf. D.L. vi.13; *SSR* VA 134, 106).

50 Kahn 1998, 30-31 in affinity with Xenophon, rather than influencing him proper.

51 *SSR* VA 93; Prince 2015, 326-327. In one of Antisthenes' *Hercules* compositions, the hero is addressed by Prometheus following a scene describing his conversation with Chiron and Achilles with Antisthenes' interrupting the discussion of both scenes in order to make *autoptic* remarks of his own (Luz 1996, 89-103).

52 Kahn 1998, 32 on the discrepancy between his opening claim to have been present (*paragenomenos*) at it (*Symp.* 1. 1-2), but is not mentioned again. Cf. also Xen. *Oec.* I. 1 ('I once heard (Socrates) speak'); *Mem.* II. 1; in other places he merely 'knows' (*viz.* had heard about) what Socrates said (III.1).

53 1. Socrates has actually taught (διδάξω) Alcibiades virtue (col. II *l.* 25; cf. *D.L.* vi. 10: virtue is teachable (διδακτή;); 2., 107); 2. the Homeric *cento* of Penelope's web used as a philosophical analogy for the unraveling of arguments, not in the sense of their solution, but in pupil's dissuasion. See also: Brancacci 2004, 228; Luz 2015, 304 n. 49).

54 *DL* vi. 17 (*On Helen and Penelope*), 18 (*On Odysseus and Penelope* - deleting the Cynic καὶ περὶ τοῦ κυνός; Prince 2015, 124; Goulet-Cazé 1999, 699 n. 5, 701 n. 2). On his moral criticism of Alcibiades in a Socratic dialogue: *SSR* VA 198-202; Luz 2014, 176-177.

55 Antisthenes' criticism of Alcibiades excludes him as Antisthenes' favourite in the second anecdote.

Elsewhere, he contrasts his physical beauty (*SSR* VA198; Prince 2015, 679) to the ugliness of his soul: if Achilles had not been of that sort (*scil.* beautiful in soul), he would not have been truly beautiful (Luz 2014, 184 n. 87).

56 His *Hercules* contained episodic conversations between Hercules and Prometheus, Chiron and Achilles (Prince 2015, 143-145; Luz 1996, 89-103).

57 Prince 2015, 567-568; Brancacci 2004, 226); as a 'middle', 'have mastery over the sea' (Gallo 1980, 239), it is unsupported.

58 Storey 2011, I 438 fr. 2; *PCG* V p. 9-10 *Demetrius I* fr. 2. Note Demetrius' negative 'no longer beaten at sea' is comparable with the reading of the anecdote as a negative 'not beaten at sea' rather than Guida's positive (above, n. 38).

59 Brancacci 2004, 230-231; Guida 1989, 239. Thus, in contrast to Athens, Antisthenes is 'not defeated at sea' and 'the walls of his soul are unshaken and unbroken' (*SSR* VA 107: ἀσάλευτα δὲ τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς τείχη καὶ ἀρραγῆ); 134 (*DL* VI. 13).

60 *PCG* V p. 9-10 *Demetrius I* fr. 3: 'to reestablish the *demos* free and untrammeled by tyrants'. Dating it to when sad memories of Athens' defeat had faded (Storey 2011 I 436) overlooks this line glorifying the return of the democracy.

Le sens de la « *kuèsis* » dans la perspective des mythes de la gestation (*Banquet* 201d-212b)

Diotima and *kuèsis* in the light of the myths of the god's annexation of pregnancy (*Symposium* 201d-212b)

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RÉSUMÉ

L'une des thèses les plus paradoxales du discours de Diotime dans le *Banquet* de Platon (201d-212b), est que l'érôs masculin est tourné vers la *kuèsis*. On a prétendu que, appliquée aux mâles, la *kuèsis* ne pouvait avoir qu'un sens métaphorique, mais cela interdit de comprendre pourquoi Diotime choisit cette métaphore plutôt qu'une autre. A la lumière des traditions remontant à Hésiode, Orphée, et surtout aux néo-musiciens du Vème siècle qui vantent la nouveauté, en se considérant eux-mêmes en tant que compositeurs « enceints » d'un nouveau-né, la *kuèsis* étant conçue dans une dimension éjaculatoire et projective, il apparaît que selon Diotime, la création ne saurait se réduire à un engendrement de nouveauté. Diotime insiste au contraire sur la nécessité de prolonger le temps de la maturation dans un contexte qui est celui de la philosophie. L'expérience ainsi décrite doit donc être entendue au sens « féminin » d'une *gestation*.

Mots-clef : gestation, Diotime, Nouvelle Musique, Timothée de Milet, Agathon, naissance.

ABSTRACT

Reported by a male, one of Diotima's thesis seems rather surprising: men's desire is to become pregnant. Scholars have pretended that *kuèsis* applied to males must be interpreted in a metaphorical sense, but this prohibits understanding why Diotima chooses this metaphor rather than another. In the light of the mythological traditions going back to Hesiod, Orpheus, and the New Musicians who emphasize the novelty of their music while considering themselves as begetting a *newborn* child, it seems reasonable to assume that Diotima means that creation can't reduce itself to the begetting of novelty, but takes time as does a maternal gestation.

Keywords : pregnancy (*kuèsis*), New Music, Agathon, Timotheus of Miletus, Orphism

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Dans le *Banquet* (201d-212b), une femme, Diotime, est introduite dans un cercle hyper-masculin,[1] par l'entremise de Socrate qui se fait son porte-parole.[2] Or, bien que rapportée conventionnellement par un locuteur mâle, c'est-à-dire sans déroger au protocole le plus traditionnel selon lequel une femme ne doit pas parler en son nom propre,[3] *l'une* des thèses[4] majeures de Diotime a de quoi surprendre : le désir des hommes (*erôs*), y compris des plus virils, est d'être enceint, ce que le grec exprime par le verbe *kueîn*.

Mais que recouvre ce verbe pour que, dans le texte de Platon, Diotime soit autorisée à en exalter la signification pour en faire la métaphore de la pensée du philosophe ?

Les spécialistes ont presque universellement tenté d'interpréter la thèse de Diotime en édulcorant ce que nous appellerons provisoirement la dimension « féminine » [5] de la gestation, et cela de trois manières.

- Pour les premiers, Diotime énoncerait une conception de l'amour non comme une relation fondée exclusivement sur l'attirance sexuelle stérile,[6] en particulier celle qui unit de jeunes aristocrates du type d'Agathon, mais comme une procréation (« procreative sex »)[7], l'enfant étant l'unique finalité du rapport sexuel, parce que c'est le seul moyen pour les humains d'acquérir l'immortalité. On se fonde sur le passage 206b7-207a4 du *Banquet,* où *erôs* est la force qui pousse les humains à se reproduire, et la *kuèsis,* la gestation, ne ferait que coïncider avec une étape, certes indispensable, mais certainement pas privilégiée, dans la procréation.[8]

- Pour les seconds, par le mot *kuèsis,* Diotime ne désignerait pas, comme on pourrait le croire, la gestation des femmes, mais celle des hommes : *kuèsis* serait, dans un contexte historico-anthropologique particulier, une métaphore de la phase pré-éjaculatoire masculine. Il faudrait donc replacer le terme *kuèsis* dans le contexte des dialogues de Platon : après tout, l'auteur du *Banquet* est aussi celui du *Timée* et on peut attendre de lui une certaine cohérence lorsqu'il écrit que la semence mâle, une part divine, issue de la moelle qui constitue le cerveau, « sème dans le champ de la matrice des êtres vivants trop petits pour être visibles, où ceux-ci sont nourris jusqu'à leur plein développement ».[9]

Cette théorie prend sens à être replacée dans le contexte des théories médicales de la procréation et de la génération. Car, à côté des théories alternatives de la « double semence », sur lesquelles nous reviendrons plus loin, il faut mentionner la théorie d'Anaxagore, selon laquelle l'éjaculation produit un petit homme qui atteint sa taille convenable grâce à la fonction nutritive de la matrice.[10] C'est dans le même esprit, à la même époque, qu'Eschyle fait dire à Athéna à la fin des *Euménides* que « ce n'est pas la mère qui est le parent de l'enfant, elle n'est que la nourrice de l'embryon nouvellement semé ; celui qui enfante, c'est celui qui éjacule (*ho thrôiskôn*) » (v. 658-660).

Dans cette représentation, c'est l'éjaculation qui produit l'embryon, le *kûma,* mot de la même racine que *kuèin*, et c'est l'éjaculateur qui enfante, *tiktei.* Le registre « féminin » du vocabulaire, dont use Eschyle à propos du père, suggère que la gestation est une métaphore de la phase pré-éjaculatoire et l'accouchement une métaphore de l'éjaculation. L'accouchement maternel serait précédé d'un accouchement paternel dans la matrice.[11]

Dans cette perspective, la thèse de Diotime retentirait comme un point d'orgue : si les mâles aspirent à la grossesse, on doit comprendre, sous peine d'absurdité, qu'il ne peut s'agir de la « grossesse » au sens strictement

féminin, nourricier, mais forcément d'une métaphore appliquée à l'éjaculation.[12]

- Enfin, pour les derniers, il n'y a évidemment pas d'incompatibilité entre ces deux interprétations qui peuvent être conciliées : l'émission de sperme correspondrait à un « enfantement » masculin, au même titre que l'accouchement est l'enfantement de la femme, dans un parallélisme parfait.

Pourtant, une autre hypothèse mérite d'être examinée. On peut, en effet, envisager que Diotime emploie le mot *kuèsis* pour souligner une autre perspective, distincte aussi bien de la perspective éjaculatoire liée à la métaphore de l' « accouchement paternel », que de la perspective procréationiste, centrée sur l'expulsion du « fruit » de la gestation. Pour parvenir à saisir ce que dit Diotime, il faut réussir à penser la gestation dans son sens dynamique, processif, dans un procès performatif de croissance et de maturation : considérer la gestation comme l'action de porter et de mener à terme. Pour le dire autrement, la *kuèsis* telle que l'entend Diotime n'est pas « projective » ou « expulsive », mais « gérondive », au sens où le gérondif, du latin *gerere* (mener, accomplir), désigne un processus en cours. Mais la signification de cette thèse ne pourra être saisie qu'à la lumière des mythes de la gestation, en particulier dans les milieux de la Nouvelle Musique dont Agathon est le représentant dans le *Banquet*.

Il ne s'agit pas ici de nier que dans certains extraits du discours de Diotime, la *kuèsis* peut être comprise en tant que métaphore de la phase pré-éjaculatoire. Ainsi, lorsque Diotime explique que l'amour consiste, qu'il s'agisse du corps ou de l'âme, à enfanter dans le beau ou la Beauté, deux passages évoquent le comportement de celui qui s'apprête à enfanter :

> ἁπτόμενος γὰρ οἶμαι τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ὁμιλῶν αὐτῷ, ἃ πάλαι ἐκύει τίκτει καὶ γεννᾷ,
> car, à ce que je crois, en étant en contact avec le beau et en le fréquentant, les choses dont il était depuis longtemps enceint, il les enfante et leur donne naissance.[13]

> ὅθεν δὴ τῷ κυοῦντί τε καὶ ἤδη σπαργῶντι πολλὴ ἡ πτοίησις γέγονε περὶ τὸ καλὸν διὰ τὸ μεγάλης ὠδῖνος ἀπολύειν τὸν ἔχοντα.
> D'où pour celui qui est enceint et déjà gros, la grande stupeur qui le saisit à l'entour du beau, du fait que celui qui le possède est délivré d'une grande douleur d'enfantement.[14]

Dans ces deux passages, la gestation semble précéder la possession du beau, comme l'indiquent les expressions ἃ πάλαι ἐκύει et καὶ ἤδη σπαργῶντι. Il est suggéré que, en possédant le beau, l'amant serait soulagé, délivré de ses douleurs d'enfantement.[15] Logiquement, la signification ne peut être que pré-éjaculatoire (le participe σπαργῶντι signifie ainsi le fait d'être « plein » ou « gonflé » de sève).[16]

Le passage précédent décrit le comportement symétriquement inverse :

> ὅταν δὲ αἰσχρῷ, σκυθρωπόν τε καὶ λυπούμενον συσπειρᾶται καὶ ἀποτρέπεται καὶ ἀνείλλεται καὶ οὐ γεννᾷ, ἀλλὰ ἴσχον τὸ κύημα χαλεπῶς φέρει.
> Lorsque c'est dans le laid, assombri et affligé, il (l'enceint) se contracte, se détourne, se replie et ne donne pas naissance, mais se retenant, il porte péniblement l'embryon.[17]

Les métaphores de rétraction suggèrent que l'amant, sur le point d'éjaculer, se retient parce

qu'il ne trouve pas le beau, pour engendrer. *Kuèma* aurait ici le sens de germe.[18] Un autre passage illustre bien cette situation :

> ἐν τῷ γὰρ αἰσχρῷ οὐδέποτε γεννήσει. τά τε οὖν σώματα τὰ καλὰ μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ αἰσχρὰ ἀσπάζεται ἅτε κυῶν, καὶ ἂν ἐντύχῃ ψυχῇ καλῇ καὶ γενναίᾳ καὶ εὐφυεῖ, πάνυ δὴ ἀσπάζεται τὸ συναμφότερον, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον εὐθὺς εὐπορεῖ λόγων περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ οἷον χρὴ εἶναι τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἃ ἐπιτηδεύειν, καὶ ἐπιχειρεῖ παιδεύειν.
>
> Car dans le laid, jamais il ne donnera naissance. Et donc les corps beaux, plus que les laids, il les accueille avec joie du fait qu'il est enceint, et quand il rencontre une belle âme, bien née et de bonne nature, il accueille tout à fait avec joie cet ensemble, et aussitôt, à l'égard de cet humain-là, il est plein de ressources pour des discours sur la vertu et sur comment doit être l'homme de bien et de quoi il doit s'occuper, et il entreprend de l'éduquer.[19]

Dans ce passage consacré à l'érotique emblématiquement diotimienne, il y a une analogie du corps et de l'âme. La métaphore du verbe *euporeîn*, littéralement frayer ou faire un passage, appliquée à des discours éducatifs, permet de supposer que, de même qu'au plan physique l'amant fait passer le sperme dans le corps aimé, de même, au plan psychique, l'amant déverse ses discours sur son aimé. Il semble donc clair que l'enceint de l'âme est à l'enceint du corps, ce que l'euporie est à l'éjaculation.

Dans ces extraits, l'interprétation selon laquelle la gestation serait une métaphore du stade pré-éjaculatoire semble parfaitement étayée. Le problème est malgré tout que cette interprétation de la métaphore dissimule une *petitio principii*. En effet, il va de soi pour tout le monde que, dans ce contexte, la *kuèsis* appliquée aux hommes ne peut pas avoir sa signification habituelle (« féminine ») et qu'elle doit être interprétée en un sens *métaphorique*, dans la mesure où, après tout, un homme ne peut pas être enceint. Nul ne s'interroge sur le choix, par Diotime, de cette métaphore-là, de ce mot particulier, plutôt qu'un autre. Une métaphore est une comparaison implicite **:**[20] le comparé est l'objet dénoté par la métaphore, le comparant constituant la connotation de la métaphore, l'ensemble de ses significations implicites. Quand bien même *kuèsis dénoterait* le stade pré-éjaculatoire, cela n'expliquerait pas la *connotation* de la métaphore : il reste à comprendre pourquoi Diotime choisit cette métaphore-là, avec sa connotation de gestation, pour dire quelque chose qui relève de l'éjaculation. En effet, il faut le souligner, elle est la seule à le faire, y compris dans l'œuvre de Platon : par exemple, dans le *Timée,* le stade pré-éjaculatoire est bien comparé aux douleurs d'enfantement (ôdinès, 86c6-7), une métaphore qui, depuis Homère,[21] peut désigner une douleur en général, mais pas à une *kuèsis*.

Or on peut noter une certaine insistance de Diotime dans son emploi de la métaphore : d'un point de vue statistique, le terme *kuèsis* et ses dérivés apparaissent douze fois dans le *Banquet*, et soulignons-le, *exclusivement* dans le discours de Diotime.[22] Sachant que, dans la tradition grecque, le terme *kuèsis* est le seul qui soit exclusivement réservé aux femmes,[23] il n'est peut-être pas anodin non plus de remarquer que jamais Diotime ne mentionne explicitement le terme « éjaculation », alors que ce terme est bien présent par ailleurs chez Platon, dans les contextes érotiques tels que celui du *Phèdre*, (250e5), avec les verbes *paidosporeîn* « saillir » **ou** *bainein* « monter ». Pourquoi donc, alors que Diotime use du terme réservé aux femmes,

kuèsis, laisse-t-elle de côté ces autres termes de connotation virile ?

On a prétendu[24] que *kueîn* pouvait avoir une signification causale, au sens de « rendre enceint », et s'appliquerait alors au rôle masculin, actif, dans la procréation. Ce serait le cas chez Eschyle : *ekuse gaîan* (il a rendu Gaia enceinte).[25] Mais remarquons qu'Eschyle n'emploie pas le verbe contracte *kueîn (être enceint, porter dans son sein), mais le verbe kuein* avec un accusatif complément d'objet qui signifie « rendre enceinte », ce que ne fait justement *jamais* Diotime. Il ne s'agit pas de dire qu'elle ne *pourrait pas* employer l'expression « rendre enceinte », mais il faut être attentif au fait que lorsque Diotime se place dans l'optique causale, étiologique, de la gestation (comment une femme devient enceinte), c'est pour aussitôt opérer une étrange manipulation discursive. Ainsi, lorsque Pénia, mère d'Erôs, devient enceinte de Poros :

> ἡ οὖν Πενία ἐπιβουλεύουσα διὰ τὴν αὑτῆς ἀπορίαν παιδίον ποιήσασθαι ἐκ τοῦ Πόρου, κατακλίνεταί τε παρ' αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκύησε τὸν Ἔρωτα.
> Alors Pauvreté formant le projet, à cause de son propre manque de ressources, de *se faire faire* un enfant de Ressource, s'étend près de lui et la voilà enceinte d'Erôs.[26]

Diotime propose indubitablement une description étiologique de la gestation. Mais attardons-nous sur ce passage : le verbe *poieîn*, employé à la voix moyenne, souligne la dimension active (certes paradoxale) de Pénia. Pénia, une femme dont le nom indique qu'elle manque de ressources, se montre capable de ressources en profitant de ce que Poros (dont le nom indique au contraire qu'il est riche de ressources) a perdu toute ressource : il s'est endormi après avoir trop bu, il est inconscient de ce qui se passe, ce qui lui donne un rôle passif.[27] Comme on dit en français : Pénia *se fait faire* un enfant, pour indiquer que, si l'agent du processus est bien Poros, Pénia s'approprie son action, *comme si* elle « volait » le sperme de Poros inconscient. Pour bien comprendre la portée de cet épisode il faut remarquer qu'il n'est nullement question pour Diotime de revendiquer un *sperma* de la femme. En particulier, aucun élément ne permet d'affirmer que Diotime se placerait dans le cadre de théories pourtant existantes et admises par les Grecs, telle que la théorie démocritéenne ou hippocratique de la « double semence » ;[28] jamais elle ne mentionne comme Euripide « la semence féminine » (*Bacchantes*, v. 35). Voler le sperme, ce n'est pas remettre en question l'origine masculine de la semence, c'est la mettre à disposition, sous contrôle de « gestion », pour en « gérer » les effets. Cet épisode, qui montre que Diotime sait bien que rien n'est plus facile que d'occulter l'identité de l'agent de la procréation, constituerait donc un premier indice que la métaphore de la *kuèsis* ne connote pas le rôle actif de l'éjaculation lors de la procréation, mais plutôt son effet. A supposer que la gestation soit la métaphore du stade pré-éjaculatoire, cela indique qu'insistance est faite sur la possibilité pour une femme d'en annexer l'initiative pour provoquer une gestation en un sens non métaphorique et « féminin ». Or, étant donné que Diotime ne paraît pas s'appuyer sur les théories de la « double semence », une conséquence indirecte de l'épisode que nous venons d'examiner est qu'il se laisse interpréter comme le pendant inversé des mythes d'annexion de la gestation par un dieu.

Examinons le mythe de la naissance d'Athéna qui intervient en clôture du passage précité d'Eschyle. L'histoire que raconte Eschyle est double : d'un côté, dans les premiers vers, l'éja-

culation est privilégiée, avec le rôle du père, mais d'un autre côté, dans les vers suivants, le père, Zeus, est comparé à une mère enceinte, et ce n'est plus alors d'éjaculation qu'il s'agit. Zeus est dit enfanter Athéna, comme s'il accouchait d'Athéna. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'éjaculation puisque c'est de sa tête que naît Athéna, comme d'une matrice. Tout le sens du mythe est de souligner la supériorité de la matrice de Zeus sur celle des femmes : οὐκ ἐν σκότοισι νηδύος τεθραμμένη, ἀλλ' οἷον ἔρνος οὔτις ἂν τέκοι θεά, « elle n'a pas été nourrie dans l'obscurité de la matrice, mais comme un fruit qu'aucune déesse ne pourrait enfanter ».[29]

Notons qu'il en est de même dans tous les mythes du même type : dans la *Théogonie* d'Hésiode où Métis étant sur le point d'accoucher, Zeus l'engloutit dans son sein (le mot *nèdus,* au vers 899, pouvant désigner l'estomac ou les intestins mais aussi la matrice, comme dans le passage d'Eschyle), et il enfante alors Athéna (verbe *etikte* vers 922, sous-entendu au vers 924). Dans les *Bacchantes* d'Euripide, Zeus est dit avoir arraché à Sémélè l'enfant Dionysos, alors qu'il était encore dans son sein. Il le cache ensuite dans sa cuisse (v. 96-97 et 523-530). Enfin, les vases athéniens placent souvent une ou plusieurs Ilithyies aux côtés de Zeus, pour souligner son annexion de la part maternelle.[30]

En conséquence, lorsque, selon la thèse de Diotime, les mâles aspirent à être « enceints », la métaphore peut se comprendre tout simplement à la lumière de la tradition olympienne de l'annexion masculine de la maternité.[31] Dans ce cas, la connotation de la métaphore de la *kuèsis* ne concernerait pas la spécificité du stade pré-éjaculatoire, mais bien sa spécificité « féminine ».

Dans cette perspective, force est de constater que certains extraits du discours de Diotime sont incompatibles avec l'interprétation pré-éjaculatoire.

Si l'on interprète, en effet, la *kuèsis* comme une métaphore de la phase pré-éjaculatoire, alors nécessairement, le partenaire sexuel sera celui qui sera « pénétré ». Mais tel n'est pas le cas comme nous allons le voir.

Diotime utilise une tournure remarquable : *en tôi kaloi* (cette expression, qui apparaît déjà en 206c5, est reprise en 206e5) :

> ἔστιν γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, οὐ τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ ἔρως, ὡς σὺ οἴει. Ἀλλὰ τί μήν; Τῆς γεννήσεως καὶ τοῦ τόκου ἐν τῷ καλῷ**.**
> Car Socrate, dit-elle, ce n'est pas du beau que l'amour est l'amour, comme toi tu le crois. Alors quoi donc ? C'est celui (l'amour) de la génération et de l'enfantement dans le *beau*.[32]

Une expression semblable apparaît encore plus loin :

> ζητεῖ δὴ οἶμαι καὶ οὗτος περιιὼν τὸ καλὸν ἐν ᾧ ἂν γεννήσειεν·
> celui-là aussi cherche alors, je crois, en tournant autour, *le beau dans lequel* il puisse donner naissance[33]

Ces passages soulignent que l'enfantement ou la naissance de l'enfant doivent avoir lieu *dans le beau*, mais il reste à comprendre ce que désigne ici *le beau*. On peut le comprendre de deux manières qui ne s'excluent pas.

Il semble qu'il faille traduire l'expression *en toî kalôi* non par « dans le beau » comme le font la plupart des traducteurs, mais comme le fait Luc Brisson, par « à terme » (notamment en 206c5, en tenant compte de la différence entre les manuscrits et le papyrus d'Oxyrinchos datant de 200 ap. J.C.), et le sens serait identique à « au bon moment » (*en toî kalôi khronôi*). Cela signifie que l'accouchement doit se produire « à

terme », par opposition à un accouchement prématuré. J'ajoute d'ailleurs un argument supplémentaire pour confirmer cette interprétation : dans la suite du texte, dans un parallélisme syntaxique frappant, Diotime use de l'expression *en toî anarmostôi*, « dans ce qui est discordant », « dans ce qui n'est pas en harmonie » (206c8). L'expression antithétique, qui apparaît en 206d1-2, *harmotton … anharmoston,* semble faire allusion à la conception pythagoricienne de la gestation selon l'harmonie cosmique et musicale, l'enfant étant considéré comme viable à 7 ou 9 mois, mais non viable à 8 mois.[34] Sans m'attarder sur les détails de cette référence, je ferai seulement remarquer que dans le *Phèdre* (276b1-8), il est dit que 8 mois sont nécessaires à la maturation de la semence philosophique, allusion qui contredit de façon claire la théorie pythagoricienne des 7 ou 9 mois, et prouve du même coup que celle-ci doit être prise en compte dans la compréhension de notre passage. Notons donc que la gestation prend du temps et qu'interpréter l'expression *en tôi kalôi* au sens de « à terme » constitue évidemment un argument en faveur de la dimension féminine de la gestation.[35]

Mais un second sens peut être donné à l'expression *en tôi kalôi*.

En effet, *kallos* désigne souvent, dans les relations dites « homophiles » masculines, le *pais* ou l'érômène.[36]

Dans deux passages consacrés à l'ascension érotique vers le beau en soi, l'ambiguïté est d'ailleurs soigneusement entretenue entre *to kalon* et *kallos*, le beau au sens de la beauté et la beauté au sens du *pais* :

> μετὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἀγαγεῖν, ἵνα ἴδῃ αὖ ἐπιστημῶν κάλλος, καὶ, βλέπων πρὸς πολὺ ἤδη τὸ καλὸν μηκέτι τὸ παρ' ἑνί, ὥσπερ οἰκέτης, ἀγαπῶν παιδαρίου κάλλος ἢ ἀνθρώπου τινὸς ἢ ἐπιτηδεύματος ἑνός, δουλεύων φαῦλος ᾖ καὶ σμικρολόγος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τετραμμένος τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ θεωρῶν πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς λόγους καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς τίκτῃ καὶ διανοήματα ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἀφθόνῳ, ἕως ἂν ἐνταῦθα ῥωσθεὶς καὶ αὐξηθεὶς κατίδῃ τινὰ ἐπιστήμην μίαν τοιαύτην, ἥ ἐστι καλοῦ τοιοῦδε.
>
> Et après les occupations, (il faut qu')il avance vers les savoirs, afin de voir alors la beauté des savoirs ; et, afin que, en regardant vers le beau désormais abondant, n'aimant plus la beauté en une seule chose, celle d'un enfant, d'un humain, ou d'une occupation unique, il ne soit plus, en étant esclave, médiocre et pauvre discoureur, mais que, s'étant tourné vers la mer abondante du beau et la contemplant, il enfante nombre de beaux et grandioses discours ainsi que des pensées dans une philosophie sans envie jalouse, jusqu'au moment enfin où, ayant assez de force et de croissance, il verra un savoir unique, tel que l'est celui du beau de cette sorte.[37]

> ὅταν δή τις ἀπὸ τῶνδε διὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδεραστεῖν ἐπανιὼν ἐκεῖνο τὸ καλὸν ἄρχηται καθορᾶν, σχεδὸν ἄν τι ἅπτοιτο τοῦ τέλους.
>
> Quand donc à partir de ces choses, s'étant élevé vers ce beau-là au moyen d'une paidérastie[38] correcte, on commence à le voir, on touche presque au but.[39]

L'allusion à la *paiderastia*, vraisemblablement celle préconisée par les sophistes tels que Pausanias[40] et Prodicos,[41] semble confirmer que le dessein de Diotime est de substituer la beauté des connaissances à celle du *pais*, ce qui permet de comprendre du même coup que la formule *en tôi kalôi* peut désigner l'érômène.

Mais il faut tenir compte encore d'une chose pour comprendre pleinement le sens de la formule *en tôi kaloi*. Examinons le texte suivant :

> Μοῖρα οὖν καὶ Εἰλείθυια ἡ Καλλονή ἐστι τῇ γενέσει. διὰ ταῦτα ὅταν μὲν καλῷ προσπελάζῃ τὸ κυοῦν, ἵλεών τε γίγνεται καὶ εὐφραινόμενον διαχεῖται καὶ τίκτει τε καὶ γεννᾷ·
> Donc la Beauté, pour la venue à l'existence, est une Moire et une Ilithye. C'est pourquoi, chaque fois que ce qui est enceint s'approche du beau, il devient joyeux et se détend de contentement, et il enfante et fait naître.[42]

La présence des déesses présidant à l'accouchement, dans le contexte de ce passage, infléchit le sens du participe substantivé neutre *to kuoûn*. L'emploi du neutre signifie que l'on envisage tout ce qui est enceint, mâle comme femelle, animal ou humain, peu importe. Mais l'élément important, c'est que c'est du point de vue de la gestation féminine que tout est envisagé, ce que souligne évidemment la présence d'Ilithye et de la Moire (Lakhesis), qui déjà chez Pindare,[43] sont les déesses présidant aux accouchements. Ce que ce texte permet de constater, c'est que le « beau » désigne non pas celui ou celle *dans lequel l'amant éjacule ou qu'il féconde*, mais une présence semblable à celle d'une déesse de l'accouchement. Cela interdit donc d'interpréter la gestation comme métaphore pré-éjaculatoire qui impliquerait que *kallos* relèverait de la fonction maternelle, alors que tel n'est justement pas le cas. L'Ilithye ne peut pas avoir la fonction d'une mère : elle est une sage-femme.

On constate du même coup que le *pais* n'est pas celui dans lequel l'amant pénètre, mais celui près duquel il accouche de discours, et analogiquement, toutes les occurrences précédentes s'en trouvent infléchies : le *pais* est ainsi l'équivalent d'une sage-femme, et non d'une mère.

Du reste, c'est ce que prouve Diotime elle-même, illustrant la façon dont on doit aimer :

> Ἀλλὰ ἐγώ σοι, ἔφη, ἐρῶ. ἔστι γὰρ τοῦτο τόκος ἐν καλῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ τὴν ψυχήν.
> Eh bien je te le dirai/t'aime. Car c'est un enfantement dans le *beau*, au sens physique et au sens psychique (selon le corps et selon l'âme).[44]

Cette définition est remarquable pour trois raisons. La première est que Diotime est en train de définir l'amour par l'enfantement *dans le beau* (au sens ambivalent de « à terme » et « près du *pais* »). La seconde est que la formulation elle-même est ambiguë : comme je l'ai montré par ailleurs, *erô* peut être aussi bien le futur du verbe *legein* (dire) que le présent du verbe *erân* (aimer).[45] La situation est la même qu'en 210a3-4. On peut noter en outre que dans la suite immédiate de ce passage, Socrate emploie pour désigner sa relation avec Diotime, le verbe *ephoitôn* (fréquenter, 206b6) ce qui suggère discrètement un commerce érotique entre lui et elle. Diotime, qui profère de beaux discours devant Socrate dont elle est l'éraste, incarne donc elle-même le processus de gestation. Il faut remarquer à ce stade que la situation est inverse de celle du *Théétète,* puisque dans le discours de Diotime, Socrate est un érômène accoucheur, alors que dans le *Théétète* il est un éraste-accoucheur.[46]

Ajoutons un argument supplémentaire. A un moment donné, Diotime évoque les auteurs de poésie épique ou les politiciens et les artisans, pour dire qu'ils sont les géniteurs et donc les pères de leur œuvre :

> ὧν δή εἰσι καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ πάντες γεννήτορες καὶ τῶν δημιουργῶν ὅσοι λέγονται εὑρετικοὶ εἶναι·
> enfin de ceux-là tous les poètes aussi sont les géniteurs, et aussi tous ceux des artisans qu'on dit inventeurs.[47]

Dans ce passage, l'inventeur (*heuretikos*) fait l'objet d'une métaphorisation notoirement masculine :[48] il est dit géniteur (*gennètor*), et l'on remarquera qu'il n'est pas question de *kuèsis*.

> καὶ πᾶς ἂν δέξαιτο ἑαυτῷ τοιούτους παῖδας μᾶλλον γεγονέναι ἢ τοὺς ἀνθρωπίνους, καὶ εἰς Ὅμηρον ἀποβλέψας καὶ Ἡσίοδον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιητὰς τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ζηλῶν, οἷα ἔκγονα ἑαυτῶν καταλείπουσιν, ἃ ἐκείνοις ἀθάνατον κλέος καὶ μνήμην παρέχεται αὐτὰ τοιαῦτα ὄντα· εἰ δὲ βούλει, ἔφη, οἵους Λυκοῦργος παῖδας κατελίπετο ἐν Λακεδαίμονι σωτῆρας τῆς Λακεδαίμονος καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν τῆς Ἑλλάδος. τίμιος δὲ παρ' ὑμῖν καὶ Σόλων διὰ τὴν τῶν νόμων γέννησιν, καὶ ἄλλοι ἄλλοθι πολλαχοῦ ἄνδρες, καὶ ἐν Ἕλλησι καὶ ἐν βαρβάροις, πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἀποφηνάμενοι ἔργα, γεννήσαντες παντοίαν ἀρετήν· ὧν καὶ ἱερὰ πολλὰ ἤδη γέγονε διὰ τοὺς τοιούτους παῖδας, διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρωπίνους οὐδενός πω.
> Et chacun préférerait qu'il lui soit arrivé de tels enfants plutôt que les enfants humains, tournant ses regards vers Homère, Hésiode et les autres bons poètes, et regardant avec envie quels descendants ils laissent derrière eux, qui leur offrent une renommée et une réputation immortelle, du fait qu'ils le sont aussi. Et si tu veux, dit-elle, prendre un autre exemple, les enfants que Lycurgue a laissés comme sauveurs pour Lacédémone et pour ainsi dire pour la Grèce. Et plus prisé chez vous, Solon aussi, pour la génération des Lois, et d'autres hommes ailleurs, en maint endroit, chez les Grecs et chez les Barbares, puisqu'ayant fait apparaître nombre de beaux ouvrages, ils font naître des vertus diverses. Pour ces hommes, sont advenus dès lors aussi de nombreux cultes par le biais de tels enfants, mais par le biais des (enfants) humains, pour personne encore.[49]

Diotime construit une analogie : les poètes, artisans, inventeurs, sont les géniteurs de leurs œuvres comme les humains le sont de leurs enfants. Il est clair que les enfants en question sont les enfants *nés* et non pas leurs embryons. C'est ce que montre aussi le passage suivant :

> καὶ παρὼν καὶ ἀπὼν μεμνημένος, καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν συνεκτρέφει κοινῇ μετ' ἐκείνου, ὥστε πολὺ μείζω κοινωνίαν τῆς τῶν παίδων πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἴσχουσι καὶ φιλίαν βεβαιοτέραν, ἅτε καλλιόνων καὶ ἀθανατωτέρων παίδων κεκοινωνηκότες.
> De près ou de loin, en se souvenant, il nourrit le rejeton, en compagnie de celui-là, de sorte que de telles personnes possèdent entre elles une communauté bien plus grande que celle des enfants, et une amitié plus solide, dès lors qu'ils ont en commun des enfants plus beaux et plus immortels.[50]

Le géniteur de l'œuvre nourrit, élève son œuvre en compagnie de quelqu'un d'autre, comme les parents nourrissent ensemble leurs enfants, ce qui suppose qu'œuvres et enfants sont déjà nés.

D'où l'analogie : l'inventeur est à son œuvre ce que les parents sont à leur enfant. Or on

voit aussitôt que l'analogie est bancale : car dans le cas des enfants humains, la mère est nécessairement supposée avoir accouché du nouveau-né, alors que dans le cas de l'inventeur, c'est lui-même qui a fait venir au monde son « nouveau-né ». La conséquence est alors la suivante : soit l'inventeur est métaphoriquement aussi bien père que mère, et l'on doit de toutes façons lui supposer une gestation. Soit, il est seulement père, mais dans les deux cas, le partenaire dont il est question en 209c3 (κοινῇ μετ' ἐκείνου) a la dimension non pas d'une mère mais bien d'une Ilithye.

Pour le moment, il n'a été question que des mythes olympiens d'annexion de la gestation. Mais, un autre modèle existe, celui des mythes orphiques dont le Papyrus de Derveni offre la version la plus ancienne. On y lit, en particulier, que Zeus avale Protogonos, le « premier-né » (XIII, 4), avant de devenir lui-même « le commencement, le milieu et la fin de toutes choses » (XVII, 12), et d'entamer le procès d'une nouvelle création, (XVI, 3-6). Selon Bernabé, Zeus remonterait dans le temps, à l'origine, et redémarrerait l'histoire de l'univers, en devenant la « nouvelle mère » de celui qui avait été l'aîné.[51] Une telle dualité des rôles sexuels est admise par toute la postérité du Papyrus Derveni. Les Hymnes orphiques plus tardifs semblent interpréter le rôle de Zeus comme une dualité sexuelle à commencer par l'*Hymne à Zeus* (vers 4) cité dans le *Traité du Monde* du Ps.-Aristote 401a25 : « *Zeus naquit mâle, Zeus immortel fut une nymphe* ».

De même, dans *l'Hymne orphique* 6 (trad. P. Charvet) :[52]

> Πρωτόγονον καλέω διφυῆ, μέγαν, αἰθερόπλαγκτον,
> ὠιογενῆ, χρυσέαισιν ἀγαλλόμενον πτερύγεσσι,
> ταυροβόαν, γένεσιν μακάρων θνητῶν τ' ἀνθρώπων,
> σπέρμα πολύμνηστον, πολυόργιον […]
> J'invoque le Premier né, aux deux sexes,
> le Grand qui hante l'éther
> né de l'œuf, glorieux avec ses ailes d'or,
> mugissant tel le taureau, lui l'origine des Bienheureux et des hommes mortels,
> la semence aux multiples souvenirs, aux multiples orgies.

Cette tradition se poursuit tardivement, comme en témoignent deux auteurs latins, Tibérianus et Avienus.

> Tu genus omne deum, tu rerum causa uigorque
> Tu natura omnis, deus innumerabilis unus
> Tu sexu plenus toto, tibi nascitur olim
> Hic deus, hic mundus, domus hic hominumque deumque.
> Toi, première origine des dieux, toi, cause et force des choses,
> Toi, nature universelle, dieu unique innombrable,
> Toi, plein de tout sexe, c'est de toi que naissent un jour
> Ce Dieu, ce monde, cette demeure des hommes et des dieux.[53]

> […] iste colorem
> imposuit rebus sexuque inmixtus utroque
> atque aevi pariter gemini simul omnia lustrans
> sufficit alterno res semine. […]
> […] il a imposé la couleur des choses, mêlé aux deux sexes
> participant d'une double vie, partout répandu à la fois
> il pourvoit aux choses par la semence des deux sexes.[54]

L'accent est mis ici sur la dualité des sexes de Zeus, dualité qui semble confirmée par un autre passage du Papyrus de Derveni (colonne VII) :

> Ἀφροδίτη Οὐρανία
> καὶ Ζεὺς καὶ ἀφροδισιάζειν κ̣αὶ θόρνυσθαι
> καὶ Πειθὼ
> καὶ Ἁρμονία τῶι αὐτῶι θεῶι ὄνομα κεῖται.
> Aphrodite Ourania
> Zeus, faire l'amour, éjaculer, Persuasion
> Harmonie, noms donnés au même dieu.

Dans cette suite paratactique où noms propres et verbes d'action sont juxtaposés et assimilés aux noms du même dieu, Zeus, identifié à des divinités féminines, on peut voir la preuve que Zeus acquiert effectivement les deux sexes. Et si Zeus est bien le *Noûs*, il faut tenir compte de la colonne XXVI, où le *Noûs* est explicitement appelé la « mère » des autres choses.

Afin de montrer l'ancienneté du mythe de la bisexualité de Zeus, Bernabé relate d'ailleurs un mythe hourrite connu à partir d'une version hittite, le *Règne aux Cieux* ou *Théogonie*. Dans cet épisode, Anou, le dieu du Ciel, est émasculé par la morsure de Koumarbi. Il avale le phallus du Ciel, puis se trouverait « enceint» de plusieurs dieux. Même si la tradition orphique du Papyrus de Derveni ne fait que rendre un écho de ce mythe hourrite, la dualité des sexes de Zeus y semble bien attestée.

Ces divers passages qui mentionnent à propos de Zeus, la bisexualité, l'éjaculation,[55] la maternité, doivent être interprétés en relation avec un autre fait capital, peu remarqué jusqu'ici : c'est dans le contexte orphique que la création est assimilée pour la première fois à un enfantement, que *poieîn* c'est désormais *tikteîn*.[56] Il ne s'agit pas seulement de l'assimilation de la création à une génération, comme en témoigne un poème orphique où l'on peut lire que, par Zeus, le premier géniteur (*archigenethlos*), « toutes choses ont été faites » *(Dios d'ek panta tetuktai*).[57] Ce dont il s'agit ici, c'est de la création comme enfantement au sens maternel, assimilation qui aurait pour origine l'interprétation de l'orphisme offerte par la « Nouvelle Musique ». Ainsi, le musicien Timothée de Milet, notoire innovateur en matière musicale et promoteur de la Nouvelle Musique, mentionne dans ses *Perses*,[58] Orphée, demi-dieu, fils de la Muse Calliopè dans des termes révélateurs pour notre propos :

> Premier à la muse foisonnante
> il a enfanté (*eteknôsen*) une lyre[59]
> le fils de Calliopè, Orphée,
> en Piérie.[60]

L'enfantement d'une lyre qui, en tant qu'instrument de musique, constitue un objet technique et non naturel témoigne de l'assimilation des deux registres, celui de la démiurgie et celui de la génération, et cette référence est explicitement orphique. Bien que lacunaire, le passage qui met en scène Orphée prend tout son sens à être comparé avec l'*Hymne homérique à Hermès*, où Hermès est dit « fabriquer une chanteuse » (*tektènat'aoidon*) (vers 25), la chanteuse désignant la lyre faite à partir de la carapace de la tortue.[61]

Toute une théorie de la création pourrait trouver son sens dans cette perspective où le créateur enfante, comme une femme.

Dans la comédie d'Aristophane, *Les Thesmophories*, le poète-musicien Agathon représentant de la Musique Nouvelle est montré en pleine action. Il est en train de composer une tragédie du genre de *Phèdre*, et recourt au mode musical propre à la tragédie (un mixolydien par exemple, qui passe pour être « féminin »). Dans ce but, le créateur doit se livrer à une *mimèsis* d'un type spécial qui consiste à se mettre dans l'esprit (*gnômè*) du mode féminin, c'est-à-dire

à « penser en femme », à se « sentir femme » jusque dans le corps. Telle est la théorie des *gunaikeîa dramata*, selon laquelle un compositeur de drames féminins doit pousser la *mimèsis* si loin qu'il conforme ses propres manières aux personnages qu'il crée.[62] C'est pourquoi il possède les attributs féminins, ce que Aristophane caricature. Cela ne signifie pas qu'Agathon soit un homme efféminé, comme en témoigne la description de la virilité du poète (vers 149-156 : il est un *anèr* et ne possède « dans son corps » que des attributs masculins).

Il y a de fortes chances pour que dans son dithyrambe intitulé les *Douleurs d'enfantement de Sémélè,*[63] Timothée de Milet ait usé de la même théorie mimétique de la création qu'Agathon : une anecdote racontée par Callisthène semble suggérer que les sons émis par les chœurs masculins lors de l'imitation des cris de Sémélè étaient particulièrement intenses,[64] et Boèce mentionne un décret qui semble condamner les *Semelès ôdîna,* qu'il ne convient pas à des jeunes gens de mimer,[65] et qui offre un écho tardif des condamnations présentes dans la *République* de Platon où il est interdit aux gardiens de mimer les femmes dans leurs douleurs d'enfantement (*ôdinousan*, 395e1-2).

Mais il y a plus encore. Car si le thème de l'enfantement et des douleurs d'enfantement apparaît en relation avec la création, c'est une création caractérisée par l'invention toujours neuve. Ainsi le poète comique du Vème siècle, Eupolis, déclare que « 'la Musique est une chose (*pragma*) profonde et complexe' et elle est constamment en train d'offrir de nouvelles découvertes (*aiei te kainon hexeuriskei*) pour ceux qui peuvent les atteindre ».[66]

Le producteur par excellence, c'est le musicien ; or le musicien, illustré par Agathon, est non seulement celui qui enfante, mais celui qui enfante toujours quelque chose de nouveau, comme le néo-musicien. Du reste, comme Timothée ou Philoxène, il est « passionné de nouveauté, *philokainos* ».[67]

Ce qui n'a guère, en effet, été remarqué jusqu'ici, c'est que le poète-musicien Agathon du *Banquet*,[68] tout comme Timothée de Milet,[69] témoigne d'une certaine obsession du « nouveau-né », le *neos*, qui représente symboliquement l'invention musicale « toujours neuve ». Ainsi, Agathon fait l'éloge d'Erôs, décrit comme le poète-musicien, en le proclamant *neôtatos* (« le plus nouveau ») et *aei neos* (« le toujours nouveau », *Banquet*, 195c), écho d'un nome de Timothée où figure l'un des manifestes de la Nouvelle Musique :

> οὐκ ἀείδω τὰ παλαιά,
> καινὰ γὰρ ἀμὰ κρείσσω·
> νέος ὁ Ζεὺς βασιλεύει,
> τὸ πάλαι δ' ἦν Κρόνος ἄρχων·
> ἀπίτω Μοῦσα παλαιά.
> Je ne chante pas les antiquités,
> mes nouveautés sont, en effet, supérieures.
> Jeune, Zeus règne,
> dans l'antiquité, c'était Kronos qui commandait ;
> au loin, Muse antique.[70]

De telles références au Nouveau Zeus, combinées à la nouveauté musicale, assimilée de son côté à l'enfantement d'un nouveau-né, sont loin d'être négligeables, d'autant qu'elles ne sont pas isolées. Ainsi, selon Athénée, un poète comique du IVème siècle, Anaxilas, aurait dit dans son *Hyacinthus* : « *La musique, comme la Lybie, grâce aux dieux enfante (tiktei) une nouvelle créature (kainon) chaque année* ».[71]

Autrement dit, le néo-musicien se targue d' « enfanter » toujours plus de nouveauté, l'accumulation de nouveauté impliquant nécessai-

rement un enfantement rapide qui, pour être prolifique, doit s'effectuer pour ainsi dire « en continu ». Dans cette perspective, ce que l'on retient inévitablement de l'expérience féminine de la gestation, c'en est le terme douloureux, au mépris de sa durée performative et *gérondive*.

Ces références confèrent alors, du même coup, une certaine vraisemblance à l'hypothèse selon laquelle ce serait contre cette doctrine de la création « en continu », qui revient à focaliser l'attention sur le jet, l'émission, le produit, que prend toute sa valeur l'insistance contraire de Diotime sur la gestation dans sa durée. A la lumière des mythes orphiques qui inspirent les néo-musiciens du Vème siècle pour lesquels la gestation est conçue de manière projective, la théorie de la gestation énoncée par Diotime aurait pour visée d'insister sur la nécessité d'allonger, de prolonger le temps de la maturation dans un contexte qui est celui de la philosophie. On pourrait comprendre alors pourquoi l'expérience de la gestation qui informe le niveau cognitif est nécessairement pensée par Diotime dans la dimension dite « féminine ». Et n'est-ce pas alors pour cela que même les mâles doivent être enceints, porter longtemps leur enfant, parce que la maturation est le seul vrai gage de sa viabilité ?

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NOTES

1 Cette contribution a fait l'objet d'un premier exposé lors du *Symposium Platonicum* de Pise, en 2013. Elle a bénéficié en particulier des remarques de Christopher Gill, Debra Nails, Rafael Ferber, que je voudrais ici remercier, ainsi que Luc Brisson et Sylvie Perceau pour leur relecture.

2 Sur le problème de l'énonciation chez Platon : Wersinger, 2012 et 2011.

3 Halperin 1990, 146, sur le silence des femmes.

4 Il ne s'agit donc pas ici d'examiner la pensée philosophique du discours de Diotime, mais seulement le contenu d'une métaphore, celle de la gestation.

5 En disant cela je ne préjuge en rien de la question d'une « essence » du féminin au sens dénoncé à juste titre par Halperin 1990, 150-151.

6 « Recreative love », au sens de Halperin 1990, 143.

7 Halperin 1990, 143

8 Ce qui, Halperin l'a montré, revient à construire le désir féminin sur un paradigme masculin, dans la mesure où chez les hommes seuls, la reproduction présuppose le désir sexuel,. Halperin 1990, 141-142.

9 Platon, *Timée* 91c8-d5.

10 Leitao 2012, 15 *sq*.

11 Morrisson 1964, 54.

12 Leitao, 2012, 3.

13 Platon, *Banquet* 209c2-4. Sauf mention contraire, les traductions sont les miennes.

14 Platon, *Banquet* 206d7-e1.

15 Pour le moment je ne m'occupe pas de définir le beau en question.

16 Pender (1992, 72-75), qui déclare que la « gestation » masculine doit se comprendre analogiquement à l'éjaculation, considère, comme Morrisson (1964, 51-52), qu'en 206c5, *tokos* désigne l'éjaculation (Pender, 75) et qu'en 208e1, *egkumones* désigne ceux qui sont « gros » de sperme, dès lors qu'il s'agit des hommes à l'égard des femmes (Pender, 76). Ce passage trouve un parallèle dans le *Phèdre :* lorsqu'il regarde la beauté de son *pais* (251c6), l'amant éprouve les démangeaisons sexuelles que décrit, entre autres, la métaphore de la croissance des plumes (Csapo 1997, 12), puis, une fois que son âme a reçu l'*himeros*, elle est soulagée de sa douleur (*odunès,* 251 d1).

17 Platon, *Banquet* 206d5-7.

18 Leitao 2012, 184.

19 Platon, *Banquet* 209b4-c2.

20 Molinié 1992, 213.

21 La blessure douloureuse d'Agamemnon comparée aux douleurs de l'enfantement (*Iliade* XI, 269-271) ; la douleur du cyclope aveuglé par Ulysse est désignée par le verbe ôdinô (*Odyssée* IX, 415).

22 Platon, Banquet : 203c1, *ekuèse* ; 206c1, *kuoûsi*, c7, *kuèsis*, d4, *kuoûn*, d7, *kuèma*, d8, *kuoûnti* ; 208e2, *egkumones* ; 206c1, 209a1, *kuoûsin*, a2, *kuêsai*, b1, *egkumôn*, b5, *kuôn*, c3, *ekuei*.

23 Diotime emploie 8 fois le verbe *tiktein* : 206c1, c4, d5, 209b2, c3, 210c1, d5, 212a3. *Tiktein*, certes employé majoritairement pour les femmes, n'exclut pas les hommes. Leitaio (2012, 282), fait un relevé d'occurrences du verbe *tiktein* mais il oublie le verbe *kueîn*, ce que je ne peux m'empêcher de trouver symptomatique du geste d'occultation de la gestation.

24 Morrisson 1964, 53 ; Evans 2006, 15, et n°2.

25 Fr. 44 Nauck.

26 Platon, *Banquet* 203a3-203c.

27 Halperin1990, 148.

28 Sur ces doctrines, Leitao 2012, 16.

29 Eschyle, *Euménides*, v. 662-666.

30 Brommer 1961, planche 8 ; Loraux 1981, 31.

31 Pour autant, je ne m'occuperai pas ici des arguments ethnographiques selon lesquels les hommes investissent rituellement la gestation ou déploient une pseudo-gestation, par exemple la couvade (voir Halperin 1990, 143-144).

32 Platon, *Banquet* 206e2-5.

33 Platon, *Banquet* 209b2-4.

34 Hippocrate, *Du régime*, 8, 7-12 ; Censorin, *De die natali,* 7, 2. Voir aussi Lehmann 2011, 174-177.

35 La dimension temporelle de la gestation n'est pas immédiatement visible. En Français, nous employons des métaphores mi-géométriques mi-urbanistes (« être enceinte »), ou mi-topologiques mi-nutritionnistes (« grossesse »), ou encore dynamiques (« porter »). En grec ancien, le verbe *kuèô* est de la même racine que *kûma*, la vague qui enfle ou qui ondule, qui gonfle, mais aussi *kûros*, la force, la souveraineté, et il faudrait le rattacher au védique *su-sva-* « s'accroître, être fort » (Chantraine 2000, 596 ; Benveniste 1969, II, 183). La gestation assure la prospérité. En Latin l'étymologie de *gestare* (fréquentatif de *gerere*, « mener » et de la même famille que *le* ou *la* geste) suggère que (outre le fait de « porter ») la gestation consiste en une action qui implique une durée.

36 Platon, *Banquet* 194d4 ; *Phèdre,* 251b1, d7, 252b2 etc..Pour les références, complètes Wersinger 2012, 10.

37 Platon, *Banquet* 210c6-d8.

38 J'use à mon tour de ce néologisme calqué sur le mot grec, pour éviter autant que possible les connotations du mot français habituel.

39 Platon, *Banquet* 211b5-7.

40 Halperin 1990, 117.

41 Leitao 2012, 129 *sq*.

42 Platon, *Banquet* 206d1-5.

43 *Péan*, Fr. 52m, 17 Maehler.

44 Platon, *Banquet* 206b6-8.

45 Wersinger 2012, 12. J'ajoute que Platon est friand de ce jeu de mots qui figure aussi à la fin du discours de Lysias, dans le *Phèdre* (Wersinger 2001, 93).

46 Wersinger 2012, 12.

47 Platon, *Banquet* 209a4-5.

48 Diotime emploie 11 fois le terme *gennèsis* et ses dérivés : γέννησις (206b8, c5, 207a1), γέννησιν (209d8), γεννήσεως (206 e3, e5), γεννήσει (209b5), γεννᾷ (206d5, d7, 209c4), γεννᾶν (207a9, 209b3, 210a8), γεννήσειεν (209b4), γεννήτορες (209a4), γεννηθὲν

(209c4), γεννήσαντες (209e2-3), γενναίᾳ (209b6). Rappelons que le grec réserve au rôle masculin le verbe *gennân* (faire naître, factitif de *gignesthai*) dont dérive *gennèsis*, la génération (et non pas la genèse), *gennaîos*, bien né, de bonne race, et *gennètor,* celui qui propage la lignée.

49 Platon, *Banquet* 209c7-e4.

50 Platon, *Banquet* 209c3-7.

51 Bernabé 2010, 78.

52 1-4 Quandt. Voir aussi l'hymne 30, v. 2.

53 Tiberianus*, Versus Platonis de deo,* v. 21-24 Mattiacci.

54 Avienus*, Les Phénomènes d'Aratos,* v. 25-28 Soubiran.

55 Il n'est pas possible d'aborder ici le problème controversé de l'interprétation de la formule que l'on rencontre dans la colonne XIII, 4, « Il avala le Vénérable (*aidoîon katepinen*) » que, par exemple, Barnabé assimile au phallus, ce qui est contesté par Brisson.

56 Wersinger 2009, 2013. Leitao (2012, 122) le remarque sans plus.

57 Fr. 21a, vers 2, Kern, cité par Apulée, de *Mundo* 37, et Porphyre, *Peri Agalmatôn* 3, 7. Ce poème date du IIème siècle après J.-C., mais une version ancienne serait citée dans le Papyrus de Derveni.

58 Vraisemblablement composés entre 417 et 408, Hordern 2002, 15 ; Lambin 2013, 113. Rappelons que la victoire d'Agathon est située en 416 ce qui coïncide avec l'action du *Banquet*.

59 Le papyrus d'Abousir (P. Berolinensis 9875) qui contient le fragment 791 des *Perses* présente une lacune.

60 Fr. 791, voir Page 1962, v. 221-224.

61 Detienne 1989, 112 ; Svenbro 1992, 135-136.

62 Saetta Cottone 2003, 457 ; Wersinger 2012, 16.

63 Hordern 2002, 249 ; Leitao, 2012, 65, 155 ; Lambin 2013, 80-82.

64 2b, 124, F. 5, 54-56 Jacoby ; Hordern 2002, 249 ; Leitao 2012, 65.

65 *Institution musicale,* I, 1, 182-183, Lambin 2013, 82, note 47.

66 Athénée, *Deipnosophistes* 14, 18, 8-10 Kaibel.

67 Il n'est pas possible ici de montrer comment la musique finit par s'identifier à la nouveauté, pour devenir la musique « nouvelle ». Wersinger 2014.

68 Pour une étude précise du style musical d'Agathon en relation avec la nouvelle musique, voir Wersinger 2001, 79 *sq*.

69 La meilleure monographie consacrée à Timothée demeure celle de Hordern, 2002.

70 Timothée, fr. 20 Page.

71 Deipnosophistes 14, 18, 11-13 Kaibel.

Socrate et Alcibiade
Socrates and Alcibiades

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ABSTRACT

In Plato's *Symposium eros* and *paideia* draw the fabric of dramatic and rhetorical speeches and, especially, the picture of the relation between Socrates and Alcibiades. This paper will focus, firstly, on two important facts, which are essential for the correct understanding of the dialogue, both of which appear at the beginning. First, it is said that Socrates, Alcibiades and the others (172 b) were present at the famous banquet, and second, that the banquet and the erotic speeches of the participants were so celebrated as to attract the attention for several decades to come. So, the memory of that symposium is thus the memory, far beyond the other symposiasts, and through the erotic speeches, of something precise: that is, a particularly significant relationship, that between Socrates and Alcibiades. What matters most for the aim of this paper is the fact that Alcibiades is considered one of the major reasons for the defeat of Athens and the main cause of the crisis into which the city was plunged during the last years of 5th century BC. Due to the distrust of the city towards the groups of 'philosophers' that remitted to Alcibiades' group, it is no surprise that the so-called Socratics committed themselves to refuting the accusation of Socrates having been Alcibiades' mentor, to the point of reversing the charge. In the same way as the others Plato, also a Socratic, concerns himself with what might be called the 'Alcibiades' Connection'. Realizing there obviously was no way to deny the deep connection between Socrates and Alcibiades, he uses a clever dramatic construction with the intention of operating a political intervention upon the memory of this relationship, that is, of rewriting history, with the intent of relieving him of a more precise charge, which must have especially weighed upon Plato and upon Socrates' memory: of him having been Alcibiades' lover/mentor. This Platonic apology is based, ultimately, in a clever rhetorical strategy, which emphasizes the now traditional sexual *paranomia* of Alcibiades, in order to make him guilty of an attempted excessive and outrageous seduction not only of Socrates, but of the *polis* itself. Reusing comic and oratorical/rhetorical motifs of his time, therefore, Plato deepens the *J'accuse* against Alcibiades, trying to withdraw him from the orbit of Socrates and the Socratics.

Key-words: Plato, Symposium, Alcibiades, Socrates.

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L'idée centrale que nous défendrons ici est que deux mouvements différents mais complémentaires sont en jeu au sein de l'adroite construction de la figure dramatique d'Alcibiade à l'intérieur des dialogues platoniciens : une adroite construction rhétorique, fortement marquée par une insistance sur la *paranomia* sexuelle d'Alcibiade, c'est-à-dire par son comportement sexuel déviant qui, tour à tour, fonctionne comme une stratégie politique du contrôle de la mémoire au regard de la défense posthume de Socrate et de sa *paideia* considérée comme responsable de la création de la figure éthico-politique d'Alcibiade.

C'est précisément le *Banquet* de Platon qui a été choisi comme lieu de notre recherche où *erôs* et *paideia* dessinent la structure des discours dramatiques et rhétoriques et, spécialement, la belle image de la relation que Socrate entretient avec Alcibiade.

Afin d'être en mesure de réaliser cette recherche, nous focaliserons notre attention, en premier lieu, sur deux faits importants qui sont essentiels à une correcte compréhension du dialogue, et qui ensemble, apparaissent au tout début du dialogue. Premièrement, il est dit que Socrate, Alcibiade et d'autres (172 b) étaient présents au célèbre banquet, et deuxièmement, que le banquet et les discours érotiques des participants étaient célébrés afin d'attirer l'attention de plusieurs générations à venir. On peut percevoir à partir de ces premières observations explicatives que le souvenir (mémoire) de ce repas est donc, bien au-delà des participants, et à travers les vrais discours érotiques, le souvenir de quelque chose de très précis, à savoir une relation particulièrement importante entre Socrate et Alcibiade.

La vraie structure du dialogue ne laisse aucun doute au sujet du caractère central de la relation qu'ils entretiennent : comme le discours de Diotime devait être le point culminant de la discussion à propos de l'amour d'un point de vue théorétique, et le dialogue pouvait alors se clore à cet endroit.

Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est à ce moment du dialogue qu'Alcibiade, masque d'Eros et de Dionysos, le modèle de l'amant, entre en jeu. D'une certaine manière, il est possible de dire, en jouant avec le lexique du « banquet » lui-même, que tous les discours ont attendu et désiré l'entrée du masque propre de l'amant, incarnation d'Eros : Alicibiade. A travers son adresse littéraire, Platon semble être en mesure de faire converger tous les discours en direction de la mise en scène finale de l'entrée d'Alcibiade.

Le premier discours de Socrate (213 d), après l'entrée d'Alcibiade, met l'accent sur le personnage : ici Socrate exprime sa peur face à la *mania* et à la *philerastia* d'Alcibiade, c'est-à-dire face à ses excès en amour :

> Vois à me défendre, Agathon, reprit Socrate, car aimer cet homme ce n'est pas pour moi une mince affaire. Depuis le moment où je suis tombé amoureux de lui, il ne m'est plus permis de tourner mon regard vers un seul beau garçon ou de parler avec lui, sans que cet homme-là devienne envieux et jaloux, sans qu'il me fasse des scènes extraordinaires et qu'il m'injurie ; pour peu il en viendrait même aux mains. Vois donc si, à l'heure qu'il est, tu peux l'empêcher de me faire une scène. Tâche plutôt de nous réconcilier ou, s'il lève la main sur moi, défends-moi, car sa fureur (*mania*) et sa passion amoureuse (*philerastia*) me font frémir d'effroi.[1]

Le recours à Agathon pour contrôler Alcibiade dans ses violents excès en amour ne devrait pas passer inaperçu. Le lien étroit du domaine érotique et de la violence n'est pas uniquement la carte d'identité du personnage, mais, comme nous le verrons, son leitmotiv à travers le dialogue.

En avançant l'excuse d'avoir bu beaucoup de vin, Alcibiade refuse d'une manière significative de continuer le jeu des *erôtikoi logoi* (discours érotiques), déclarant être capable de parler uniquement de Socrate, et à partir de là vouloir/être capable de dire uniquement la vérité.[2] Avec ce discours d'Alcibiade, le récit de la conversation change donc de la théorie à l'histoire, de l'éloge à la vérité (une vérité dionysiaque caractérisée par la *mania* et la *parrêsia* de l'ivresse – *oinos alêthês*, 217 e : *in vino veritas*), des concepts aux images (215 a), celles d'une vie vécue côte à côte (comme dans le cas du service militaire), et spécialement celles qui, dans une grande habileté mimétique, sont choisies en vue de représenter le véritable Socrate.

La véritable première image qu'Alcibiade utilise est celle qui provient des statues de Silènes. L'image, bien au-delà de l'approximation, largement représentée par l'iconographie antique, est située entre la typologie humaine de Socrate (laideur, lèvres lippues, etc.) et l'image du Silène. Ici, Alcibiade renvoie à quelque chose de précis, probablement à quelque chose que nous connaissons aujourd'hui uniquement à travers les statues russes Matryoshkas, des poupées qui contiennent en elles d'autres poupées. Les statues de Silènes auxquelles Alcibiade renvoie tendent donc à être des statues monstrueuses et laides qui, une fois ouvertes, laissent voir en elles des figurines de divinités. De la même façon – ceci est le sens moral de l'image – Socrates aurait été un masque de lui-même, laid et rude de l'extérieur, mais divin à l'intérieur.

Il faut noter un détail de cette image qui souvent échappe aux traducteurs – Brisson, en ce sens, l'a bien remarqué :[3] Alcibiade renvoie littéralement à des statues qui sont dans les ateliers des *hermoglupheioi*, c'est-à-dire des « sculpteurs qui fabriquent des Hermès ».[4]

Mais cette référence initiale et voilée aux Hermès ne peut être considérée comme accidentelle. Au contraire, elle inaugure la politique platonicienne de la mémoire. En fait, le banquet d'Agathon a dû avoir lieu quelques mois avant cet événement majeur. Il semble qu'au matin du 8 juin 415 on trouva que les Hermès avaient été mutilés « au visage » (*prosôpa*) – selon le témoignage de Thucydide – ce qui signifie à l'origine une mutilation de leurs attributs sexuels.[5] Placés à l'entrée et aux sorties des maisons et des temples, aux intersections et à l'entrée des villes, les Hermès étaient – symboliquement – chargés de la protection de la cité. L'accroissement de l'horreur causée par un tel sacrilège immense était dû au fait qu'il a été commis durant une conjoncture critique pour Athènes : la préparation à l'une des plus ambitieuses et dangereuses expéditions militaires, celle contre Syracuse et ses puissants alliés. Le soupçon d'un tel sacrilège – qui possède également un aspect humoristique pour parler ainsi – pouvait être ordinairement endossé par quelques jeunes gens désordonnés et brailleurs. Platon semble, en quelque sorte, appuyer cette version. En fait, l'histoire de l'arrivée d'Alcibiade au banquet situé dans la maison d'Agathon semble contenir une référence aux soupçons selon lesquels le peuple d'Athènes s'en est pris à Alcibiade et à ses compagnons : pendant que Socrate et les autres passent la nuit à boire modérément à la maison, Alicibiade arrive à l'aube, ivre et – c'est

ce que le texte suggère – après avoir erré à travers Athènes dans un état second. Un Athénien n'aurait pas besoin d'utiliser beaucoup d'imagination pour se représenter Alcibiade et ses groupes d'ivrognes commettant toutes sortes d'impiétés. Le fait que Platon insiste sur cette version aurait pu être également une des raisons de l'annonce de la seconde interruption du banquet vers sa fin (223 b) à laquelle ont également participé plusieurs jeunes gens ivres. C'est-à-dire que Platon semble insister sur la présentation des nuits d'orgie dans la rue, juste au moment de la mutilation des Hermès, appuyant ainsi cette version des motifs qui se cachent derrière le sacrilège.

Et si ceci ne semble pas être une trop forte reconnaissance voilée de la culpabilité d'Alcibiade et de son équipe de la part de Platon, libérant Socrate et son groupe de ce soupçon, c'est vraisemblablement que Platon est en train de masquer – après tout nous parlons du *Banquet*, c'est-à-dire de l'un des plus habiles jeux de masques – quelque chose de plus grave. Véritablement, selon les sources contemporaines, le soupçon de profanation ne tombe pas tellement sur les jeunes gens ivres. Ce qui vient à l'esprit des gens, c'est qu'il s'agit plutôt d'un complot ourdi de manière claire par des groupes ayant l'intention d'affaiblir la confiance dans la démocratie athénienne à un moment délicat de son histoire, voulant par là restaurer l'oligarchie ou la tyrannie.

Voyons à ce sujet l'exposé de Thucydide :

> Nul ne connaissait les coupables, mais, par de fortes primes à la délation, l'Etat les faisait rechercher, et l'on décréta, en outre, que quiconque aurait connaissance de quelque autre acte sacrilège devait le dénoncer, sans crainte pour personne, qu'il fût citoyen, étranger ou esclave. L'affaire prenait dans l'opinion une grosse importance : elle paraissait constituer un présage pour l'expédition, en même temps qu'appuyer un complot visant à faire une révolution et à renverser la démocratie.[6]

Manifestement, les groupes de conspirateurs comme ceux-ci existaient réellement, ce qui est attesté par les *staseis* successives qui ont profondément modelé les quinze ou vingt années succédant à la démocratie athénienne. Ils étaient appelés *hetairias*, groupes d'amis, compagnons. Les membres de ces *hetairias* étaient tous d'origine sociale élevée, et leurs rencontres étaient habituellement associées au rituel du banquet et du *symposium* (beuverie commune). C'est-à-dire que le soupçon tombe exactement en premier chef sur un groupe comme celui que Platon constitue dans le *Banquet,* heureusement rassemblé quelques mois avant la mutilation des Hermès. En fait, plusieurs de ces *hetairias* étaient attaqués et conduits en justice, en utilisant des moyens légaux exceptionnels comme l'*eisaggelia*. Athènes commence par être obsédée par le risque d'un retour à l'oligarchie, ou pire, à la tyrannie. Progressivement – Thucydide est la principale source de ce problème – une figure riche, excessive et puissante telle que celle d'Alcibiade rencontre toutes les conditions pour focaliser toutes les peurs du peuple démocratique. Thucydide expose clairement les choses :

> En ce qui concerne Alcibiade, sous la pression des mêmes ennemis qui, déjà avant qu'il s'embarquât pour l'expédition, s'acharnaient contre lui, les Athéniens prenaient les choses avec humeur. Quant ils crurent avoir obtenu la certitude de l'affaire des Hermès, l'opinion alla se fortifiant chez eux que la parodie des

> mystères, pour laquelle il était en cause, s'était faite sur son initiative, en vertu du même motif et de la conjuration contre la démocratie.[7]

Mais Alcibiade n'a jamais été attaqué en relation avec le cas des Hermès. Néanmoins, au sein du climat de terreur et de calomnie qui prévalait pendant qu'Alcibiade était en train de préparer l'expédition de Syracuse, apparaît à son encontre le grief explicite, celui d'avoir commis un autre sacrilège : l'accusation était qu'il avait participé, dans une maison privée, à une parodie des mystères. Androclès a essayé de mettre en relation les deux profanations, les Hermès et la parodie des mystères, en tant que prologues à une menace à la démocratie. Plutarque révèle ainsi les intentions diffamatoires d'Androclès :

> Sur ces entrefaits, l'orateur Androclès produisit des esclaves et des métèques qui accusèrent Alcibiade et ses amis d'avoir mutilé d'autres statues et d'avoir parodié les mystères après avoir bu. Ils disaient qu'un certain Théodore jouait le rôle de héraut, Poulytion celui de porte-flambeau, Alcibiade celui d'hiérophante et que les autres membres de la coterie y assistaient comme spectateurs, sous le nom de mystes.[8]

Bien que la participation d'Alcibiade au cas des Hermès n'ait jamais été prouvée, l'association des deux sacrilèges a marqué l'esprit public d'Athènes. Ainsi, Thucydide décrit en fait la réaction du peuple d'Athènes :

> Les réflexions que ces faits suggéraient à la démocratie athénienne, le souvenir qu'elle évoquait de ce que la tradition lui en avait appris, la rendaient à ce moment intraitable et soupçonneuse à l'égard des gens mis en cause dans l'affaire des mystères : elle rapportait tout à un conjuration oligarchique et tyrannique.[9]

L'économie de ce texte ne nous permet pas de rendre compte exactement des mois troublés qui suivirent ce grief. Il suffit de dire qu'il a été initialement démenti, et qu'Alcibiade était capable de voyager, en tant que stratège, en direction de Syracuse. Toutefois, alors que l'expédition était à mi-parcours, une femme issue d'une famille éminente, Agariste, évoqua une autre version de la même attaque de la parodie des mystères éleusiens : à ce moment, il a été allégué que cette parodie avait eu lieu dans la maison de Charmide, membre de l'*hetairia* d'Alcibiade. Elle l'accusa d'avoir joué un rôle central, celui de grand prêtre. Considérant le sérieux de l'attaque, un navire fut immédiatement envoyé en Sicile dans le but de ramener Alcibiade afin qu'il soit jugé à Athènes. Le reste est bien connu : la fuite d'Alcibiade marque sa première trahison et l'exil.

Ce qui importe le plus est qu'à partir de ce moment, Alcibiade commence vraisemblablement à être considéré comme l'une des raisons majeures de la défaite d'Athènes et la cause principale de la crise dans laquelle la cité fut plongée, et avec lui tous ceux qui appartenaient à son groupe. Il n'y a certainement rien de nouveau à affirmer, comme le fait Centrone, que « la proximité d'une telle figure controversée qu'est Alcibiade était l'une des vraies causes de la mort de Socrate »,[10] et la défiance de la cité à l'égard des groupes de « philosophes » doit lui être rapportée.

Il n'est pas non plus surprenant pour nous que les soi-disant socratiques se soient eux-mêmes compromis, à partir de ce moment

tragique, à réfuter l'accusation selon laquelle Socrate a été le mentor d'Alcibiade, au point de renverser l'attaque, comme cela est affirmé par Gribble : « l'allégation selon laquelle Socrate a corrompu Alcibiade, l'attaque faite par la société contre les philosophes, n'est pas seulement réfutée mais renversée : c'est la société qui corrompt Alcibiade et d'autres comme lui ».[11]

De la même manière, comme les autres, Platon, également socratique, est lui-même concerné par ce qui pouvait être appelé « l'affaire Alcibiade » (ou « l'Alcibiade connection »). Réalisant manifestement ici qu'il n'y avait pas moyen de nier la profonde relation entre Socrate et Alcibiade, il utilise une plus intelligente construction dramatique avec l'intention d'opérer une intervention politique concernant la mémoire de cette relation, c'est-à-dire en réécrivant l'histoire, produisant ainsi une autre apologie de Socrate, et dans le but de le dégager d'une attaque plus précise qui devait peser spécialement sur Platon et sur la mémoire de Socrate : celle d'avoir été l'amant/mentor d'Alcibiade (en essayant de traduire le large vocabulaire concernant la relation *erastês/erômenos*).

L'idée n'est bien évidemment pas originale. Déjà, Gomperz considère le discours d'Alcibiade comme une réponse à Polycrate qui, vers la fin des années 90 du IVe siècle, c'est-à-dire quelques années après la mort de Socrate, aurait rédigé un acte d'accusation contre Socrate.[12] Le principal témoin de l'existence d'un *katêgoros*, d'un accusateur, identifié par les critiques comme étant Polycrate, est Xénophon.[13] Cependant Robin considéra la possibilité de cette réponse directe à Polycrate comme « toute gratuite »,[14] et préféra, dans le même cas, penser à une polémique entre Platon et Aristophane qui pouvait par la suite être considérée par Platon « comme faisant partie des adversaires de Socrate dont l'influence en ce temps méritait encore qu'on s'y attaque ».[15] Le fait est que Platon, depuis qu'il avait associé dramatiquement Socrate à Alcibiade, semblait aux yeux de chacun éprouver le besoin de le défendre.

Socrate éprouvant en quelque sorte le besoin d'être défendu par Alcibiade est un *topos* récurrent dans les dialogues. Considérons, par exemple, la célèbre interdiction divine (*daimonion enantiôma*) qui empêche Socrate de parler à Alcibiade au début du *Premier Alcibiade* (103 a).

Il n'est pas surprenant qu'une majeure partie du discours d'Alcibiade dans le *Banquet* tende à insister sur la défaite de la *paideia* de Socrate, renforçant ainsi l'impression d'une forte tendance apologétique. Les mots mêmes de Socrate, à la fin de l'éloge, soulignent cette défaite lorsqu'il tente de ridiculiser les faux-fuyants, l'usage, l'échange inéquitable entre la vraie beauté de Socrate et sa beauté éphémère qu'Alcibiade a en vue d'exposer avec son propre accord (218 e). Le terme que Socrate utilise pour indiquer la solution à ce problème d'Alcibiade est très significatif : il s'agit du terme de *pleonektein*. Alcibiade est ainsi installé dans un contexte de violence et d'équivoque qui décrit les années de l'impérialisme athénien, et que Vegetti a magistralement résumé en utilisant le concept d''«anthropologie de la pléonexie » (Vegetti, 2003).

Ainsi, en grande partie, l'éloge de Socrate par Alcibiade peut être considéré comme étant plus qu'une apologie.

Essayons, par exemple, de réfléchir au sujet du véritable usage des images de statues de Silènes, qui illustre le besoin de vaincre l'apparence, le masque historique et inconfortable de

Socrate, pour apercevoir une vérité au sujet de sa vie et de son héritage, qui demeure encore cachée pour la majorité. Il n'est pas difficile de voir, à travers la voix d'Alcibiade qui dit « personne parmi vous ne le connaît » (216 c-d), Platon le disant lui-même à Athènes.

Le sens apologétique est spécialement évident dans l'insistance de Socrate, suivant l'avancement de l'exposé d'Alcibiade, qui abandonne *ta athenaiôn pratto*, les questions politiques d'Athènes pour se consacrer au souci de soi (*emautos*) (215 a-216 c). Evidement, *in re* comme in *post factum*, un tel avis visant l'abandon de la politique lorsqu'il est adressé au grand homme d'état, à un véritable homme politique athénien, est destiné à l'échec, mais fonctionne au sein de la politique de la mémoire platonicienne, dans son projet historiographique qui marque une séparation entre Socrate et les *staseis* athéniennes de son temps.

Les merveilleuses pages 221 et 222 a, sur les *logoi* socratiques, qui métonymiquement participent à l'image de la statue de Silène, qu'Alcibiade attribue à Socrate lui-même, si banal de l'extérieur, mais divin à l'intérieur, sont étroitement liées à l'admission que ces mêmes discours « s'adressent à ceux qui veulent devenir *kalos-kagathos* » (222 a). C'est-à-dire que la *paideia* de Socrate, bien qu'elle puisse sembler atypique, est en fait profondément impliquée par l'idéal de la *kalos-kagathia* qui guide la *politeia* athénienne.

Ainsi, le problème ne réside pas dans les enseignements de Socrate, mais, plutôt, dans l'incapacité d'Alcibiade à vaincre sa *philotimia*, son amour des honneurs que confère le grand nombre (216 b). Cette *philotimia*, dont Alcibiade est presque l'exemple paradigmatique au sein du monde ancien (selon Thucydide, le *Premier Alcibiade*, Plutarque, passim) l'éloigne d'un côté de Socrate, échappant ainsi à toute forme de conseil, mais qui d'un autre côté se sent honteux de sa propre faiblesse. Giorgini l'établit bien lorsqu'il dit que « sans aucun doute, la figure d'Alcibiade représentait le plus large échec à la fois de l'éducation athénienne et de la pédagogie socratique ».[16]

Pour expliquer l'immunité d'Alcibiade à la *paideia* socratique, dans le but de sauver Socrate de la défaite, Platon fait usage d'une stratégie rhétorique que la comédie, la rhétorique et Thucydide lui-même ont déjà soulignée : la *philotimia* et la faiblesse d'Alcibiade indiqueraient essentiellement et sans équivoque des traits « féminins ».

Mais cette faiblesse d'Alcibiade n'est pas une simple quête immodérée pour les honneurs et la richesse, avec la représentation parallèle de l'éthique du genre féminin comme nécessairement lié à la *philotimia* et à quelques faiblesses en rapport avec le plaisir de la séduction. Il y a quelque chose de plus précis concernant la caractérisation de la *paranomia* d'Alcibiade en tant qu'homme qui le rend à la fois craint et admiré aux yeux de ses contemporains et même dans les nombreux siècles de la tradition qui suivirent. Une fois de plus Gribble souligne correctement que « au cours des dix dernières années de la Guerre du Péloponèse la constante ambivalence et l'indécision qui a caractérisé l'attitude athénienne à l'égard d'Alcibiade sape d'une manière cruciale la ligne de conduite (politique) athénienne ».[17]

Cette indécision, qui est un mélange de peur et d'attraction, est d'une certaine manière une description de la relation érotique entretenue par Athènes avec Alcibiade. Aristophane l'a bien compris, quand dans les *Grenouilles*, il fait dire à Dionysos qu'Athènes « le veut, le hait

et le désire ardemment » (1425)). Le sens de cet énoncé contient une très spéciale connotation quand on pense que la pièce d'Aristophane était présentée au théâtre en 405 avant J.-C., pendant qu'Alcibiade était en exil, que la guerre était presque perdue, et que Dionysos était en train de visiter dramatiquement, dans l'après vie, les tragédiens Eschyle et Euripide.

C'est Thucydide lui-même (VI, 15) qui nous parle de la grande *paranomia* d'Alcibiade, comme étant celle qui scandalisa les Athéniens (les nombreux : *oi polloi*) quant à sa *diaita*, son style de vie. Une *paranomia* qui est plus précisément décrite comme *kata to heautou sôma* (VI, 15), c'est-à-dire au regard du corps propre de chacun. Bien qu'on puisse certainement penser à des excès tels que les plaisirs corporels de la nourriture et de la boisson, l'expression renvoie plus précisément aux déviances sexuelles.[18] Il n'est pas fortuit qu'Antisthène affirme qu'Alcibiade pouvait être « *paranomos* aussi bien envers les femmes qu'au regard de sa *diaita* ».[19]

La *paranomia* d'Alcibiade semble s'effectuer dans une très précise caractérisation sexuelle. Ceci est clairement montré par le grand nombre d'anecdotes, les informations et les représentations dramatiques qui caractérisent la tradition relative au personnage.

Depuis l'enfance, selon Plutarque, la renommée d'Alcibiade était liée à un comportement féminin. Ceci est emblématique dans le cas d'un célèbre combat, celui définissant l'espace central du genre masculin, au cours duquel Alcibiade, étonnamment, pratique la morsure :

Un jour qu'il s'exerçait à la lutte, pressé par son adversaire et craignant d'être renversé, il amena jusqu'à sa bouche les bras qui l'étreignaient, et fit mine de les dévorer. L'autre lâcha prise, en s'écriant : – Tu mords comme les femmes, Alcibiade. – Non, dit-il, mais comme les lions.[20]

La réponse d'Alcibiade – « pas comme une femme, mais comme un lion » - renvoie elle-même plus immédiatement à un autre passage central de l'image comique d'Aristophane dans les *Grenouilles* qui a quelque chose à voir avec Alcibiade. Le personnage Eschyle dit en réalité : « Tout d'abord, personne ne devrait évoquer le lion à l'intérieur de la cité. Mais si quelqu'un le fait, il doit alors se plier à son caractère ».[21] Le lion, non seulement associé à la figure d'Alcibiade, mais plus généralement associé à un rôle social illégal (illégitime) au sein de la communauté,[22] représente dans le contexte athénien du Ve siècle une image qui renvoie immédiatement aux plus effrayantes tendances tyranniques. Hérodote associe l'image du lion à celle des tyrans, et à nouveau Aristophane, dans les *Cavaliers* parle d'une femme donnant naissance à un lion à Athènes.[23] Calliclès, dans le *Gorgias* de Platon, compare la soumission des meilleurs et des plus forts citoyens aux lois de la cité à celui qui est mandaté pour entraîner les jeunes lions.[24]

Cette double imagerie sauvage et féminine attribuée à Alcibiade pousse en fin de compte la représentation qu'on s'en fait plus du côté de la sauvagerie que de la culture civilisée. Une telle dichotomie entre nature et culture est une marque forte de la rhétorique du genre. C'est-à-dire qu'en tant que lion et en tant que femme, Alcibiade échappe à la norme morale et à la conduite établie par une cité, outrageant et menaçant les usages sociaux à travers son irréductible différence et son défi permanent à la culture de l'apparence sexuelle promue par la *polis*.

Dans la crise politique de l'Athènes de la fin du Ve siècle, la *paranomia* sexuelle d'Alcibiade joue donc un rôle clé dans la représentation

d'un individu conduit par ses excès et incapable de *metron*, qui a été établie comme étant la grande valeur démocratique.[25] En conséquence, cette caractérisation du genre révèle son inhérente connotation politique : « le plaisir sexuel est vu comme étant le plus fort et le plus dangereux des désirs du corps, de là son association particulière aux tyrans ».[26]

Ainsi, le concept même de *pleonexia*, qui, comme nous l'avons vu était central pour la rhétorique politique de la fin du Ve siècle, permet de révéler une connotation du genre qui est sans précédent, renvoyant à l'intempérance dans les désirs sexuels, dans un autre exemple du chevauchement des deux domaines.

La *paranomia* sexuelle d'Alcibiade, son manque de masculinité, est premièrement une question politique soulignée par Gherchanoc : « sa féminité est présentée comme un atout politique même si elle est du ressort de la critique ».[27]

Une tradition très bien attestée décrit en fait le jeune Alcibiade comme étant le favori de plusieurs amants aristocratiques : toujours disposé à être l'objet du plaisir des autres, non par contrainte, mais précisément parce qu'il est incapable de contrôler son propre désir sexuel. La même image, en effet, émerge dans le *Banquet* de Platon.[28]

Une figure sexuelle déviante est évidemment une recette pour la comédie. Aristophane appelle Alcibiade *euruprôktos* (vagabond), pendant qu'Eupolis représente le rôle sexuel d'Alcibiade comme étant un rôle de femme.[29]

Mais comment articuler cette description avec celle – également présente dans la tradition – d'Alcibiade considéré comme « féminisé » ? On devrait exprimer, bien sûr, une précaution herméneutique supplémentaire : le court-circuit suggéré par cette question peut dépendre plus de la description moderne des relations entre genres qui ne correspond pas nécessairement à la même description au sein du monde ancien. En fait, Davidson note, à juste titre, que même plus que sa propre passivité, son trait le plus féminin, selon l'éthique grecque ancienne du genre, serait son incapacité à contrôler ses désirs.[30] Comme l'affirme Gribble, qui résout ainsi l'apparente contradiction qui vient d'être mentionnée : « ce qui détermine 'l'éthique du genre' c'est l'attitude du sujet à l'égard du plaisir, même un agent sexuel actif le *kinaidos* demeure identifié au féminin », spécialement lorsqu'il est adultère.[31]

La représentation du réseau complexe des relations du genre, lorsqu'il renvoie au monde ancien et, plus précisément à Alcibiade, est bien loin de la simple dichotomie naturelle homme/femme. Un ancien fragment comique de Phérécrate est en fait symptomatique de cette perspective du genre : « Pour n'avoir pas été un homme (*anêr*), Alcibiade, semble-t-il, est maintenant le mari (*anêr*) de toutes les femmes autour de lui ».[32] Pour n'avoir pas été un homme, c'est-à-dire pour n'avoir pas contrôlé ses désirs – ce qui définit le plus la représentation du mâle – Alcibiade est un adultère.

La tradition ultérieure ne cesse de rassembler plusieurs anecdotes qui représentent sa *paranomia* sexuelle spécifique depuis l'histoire de son voyage à Abydos, en compagnie de son oncle, au cours duquel tous les deux sont dits avoir eu une relation avec la même femme, Medontis, et avoir clamé la paternité de l'enfant qu'elle avait engendré.

Il y a également l'incident à Mélos, où encore une fois les excès politiques et sexuels interfèrent outrageusement : après avoir décrété

l'asservissement de l'ensemble des habitants de l'île de Mélos, Alcibiade acheta pour lui-même une femme de Mélos et eut avec elle un fils.[33] Andocide, dans son discours contre Alcibiade, note avec indignation que le fils d'Alcibiade, né d'une esclave de Mélos dans le contexte de la destruction de l'île et de ses habitants, pouvait certainement devenir un autre ennemi d'Athènes. Le résultat est qu'Alcibiade est ainsi en train de créer, avec ses excès sexuels, de nouveaux ennemis pour la cité.[34]

Alcibiade meurt au combat, une mort conventionnellement « virile ». Toutefois, même dans les traditions qui mentionnent sa mort, la représentation de la « féminité » d'Alcibiade est fortement présente. En fait, Plutarque, comme d'habitude dans ses *Vies parallèles*, à la fin de la vie d'Alcibiade, symbolisant brièvement son existence au cours des dernières heures, utilise deux représentations féminines qui ne sont en aucune manière équivoques. D'une part, dans l'ultime rêve prémonitoire de sa mort, un courtisan appliqua sur lui des cosmétiques « et comme s'il était une femme, peigna ses cheveux ». D'autre part, après sa mort sur le champ de bataille, Alcibiade est habillé pour les obsèques avec des robes de femmes : « Timandra récupéra son cadavre, l'enveloppa et le couvrit avec ses propres habits ».[35] Par conséquent, la dernière image d'Alcibiade renvoie sympoliquement à sa *paranomia* de genre.

Quoi qu'il en soit, la meilleure description de la *paranomia* de genre d'Alcibiade peut encore être trouvée dans le *Banquet* même de Platon, dans l'inversion des rôles entre amant et aimé, un *topos* central dans l'économie du dialogue en tant que tout : Alcibiade est celui qui est amoureux de Socrate, et non l'inverse (222 b).

A la page 213 d citée ci-dessus, Socrate exprime sa peur au sujet de la *mania* et de la *philerastia* d'Alcibiade. En fait, Alicibiade, le masque et l'incarnation même d'Eros, est aussi puissant et subtil que lui (205 d). Il est le paradigme de l'homme tyrannique, bien décrit à la fin du Livre VIII de la *République*. Mais ici, dans le *Banquet*, *erôs tyrannos* est également inversé, lorsque Alcibiade regrette à deux reprises d'avoir été réduit en esclavage par Socrate, se sentant obligé de l'aimer : ainsi, lui, l'homme tyrannique par excellence, utilise l'adverbe *andrapodôdôs*, « comme un esclave », et la préposition *hypo*, « sous », pour montrer sa soumission à Socrate (215 e). Il s'agit certainement d'une référence *post factum*, légèrement tragique, de Platon à son mentor déjà mort mais également une affirmation de la nuisance que le Socrate-Eros pouvait avoir provoqué au sein de l'élite de la *polis* athénienne qu'Alcibiade est ici en train de représenter.

Le jeu de l'inversion des rôles sert simultanément de compliment aussi élevé que possible à Socrate comme étant même supérieur à Eros lui-même et comme la véritable incarnation du philosophe, mais aussi, une nouvelle fois, l'inversion du terrain dramatique sert à appuyer le soupçon qu'Alcibiade, dans ses multiples *paranomiai* était au final en train de réaliser la tyrannie.

L'introduction dans le discours de Diotime du thème de l'initiation aux mystères peut être analysée de la même façon que le cas de la présence d'un lexique lié aux Hermès. La sérieuse attaque, déjà mentionnée, dirigée à l'encontre d'Alcibiade pour avoir participé à une parodie des mystères, une attaque qui conduisit à sa première défection, et « était une /la [?] source, non la moins importante, de la défaite d'Athènes ».[36] Il est par conséquent impossible

de ne pas penser que Platon, toujours le plus apte à « tisser des mots », n'a pas présenté le discours de Diotime, juste avant l'entrée d'Alcibiade, renvoyant à une double initiation aux mystères, sans avoir à l'esprit le plan rhétorique de l'effet scénique de son approche de la figure d'Alcibiade.

Le jeu rhétorique de Platon, si intelligent et suggestif, désigné tout au long des lignes qui précèdent, se termine en renforçant le soupçon au sujet d'Alcibiade, au moment où ce jeu vise un effet opposé : à savoir, le projet d'une apologie renouvelée de Socrate et son *hetairia*.

Socrate, à la fin du discours d'Alcibiade, montre le « drame satyrique et sylénique » caché derrière le compliment : à savoir que l'intention de l'amant est de séparer son aimé d'Agathon de sorte qu'il puisse être avec lui (222 c). Toute la construction rhétorique du discours d'Alcibiade aurait été ainsi tissée par une histoire érotique. Comme souvent dans l'iconographie ancienne où Eros et Péitho apparaissent côte à côte, la relation des deux divinités « amour » et « persuasion », structure l'ensemble du dialogue qu'est le *Banquet*, du prologue jusqu'au discours d'Alcibiade.

Mais ce complot à cacher n'est pas seulement lié à l'attaque que Socrate lui adresse à la fin, mais l'éloge servait à d'autres buts de persuasion. La thèse ici proposée est celle de l'histoire de Platon cachant son *logos sokratikos* – qui est toujours *erôtikos* par excellence – et celle d'une apologie de Socrate construite avec une grande habileté littéraire, avec de nombreuses références implicites et de ruses lexicales. Une apologie que l'*erômenos* Platon, amoureux de son mentor Socrate, juge comme seulement possible à condition de « séparer » post-mortem, sa mémoire de celle d'Alcibiade dans d'une stratégie précise et articulée de « mémoire politique ». Alcibiade sera ainsi le seul à être blâmé pour ses mauvaises pratiques, incluant peut-être la mort même de Socrate que Platon pouvait vraisemblablement attribuer largement à la relation fatale entre les deux.

La diverse représentation du genre dans le monde grec ancien, distincte de la dichotomie des rôles sexuels du masculin et du féminin à laquelle nous sommes accoutumés par notre modernité, peut révéler plus précisément la stratégie rhétorique de Platon dans son utilisation de la *paranomia* érotique d'Alcibiade comme symptôme d'un personnage politique dangereux à cause de sa séduction excessive exercée sur Socrate et Athènes.

Cette apologie platonicienne qui découle d'un investissement dans une politique de la mémoire, est ultimement fondée sur une intelligente stratégie rhétorique qui insiste sur la présente tradition sexuelle de la *paranomia* d'Alcibiade afin de le rendre coupable d'avoir tenté une excessive et outrageuse séduction non seulement de Socrate mais de la *polis*. Soulevant les motifs/mobiles oratoires/rhétoriques de son temps, Platon approfondit par conséquent le *J'accuse* contre Alcibiade, essayant de le soustraire à l'orbite de Socrate et des socratiques.

Il n'est finalement pas impossible de remarquer qu'en affrontant de cette manière le cas d'Alcibiade, Platon agit lui-même selon le script de son personnage, Alcibiade inspiré par Eros et Péitho ne faisant « rien » pour séparer Socrate de l'autre *erômenos*. « Avec l'intention de t'aimer et personne d'autre » (222 d) – tels sont les mots que Socrate adresse à Alcibiade. Mais une grande partie du travail de Platon, et spécialement dans le *Banquet*, est également une tentative de rallier Socrate, de le garder seulement pour lui-même, de sauver la mémoire

de son mentor aimé, hautement contesté dans la littérature du début du IVe siècle. Ainsi, les dialogues socratiques de Platon se terminent en ressemblant beaucoup au compliment d'un amant – juste comme celui d'Alcibiade – c'est-à-dire avec une séduisante déclaration d'amour.

Fiction et réalité, drame et inventivité coïncident ainsi, aboutissant indubitablement à l'un des plus excitants et audacieux travaux littéraires et philosophiques de tous les temps.

Texte traduit par Michel Fattal

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NOTES

1 Platon, *Banquet* 213 c-d. Les traduction sont de Brisson 1998.
2 Platon, *Banquet* 214 c-d.
3 Brisson 1998, 217, n. 526.
4 Platon, *Banquet* 215 b. Brisson 1998, 217 : « Les 'Hermès', ces piliers quadrangulaires en pierre, ornés d'un *phallos* et surmontés d'une tête barbue, que la piété populaire dressait devant les sanctuaires et devant certaines maisons ; il devait donc y en avoir beaucoup à Athènes, ce qui explique que certains sculpteurs se spécialisaient dans leur fabrication ».
5 Thucydide, *Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponèse*, VI, 27, 3.
6 Thucydide, *Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponèse*, VI, 27, 2-3. Traduction Romilly 1955.
7 Thucydide, *Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponèse*, VI, 61, 1.
8 Plutarque, *Vies parallèles*, Alcibiade, 19, 1-2.
9 Thucydide, *Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponèse*, VI, 60, 1.
10 Centrone 1999, xxxviii.
11 Gribble 1999, loc 39.
12 Gomperz 1905, 394.
13 Xénophon, *Mémorables* I, 2, 9.
14 Robin 1908, 60.
15 Robin 1908, 61.
16 Giorgini 2005, 454.
17 Gribble 1999, loc 61.
18 Gribble 1999, loc 1094.
19 Antisthène, frag. 29 Caizzi.
20 Plutarque, *Vies parallèles*, *Alcibiade*, 2, 2-3.
21 Aristophane, *Les Grenouilles* 1432-3.
22 Chez Homère, Achille est un lion. Homère, *Iliade* 18, 318-322.
23 Hérodote V, 56 ; V, 92 ; Aristophane, *Les Cavaliers* 1037.
24 Platon, *Gorgias*, 438 e.
25 Darbo-Péchanski 2009, 51.
26 Gribble 1999, loc. 1094.
27 Gherchanoc 2003/4, 787.
28 Voir notamment l'exposé en 219 b-d du stratagème d'Alcibiade « se jettant lui-même sous les couvertures » de Socrate en vue de le séduire et de passer la nuit avec lui.
29 Aristophane, *Les Archaniens* 716 ; Eupolis fr. 171 K-A.
30 Davidson 1997, 167-182.
31 Gribble 1999, loc. 1025.
32 Phérécrate, fr. 164 K-A.
33 Thucydide, V, 84 *sq.*
34 Andocide, *In Alcibiadem* 22-23.
35 Plutarque, *Vies Parallèles* 17 ; 39.2 ; 39.7.
36 Thucydide, VI, 15, 3.

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The Secret Doctrine and the *Gigantomachia*: Interpreting Plato's *Theaetetus-Sophist*

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ABSTRACT:

The *Theaetetus*' 'secret doctrine' and the *Sophist's* 'battle between gods and giants' have long fascinated Plato scholars. I show that the passages systematically parallel one another. Each presents two substantive positions that are advanced on behalf of two separate parties, related to one another by their comparative sophistication or refinement. Further, those parties and their respective positions are characterized in substantially similar terms. On the basis of these sustained parallels, I argue that the two passages should be read together, with each informing and constraining an interpretation of the other.

Keywords: Plato; *Theaetetus*; *Sophist*; secret doctrine; battle of gods and giants; *dunamis*; *kinêsis*

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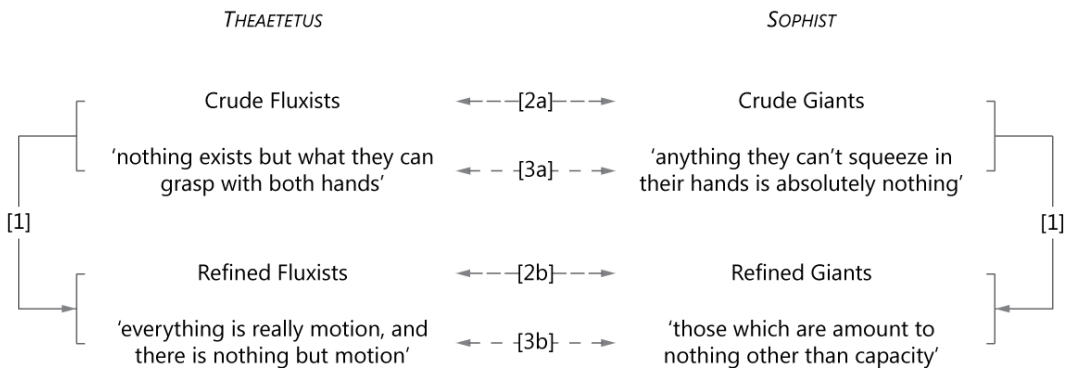
Plato, as is well known, presents the *Sophist* as a literary companion to the *Theaetetus*. Most conspicuously, the *Sophist*'s first line—Theodorus: 'We've come at the proper time by yesterday's agreement, Socrates' (216a1)—directly answers the last lines of the *Theaetetus*—Socrates: 'let us meet here again in the morning, Theodorus' (210d3-4).[1] In this way and others, Plato rhetorically flags the *Sophist* as a continuation of the recorded conversation begun at *Theaetetus* 143d1.

The *Sophist* does not merely pick up where the *Theaetetus* leaves off, however. The two dialogues are more intimately connected. In what is perhaps the most famous example, the *Sophist* fills out the *Theaetetus*' discussion of false judgment. Rather than simply branching out in new directions, the *Sophist*, at least on occasion, is informed by, returns to, and supplements substantive discussions in the *Theaetetus*.

In what follows, I aim to highlight another such point of contact between the two dialogues. Specifically, I will present three comprehensively developed parallels between, on the one hand, the *Theaetetus*' discussion of the flux theorists and their 'secret doctrine' and, on the other hand, the *Sophist*'s discussion of the giants in their fight against the 'friends of forms.' I will show that [1] both passages exhibit the same basic structure, in which two substantive positions are presented on behalf of two separate parties, related to one another by their comparative sophistication or refinement, and that [2] those parties and [3] their respective positions are characterized in remarkably similar terms (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: sustained parallels in the *Theaetetus-Sophist*



Elements of these parallels have been observed previously, but they are almost always mentioned only in passing, typically consigned to footnotes.[2] By focusing on them directly and considering them as a group, I aim to support a pair of related methodological theses. In particular, I submit, Plato's efforts to wed these sections of the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* suggest that an interpretation of the relevant part of either dialogue both can inform and should complement an interpretation of the other. If correct, we will have a trove of fresh resources, from Plato himself no less, to guide our interpretations of two of the most notoriously challenging passages in the corpus.

Let me begin with the relevant section of the *Sophist* (246a-249d). The Eleatic Visitor there presents 'something like a battle between gods and giants […] over being' (246a4-5).[3] The battleground is ontology. Each party aims to advance a 'detailed account […] of that which is' (245e6).

From this introduction, one might expect those on either side of the field to uniformly hold a single view. But this is not the case. At any rate, the giants, on whom I will focus,[4] are hardly a monolithic group. They split into two factions. At the outset of the battle, we meet the first—the 'crude giants,' as I will call them. They 'insist that only what offers tangible contact is, since they define being as the same as body' (246a10-b1). Their initial foray, then, consists in offering a view about both the intension and the extension of being. What it is to be, on the crude giants' account, is to be a body. Accordingly, all and only bodies—those things affording tangible contact—are.[5]

That identification of being and body leaves the crude giants immediately vulnerable to attack and prefigures the introduction of a second faction to take up their standard. The trouble for the crude giants begins with the extensional component of their thesis. Some of the things that respectable Greeks would count among beings do not seem to be bodies.[6] Of special note are souls and the virtues.

Since the crude giants are said to be difficult—'perhaps just about impossible' (246d1)—to talk to, we cannot be certain whether they would [i] admit souls and virtues as genuine exceptions and so challenges to their thesis, [ii] bite the bullet and preclude them from their ontology, or like the Stoics after them,[7] [iii] take both souls and virtues to be bodies and

so unproblematic. The Visitor suggests that the crude giants, hardened in their ways, would deflect the question, stubbornly reasserting their thesis and failing to engage (247c4-5). When challenged, they just 'won't listen […] any more' (246b3).

In the crude giants' stead, the Visitor thus questions some imagined 'better people' (246d7 and e2), whom I will call 'refined giants.' The refined giants are partial to the view of their crude compatriots but ultimately concede defeat on that front. 'The soul seems to them to *have* a kind of body,' making it, if not *a* body, at least bodily and so providing a small measure of solace; 'but as far as [the virtues] are concerned, they're ashamed and don't dare either to agree that they are not beings or to insist that they are all bodies' (247b8-c2). Since the refined giants will neither dismiss souls and the virtues as nonbeings nor accept them as bodies, options [ii] and [iii] are off the table. This leaves only option [i] remaining. With the soul and the virtues in mind, the refined giants retreat from the crude position that everything is a body and, with it, from the position that being and body are the same.

To retrench, the Visitor claims, they have to reflect upon the various kinds of beings that they recognize—namely, bodies and now souls and the virtues as well—and determine what is common among them that might qualify them all as beings (247d2-4).[8] Since the refined giants are not present to speak for themselves, Theaetetus and the Visitor suggest a new, more fortified position on their behalf. The refined giants are thus agreed to advance the view that 'a thing really is if it has any capacity at all, either by nature to do something to something else or to have even the smallest thing done to it by even the most trivial thing;' they 'take it as a definition[9] that *those which are* amount to nothing other than capacity' (247d8-e4; *cf.* 248c4-5).

This new position, as one commentator puts it, 'is not a complete abandonment' of the crude giants but rather 'an attempt to articulate the spirit of their original position, in a way that accommodates the Visitor's counterargument.'[10] Its emphasis on capacity (*dunamis*) is distilled from the introduction of bodies as whatever is causally salient. For the crude giants, the noteworthy mark of a body was that it afforded tangible contact (246a10).[11] Bodies, that is, were first presented as having a particular kind of capacity for action or passion. The refined giants thus home in on the only feature of bodies that the crude giants had singled out for attention and present it in its pure, unadulterated form. That is, the refined giants are not merely possessed of a better, or more refined, character than their crude compatriots; their position refines that of their crude compatriots as well. And that latter refinement is of no small significance. It allows the refined giants to treat souls and the virtues alongside bodies,[12] thus disarming the Visitor's challenge.

With that survey of the giants' tours of duty complete, I turn now to the *Theaetetus*' fluxists and begin to draw parallels between the two. The fluxists make their entrance in connection with Theaetetus' proposal that 'knowledge is simply perception' (151e2-3). Socrates will disabuse him of that view, but the path forward is long and largely indirect. For the most part, Socrates' objections are leveled at one of two theses that Theaetetus' proposed definition of knowledge is purported to imply:[13] the familiar, Protagorean dictum that 'man is the measure of all things' (152a2-3) and a much less familiar, 'secret doctrine' (152c10) held by some 'fluent

fellows' (181a4), who are commonly referred to in the secondary literature as 'flux theorists,' or 'fluxists.'[14]

Initially, it seems as if the fluxists are most concerned to advance a theory of perception and some related theses in the philosophy of language. But as it turns out, these are derivative parts of their doctrine. At its core, Socrates claims, the secret doctrine presents an ontology. As he puts it, their various claims about perception and language 'begin from the principle [*archê*] that everything is really motion and there is nothing besides motion' (156a3-5).

I discuss that principle below. What is important to observe at the outset is that just as the *Sophist* presented two factions of giants, so, too, the *Theaetetus* presents two factions of fluxists. Before introducing the heart of the secret doctrine, Socrates issues a warning. We must take care, he says, that 'none of the uninitiated are listening' (155e3). What can one say about this latter group? To begin, they are obviously not party to the content of the secret doctrine, for otherwise there would be no reason to avoid expressing it in their presence. Nonetheless, they cannot simply be identified with those who have not yet come to know the secret doctrine, for otherwise Theaetetus would count among their ranks, and Socrates would not go on to present it to him.[15] Instead, they are broadly in league with those already initiated, but they stand, as of yet, separated off; much like fraternity pledges, they are candidates for being brought into the fold.

Further, the uninitiated are distinguished from their initiated compatriots by their comparative lack of refinement. They are said to be 'very crude people [*amousoi*]' (*Theait*. 156a2) relative to the 'much more refined [*polu komp-soteroi*]' initiates (156a2).[16] That is, the uninitiated are the crude counterparts to a faction of more refined fluxists, standing to them just as the crude giants stood in relation to their more civilized and sophisticated compatriots (*Soph*. 246c9, d7, and e2).[17]

The crude giants are further characterized in two ways that even more powerfully liken them to the *Sophist*'s crude giants. First, Plato describes them in corporeal terms, associating them with the earth especially. They are 'hard to the touch [*sklêros*]' and 'resistant [*antitupous*]' (*Theait*. 155e7-156a1),[18] making them firm examples of bodies, as the crude giants describe them, which 'offer tangible contact' (*Soph*. 246a10).[19] The nature of their development is even more telling. We learn that 'There are no pupils and teachers among these people. They just spring up on their own [*automatoi anaphusontai*]' (*Theait*. 180b9-c1). That final expression models their genesis on that of plants, growing of themselves from the earth. This finds an analogue in the Visitor's description of the crude giants as 'earth people [*gêgeneis*]' (*Soph*. 248c1), 'grown from seed [*spartoi*]' and 'sprung from the land itself [*autochthones*]' (247c5).[20]

And second, much as the crude giants are 'just about impossible' to converse with (*Soph*. 246d1), one cannot have a philosophical discussion with a crude fluxist 'any more than [one] could with a maniac' (*Theait*. 179e5-6). The trouble, as in the case of the crude giants, who could not be compelled to 'answer less wildly' (*Soph*. 246d6), is that the crude fluxists are restless. As Theodorus' puts it: 'As for abiding by what is said, or sticking to a question, or quietly answering and asking questions in turn, there is less than nothing[21] of that in their capacity' (*Theait*. 179e7-180a2).[22]

The crude fluxists resemble the crude giants not only in description but also in doctrine. Their insistence that 'nothing exists but what they can grasp with both hands' (*Theait.* 155e4-5) very nicely tracks the crude giants' insistence 'that only what offers tangible contact is' (*Soph.* 246a10-b1).[23] Indeed, their view is even more forcefully recalled by a later summation of the crude giants' position: namely, that 'anything they can't squeeze in their hands is absolutely nothing' (*Soph.* 247c5-7).[24] These giants thus approach the battlefield 'clutching rocks and trees with their hands' (246a8-9)—that is, clinging to the tangible bodies on the ground, in contrast to the invisible beings that the friends of forms, their foes, champion from more ethereal climes.

These parallels cannot but be deliberate on Plato's part. The crude fluxists and the crude giants are presented as being one and the same, as are their positions. Since we have seen that each of these crude factions is compared to a more refined one, we should expect to find further parallels in Plato's presentations of their more refined compatriots and their more refined positions. The texts push, albeit less forcefully, precisely in that direction.

Apart from their relative refinement, which should be regarded as an initial parallel, neither the nobler fluxists nor giants are particularly well described. There is accordingly little to compare across Plato's characterizations of each. That absence of characterization, however, should itself be regarded as a further parallel in Plato's presentation, for its explanation is in each case the same: namely, both camps are ultimately presented as being fictional.[25] Because the *Theaetetus*' crude fluxists are not capable of conversation, Socrates, Theaetetus, and Theodorus agree to 'come to the rescue' (164e6) and 'take their doctrine out of their hands and consider it for ourselves' (180c5-6). Whether someone actually holds the doctrine in question is incidental to the discussion. As a result, the refined fluxists are not so much advocates of a position as they are placeholders for anyone who might (be tempted to) advance it.[26] Similarly, in the *Sophist*, Theaetetus and the Visitor agree to deal with the crude giants' intransigency 'by making them actually better than they are […] *in words*' (246d4-5). As a consequence, the focus must again be more on the position than on those who hold it. As the Visitor says, 'we're not concerned with the people; we're looking for what's true' (246d8-9).

What, then, can we say about the ways in which their respective *doctrines* are presented? At first glance, frankly, they would appear to be at odds. That of the refined giants is framed in terms of capacity (*dunamis*). Their central tenet, to recall, is that 'those which are amount to nothing other than capacity' (*Soph.* 247e3-4). That of the refined fluxists, by contrast, is framed in terms of motion (*kinêsis*). Their central tenet is that 'everything is really motion and there is nothing besides motion' (*Theait.* 156a3-5).

There are, nevertheless, two principle classes of parallels that serve to largely bridge that difference in framing and more broadly align the two doctrines.[27] The first class bears directly on their central claims. To begin, we may note, both are ontological. Both, further, appeal to a single criterion (capacity; motion).[28] And in each case, that criterion is similarly dichotomous. For the refined giants, there are two basic kinds of capacities, those for action and those for passion (*Soph.* 247e1, 248c5 and 7). Likewise, for the refined fluxists, 'there are two kinds of motion, […] the one

having the capacity to act and the other the capacity to be acted upon' (*Theait.* 156a5-7, trans. after McDowell).

Their central claims are thus related not only in structure but also in content, as both use capacities for action and passion to ground their respective doctrines.[29] This parallel is strengthened by a common conception of actions and passions and, thus, of the capacities for them. First, both assume that actions and passions just are motions. In light of their treatment of the two kinds of motion, I take it that this is obvious for the refined fluxists.[30] But one also finds the assumption operative in the *Sophist*, where those in the grips of the refined giants' doctrine find it inevitable that, for example, if being known is a passion, 'then insofar as [a thing] is known, it's moved [*kineisthai*]' (248e3-4).[31] Accordingly, both parties assume that capacities, generally, are capacities *for motion*.[32] Second, both assume that actions and passions are systematically interrelated. In particular, for every action there is a distinct, complementary and reciprocal passion, and *vice versa*. The refined fluxists thus speak of their 'twin births' (*Theait.* 156b1), and the refined giants assume, for example, that 'if knowing is doing something, then *necessarily* [*anagkaion*] what is known has something done to it' (*Soph.* 248d10-e1). Accordingly, both assume that the capacities for those actions and passions are analogously paired.[33]

A second, indirect class of parallels obtains between the corollaries drawn, in each dialogue, from those central ontological claims. Before addressing them, however, a preliminary point is in order. In the *Sophist*, those corollaries are revealed in the Visitor's treatment of the giants' opponents, the friends of forms, who initially accept a qualified version of the refined giants' capacity doctrine. At this point in the exchange, the friends of forms alter the capacity doctrine *only* by qualifying its scope. The doctrine applies in full, they allege, to everything that the refined giants recognize in the ontology (that is, as the friends of forms would put it, to the entire domain of coming-to-be); yet there is also, on their view, a more exalted domain of imperceptible, non-bodily forms to which the capacity doctrine does not apply (248c1-9). The friends of forms are thus a valuable source for the refined giants' capacity doctrine.

Two points in that discussion are especially striking. First, insofar as they hold the capacity doctrine, the friends of forms are said to 'break [bodies] up into little bits and call each a process of coming-to-be instead of being' (*Soph.* 246b9-c2). This cannot but recall the refined fluxists' claim that each body is an 'aggregate [*hathroismati*]' of 'becomings' that resist description in terms of 'the verb "to be"' (*Theait.* 157b1-c3; *cf.* 152d7-e1). Second, and even more notably, the friends of forms take perception to be the analogue of knowledge in the domain of coming-to-be (*Soph.* 248a10-11). Since, again, this is only domain that the refined giants admit, the implication is that knowledge is no mere analogue of perception for the refined giants; it just is perception. That is to say, the refined giants are presented as being committed to the single most dialectically significant corollary of the refined fluxists' position—namely, the claim that 'knowledge is simply perception' (*Theait.* 151e2-3).[34] All told, I submit, we thus have considerable evidence for strongly associating the refined fluxists with the refined giants and for strongly associating their respective positions.

If, as these parallels suggest, the *Theaetetus*' fluxists and the *Sophist*'s giants are, at the very

least, philosophical kin, then our interpretative approach to these dialogues should be dramatically altered. On the one hand, we are licensed to draw upon, and would do well consult, the relevant section of one dialogue to inform and advance an interpretation of that of the other. On the other hand, we are at the same time constrained, in that an interpretation of the one should not, on the whole, fail to broadly compliment an interpretation of the other. In each respect, standard interpretations of the *Theaetetus-Sophist* will require revision and supplementation. My hope is that we are now better poised to determine the form that those emendations should take.[35]

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NOTES

1 Unless otherwise noted, translations of Plato's works follow those in Cooper 1997.

2 Sedley 2004, 46 n. 9 notes parallel [1]. McDowell 1973, 137 hints at something along the lines of [2] or [3], components of which are registered more explicitly if briefly by Benardete 1984, I.108 n. 10; II.41 n. 65 and 130 n. 73, Centrone 2008, n. 106 and 107, Cornford 1935, 48 n. 2, Karfík 2011, 124 and 131, Klein 1977, 89, Notomi 1999, 217 n. 21, Polansky 1992, 96, Ross 1953, 102–103, Sedley 2004, 46 n. 9, Seeck 2011, 74 n. 62, Špinka 2011, 232, Teisserenc 2012, 74, 76, and 78, Waterfield 1987, 38 n. 2, and Wiehl 1967, n. 74 and n. 78. Many prominent commentaries—e.g., Bluck 1975, Bostock 1988, Burnyeat 1990, Chappell 2005, Cooper 1990, Duerlinger 2005, Heidegger 1997, Migliori 2007, Rosen 1983, Rijk 1986, and Seligman 1974—neglect to in any way address these parallels. Campbell 1861 and 1867 and Gonzalez 2011 are exceptions to prove the rule both in consistently comparing the two passages and in doing so more than merely in passing.

3 Combat metaphors run throughout and frame this section of the *Sophist*. Notomi 1999, 217 n. 22 presents an extensive catalogue.

The *Theaetetus*' fluxists are similarly engaged in battle: 'There is no small fight going on about [their conception of being], anyway—and no shortage of fighting men' (179d4-5). Indeed, as a group, they form 'an army led by Homer' (153a1-2) and wage a 'most vigorous campaign' to advance their theory (179d8). For extended discussion, see Nercam 2013.

4 The giants' side of the fight grounds most of the parallels that I will draw, below, to the *Theaetetus*

5 On the connection between body and tangible contact, see note 11 below.

6 Note, for example, Theaetetus' emphatic responses at *Soph*. 246e6-247a4.

7 On the Stoics' engagement with this passage in the *Sophist*, see the excellent study by Brunschwig 1994. Sellars 2010, for a different assessment, is suspicious of a connection.

8 The assumption that all beings will have some one thing in common in virtue of which they are beings is accepted by all parties. It is hardly innocent, however. Aristotle's focal analysis of being is a clear, ancient alternative. Wittgensteinean family resemblance is a modern one.

9 There is a large body of literature on whether '*horos*' should be translated as 'definition' or, less strongly, 'mark.' For a recent overview of and engaging contribution to the debate, see Leigh 2010. While I am inclined to think 'definition' the better option, nothing below will depend on how one decides the question. Since I am arguing for a pair of methodological claims about how one should approach interpreting the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, I aim to keep substantive interpretive claims to a minimum.

10 Beere 2009, 7. His development of the point comes in three stages. Mine, in the remainder of the paragraph, overlaps with the first of them.

11 The refined giants will later associate body with visibility as well (247b3-5). Body is similarly marked by tangibility and visibility in the *Timaeus* (31b4 especially). Contrast both Platonic passages with Aristotle's view, on which the primary mark of a body is instead to be extended in all three dimensions (e.g., *DC* I.1, 268^{a}6-8). For Aristotle, tangibility is a mark of bodies not as such but only insofar as they are perceptible (*GC* II.2, 329^{b}6-7).

12 How, precisely, the refined giants' position accommodates the earlier problem cases is not specified in the text. Crivelli suggests, plausibly to my mind, that a soul or a virtue might count as a being for the refined giants since each 'causes people to act in ways in which they would not in its absence' and thus 'may be described as having the power of affecting things in [… having] the quasi-causal power of making them be in certain ways' (2012, 87). But what matters is simply that the refined giants' position does, *somehow or other*, allow them to admit souls and the virtues as beings.

13 While my argument will not depend upon the point, I agree with Burnyeat 1982, esp. pp. 5–6, with n. 2 that the basic argumentative structure of this section of the *Theaetetus* is a *reductio*: knowledge is not perception since various implications of that view are absurd. Chappell 2005, 51 shows that this conception of the argument's structure is compatible with both unitarian and revisionist readings of the text (i.e., with both the A reading and the B reading [on which, see Burnyeat 1990, 7–10]), and I intend to remain neutral with respect to those options here.

14 Socrates attributes the 'secret doctrine' to Protagoras, but the very fact that it is presented as a 'secret' raises a question about the grounds for pinning it to his historical namesake (on which, see Brancacci 2011). And indeed, as soon as Socrates raises the doctrine, he rebrands it as a kind of ancient wisdom, something with respect to which 'all the wise men of the past […] stand together' (152e2-3). In the lines that follow, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Epicharmus, and Homer are all placed in Protagoras' company. Parmenides is notable for being explicitly excepted. Melissus is later said to be in league with him (180e2 and 183e3).

15 Nor, conversely, does someone count among the initiates simply for being familiar with the theory. Socrates presents neither himself nor the fluxists' primary opponents as having been initiated.

16 I have substituted Levett and Burnyeat's translation (in Cooper 1997) of '*kompsoteroi*' with an alternative from LSJ.

17 There are at least two senses of 'refined' operative in each passage. First, the refined fluxists and the refined giants are both comparatively 'gentle' in character. This sense of 'refinement' is particularly evident, I submit, in their relative willingness to engage in discussion (I comment further on this feature of Plato's presentation below). Second, the refined fluxists and the refined giants are both comparatively 'clever.' The crude fluxists are uneducated, as '*amousos*' implies, as are, by their own admission, the crude giants since education, culture, intelligence, and the like are neither tangible nor visible.

In both passages, assessments of comparative refinement can be made not only synchronically (e.g., *Theait*. 156a2 and *Soph*. 246d7-8) but also diachronically. This is because the interlocutors recognize a process of refinement in each passage—namely, initiation in the *Theaetetus* and betterment in the *Sophist* (246d4-5).

The treatment of that process is perhaps significant. In the *Theaetetus*, nothing explicit is said about the way in which the crude and refined fluxists' respective *positions* are related. Yet, the initiation metaphor is suggestive. As Plato presents it elsewhere, an initiation culminates in the initiate changing her mind (*Meno* 76e6-9), in the face of dialectical puzzles (*Euthydemus* 277d-e), but by refining her positions rather than simply jettisoning them (*Phaedo* 69b-c). Notably, in Socrates' own initiation, that movement leads away from the particular bodies, and even body generally, that the uninitiated are presented as focusing upon (*Symposium* 210a-b). Admittedly, though, this reconstruction is too speculative to count as compelling, let alone decisive, evidence of a parallel.

18 I have substituted Levett and Burnyeat's translation (in Cooper 1997) of '*sklêros*' and '*antitupous*' with alternatives from LSJ.

19 Compare *Timaeus* 31b5-6: 'nothing could ever become […] tangible without something solid, nor solid without earth.'

Campbell 1861, 50 n. 9 ties '*sklêros*' and '*antitupous*' to Plato's description of the crude giants along a different line. The 'hard and repellent' crude fluxists, he submits, recall the *Sophist*'s terrible or fearsome giants (246b4: *deinous*).

20 I have substituted White's translation (in Cooper 1997) of '*spartoi*' and '*autochtones*' with alternatives from LSJ.

21 Campbell 1861, 124 finds an echo of this phrase, 'less than nothing [*pros to mêde smikron*],' in *Soph*. 248c5's 'by even the smallest thing [*pros to smikrotaton*].' On the other hand, he denies that the difficulty in talking with the crude fluxists is the same as that in talking with the crude giants (1867, 120); I take *Soph*. 246d6, quoted above, to meet the worry he raises.

22 An anonymous referee rightly notes that *Theaetetus* 179e-180c, on which I have drawn both in this paragraph and the one prior, does not unambiguously refer to the crude fluxists. An important indicator that this is, indeed, the way to take the reference comes in Theodorus' description of those in question as those 'who profess to be adepts [*prospoiountai empeiroi*]' (179e4-5). Since '*prospoieô*' connotes pretending (LSJ points to *Gorgias* 519c3 for this coloring of the verb), the description can be paraphrased as 'those who profess to be *but are not in fact* initiates.'

23 The crude fluxists go on to deny 'that actions and processes and the invisible world in general have any place in reality' (155e5-6). The last component of that de-

nial reveals a conception of body as tangible and visible, in that order. See note 11, above. The first two components further liken them to the crude giants, who also do not admit capacities, unlike their refined compatriots. On this point, I disagree with Benardete, who takes the crude giants to 'deny […] the changeable' (1984, I.108). They deny changes (or, at least, deny that changes are fundamental), not the bodies capable of change.

24 Campbell 1861, 50 n. 6; 1867, 123 n. 1 is particularly sensitive to resemblances among Plato's formulations of the crude fluxists' and giant's positions.

25 Sedley 2004, 46 n. 9 notes the parallel; Diès 1992, 109 n. 3 links the passages I use to support it. Whether this is *merely* a matter of presentation is a separate question that I will not here address.

It is notable for Plato to develop a position on behalf of no one in particular. Indeed, Brown 1998, 182 observes that, in the early and middle dialogues, Plato is unlikely to develop a position even on behalf of a determinate proponent who is neither participating in the conversation nor present for it.

26 Protagoras and others are no doubt regularly associated with the doctrine, but at critical junctures it is explicitly wrested from them and developed independently. Presumably in relation, the refined fluxists' central tenet is called a 'veiled truth' (155d10) hidden within what was already said to be a 'secret doctrine' (152c10).

27 Ross 1953, 102–103, Benardete 1984, II.41 n. 65, Sedley 2004, 46 n. 9, Centrone 2008, n. 107, and Karfík 2011, 124 are among those who liken the refined fluxists' and refined giants' respective doctrines. While the parallels that I will present are perhaps insufficient to completely bridge the gap between capacity and motion, and so to simply identify the two doctrines (on this point, see Gonzalez 2011, 69–70), they reveal deep and pervasive agreements between those doctrines that are, I submit, sufficient to motivate the pair of methodological theses that I ultimately have in view.

28 On the significance of a commitment to a single criterion, see note 8, above.

29 Gonzalez notes the parallel, observing that, in both passages, 'all things are identified with a *dunamis* of either ποιεῖν or παθεῖν' (2011, 70).

30 While, so far as I can see, there is no cause to doubt that, for the refined fluxists, all actions and passions are motions, the status of the converse claim—that all motions are actions and passions—is less certain. Though I suspect the refined fluxists would accept it as well, I am not relying on the latter claim for the parallel in the body of the paper.

31 Similarly, in a related context, the Visitor glosses 'action and passion' as 'motion' and 'that which acts or is acted upon' as 'that which moves' (*Soph*. 249b2). The inference in the body of the paper, it bears noting, is not presented directly on behalf of the refined giants. Rather, Theaetetus and the Visitor treat it as an implication of their doctrine when demarcating them from the friends of forms, who accept a qualified form of the doctrine. I discuss the evidential import of the passage below.

32 Leigh 2010, 76 emphasizes this point in her discussion of the *Sophist*. It is not trivial that capacities should be conceived of exclusively as capacities for motion. Focusing on the *Sophist* as well, Beere 2009, 12–13 proposes that the difficulties arising in relation to this position prompt Aristotle to introduce both activities that are not also motions and, with them, capacities that are not also capacities for motion.

This link between capacity and motion may also help to explain why, in the *Sophist*, the giants' opponents, the friends of forms, might present their own position as denying that being has any share of motion, rather than as denying a claim about capacities directly. Just as the fluxists' opponents proclaim that being is 'unmoving' and 'stands still' (*Theait*. 180b2, 180e1-3, and 183d1), the friends of forms maintain that 'being always stays the same and in the same state' (*Soph*. 248a12).

33 The systematic coupling of capacities for action and passion, though not uncommon in the corpus (see, e.g., *Rep*. VI, 507e6 *ff*. and *Leg*. X, 903b4-9), is similarly nontrivial. To draw a comparison with the *Charmides*, it would preclude a capacity, like knowledge, from acting upon itself (*cf*. Barnes 2001, 79).

34 Seeck 2011, 78 n. 70 draws a related parallel to *Theait*. 184b7-185a7.

35 I owe the impetus for this paper to Charles Kahn and Susan Meyer, who encouraged me to develop and support its central thesis, a version of which I had rather flatly asserted in a footnote to my doctoral dissertation. I am also grateful to Francisco Gonzalez, two anonymous referees, and audiences at Portland State University and an SAGP meeting at Fordham University for comments on drafts.

Cephalus, the Myth of Er, and Remaining Virtuous in Unvirtuous Times

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ABSTRACT

Through a reading of the Myth of Er and Socrates' conversation with Cephalus, I will argue that merely conventional virtue is highly unstable and unreliable. Virtue acquired by convention proves foundationless outside the confines of the political regime that establishes those conventions, and a tendency toward an unreflective moral complacency on the part of the conventionally virtuous leaves them in particular danger of committing unjust actions. Socrates recommends the study of philosophy because it can ground conventionally acquired virtue and, even more importantly, because it is capable of shaking the moral complacency that afflicts the conventionally virtuous.

Keywords: *Republic*, conventional virtue, Cephalus, Myth of Er, ancient political philosophy, relation between convention and philosophy

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Though Cephalus first introduces the topic of justice in the *Republic*, he departs from the conversation before he can hear the fruits of his initial conversation with Socrates.[1] His absence raises the question of the value of philosophical study for those who are virtuous by convention without philosophy. Let us assume that Plato holds that Cephalus' departure from the conversation is an error, and that he would have benefited from taking part in a philosophical analysis of justice. Depending on how the reader interprets Plato's presentation of Cephalus, he is either a habitually just person who has a good character or a civically just person who at least acts externally in accordance with conventional standards. It is not immediately obvious how a philosophical consideration of the nature of justice would benefit a person virtuous in either of these two ways. The difficulty reemerges in the context of the Myth of Er. In that mythic context, Socrates argues that those who live in accordance with virtue unsupported by philosophy are in the greatest danger with respect to choosing their next life, and that careful attention to philosophical study is a helpful way of avoiding the dark fate of choosing an unjust future life. In this context, it again fails to become immediately obvious why a soul will be benefited from the study of philosophy, particularly outside of the immediate mythic context of the story. The puzzle becomes even more perplexing in reference to other comments that Socrates makes throughout the dialogue about the difficulty and danger of philosophical study outside of the *kallipolis*.

In this paper, I will argue that Plato proposes that undergoing the Socratic elenchus is beneficial for all citizens, even for those who are already conventionally virtuous and despite its many dangers. After a careful study of Socrates' conversation with Cephalus and his

presentation of the Myth of Er, it will become clear that Plato holds that virtue acquired without the practice of philosophy is highly unstable and unreliable. Rooted fundamentally in *nomos* (custom or law), both habitual and civic virtue remain at the mercy of the regime in which individuals find themselves. Outside the confines of that regime and the *nomos* that governs it, such as in the afterlife in the Myth of Er or in the very concrete circumstance of political upheaval and tyranny like the reign of the Thirty, conventional virtue will prove foundationless, and the individual will have no framework to orient decision making. Even worse, a tendency toward a certain sort of moral complacency or laziness on the part of the conventionally virtuous actually leave them worse off with respect to these extra-conventional situations than others within the regime. In the myth, Plato ultimately advocates the study of philosophy because it can ground conventionally rooted virtue in something more secure than convention and, even more importantly, because it is capable of shaking the moral complacency that afflicts the merely conventionally virtuous.

1: CEPHALUS' RELATIONSHIP TO PHILOSOPHY AND TO CONVENTION

I will begin by considering the conversation between Socrates and Cephalus concerning the nature of old age and the importance of virtue—particularly justice—for withstanding old age well. In this conversation, Cephalus shows himself to possess a kind of conventional virtue that is rooted in obeying various sorts of conventional norms. However this virtue should be understood—and as I will argue below, the text admits of at least two plausible interpretations of Cephalus' virtuousness—it is apparent that philosophy plays little to no role in the acquisition of virtue for Cephalus. Convention—including both the laws of the city and religious authority—tells human beings which actions are virtuous, and which actions are not. Insofar as Cephalus' primary concern is to act justly, he seems to see effectively no use for a philosophical discussion of what the virtues themselves are, or of what the justice is. Nowhere is this orientation more evident than at the end of his appearance in *Republic*, where Cephalus returns to his conventionally mandated sacrifices to the gods rather than stay to hear an extended discussion of what justice is. In this section, I will discuss two ways of interpreting Cephalus' character on the basis of his speech, and show how on either interpretation Cephalus fundamentally relies upon a conventional understanding of the virtues that is resistant to elenchic questioning. In the next section, I will then discuss the specifics of Cephalus' speech in greater detail.

Cephalus' speech has three main stages. First, he argues that old age is, in itself, a blessing insofar as it lessens the tyrannical desires of youth. Those who find it odious, he contends, do so because they possess poorly formed and disorderly characters and so are unwilling to let go of desires that a virtuous person would be happy to be abandon. Second, Cephalus argues against the thesis that it is his wealth, and not his virtuous character, that allows him to withstand the loss of his youthful desires as well as he has. Finally, Cephalus argues that wealth is still valuable to the virtuous person insofar as it promotes justice by allowing the virtuous to pay off old debts and to avoid unintentionally lying or cheating anyone on account of poverty. In this way, he argues, the virtuous person who possesses some means can avoid going to the afterlife in fear. Socrates then attempts to con-

sider the nature of justice with Cephalus—in particular, he wants to know whether or not justice fundamentally consists in paying off debts—at which point Cephalus departs from the conversation.

Though there are a number of different ways Cephalus' speech gets interpreted by commentators, most take one of two general approaches. Some hold that Cephalus is what I will call habitually virtuous—that he is a person who has habitually internalized the norms of his society concerning what is just and unjust and so generally behaves in accordance with those norms because of the way this internalization of the norms has shaped his desires. On this interpretation, Cephalus' self-presentation is basically correct: he is a man of good character who withstands his old age relatively easily on account of his virtue. Examples of this reading are found, for instance, in Beversluis and McKee, who both argue that Cephalus is unfairly treated by the roughness of Socrates' questioning.[2] Though neither read Cephalus as positively as McKee, weaker versions of this general approach are also found in Taylor and Reeve.[3]

Others hold that Cephalus is a person who is at best a latecomer to virtuous behavior. Cephalus is newly attempting to reform his life on account of newfound fears about what awaits him in the afterlife as a result of a lifetime of wrongdoing.[4] On this interpretation, Cephalus would only display what I will call civic or external virtue—he acts justly not by desire but on the basis of external compulsion, and his publically virtuous deeds and speeches are only an appearance that hides a corrupt character that really desires to do unjust things. He would therefore be a person of the sort described by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2, who only acts virtuously on account of external compulsion—in Cephalus' case, fear of the afterlife—and who is only concerned with the appearance of justice. Many—perhaps even most—commentators read Cephalus in this more dismissive light. Such commentators tend to read Plato's portrayal of Cephalus as indicating someone who is generally shallow and someone who is far less concerned with virtue than he presents himself as being to Socrates. Variations of this sort of interpretation are found, for example, in Schleiermacher, White, and Annas.[5]

I will not here attempt to decide between these two interpretation of Cephalus. Both readings can appeal to textual support, as I will discuss in the following, and Socrates himself raises and leaves open the question of whether or not Cephalus' self-assessment is accurate. Indeed, it is possible that Plato intended whether Cephalus is describing his own character honestly to be ambiguous so that he could introduce both habitual and civic virtue into the dialogue with one character. My focus will be on how either interpretation of Cephalus' speech and character reveals a tension between conventionally acquired virtue and philosophical virtue. Both habitual and civic virtue remain unphilosophical and are instances of what I will call conventional virtue. In either case, what is responsible for the virtuous behaviors demonstrated by the individual is the *nomos* of the regime and society in which the individual finds him or herself. The habitually virtuous person internalizes this *nomos*, and does not want to violate it, whereas the civically virtuous person only outwardly manifests virtuous behavior as established by *nomos* while secretly desiring to be unjust. In both cases, however, *nomos* determines what seems just to the individual, and not philosophy or ethical knowledge. What benefit a philosophical analysis of virtue has to offer to both the habitually and the civically virtuous person, whichever Cephalus himself

is taken to represent, is made problematic by his departure from the conversation. How does the philosophical analysis of virtue benefit the individual who does in fact behave virtuously conventionally?[6]

2: CEPHALUS' SPEECH: ON WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE JUSTICE

In his speech, Cephalus both introduces the idea of justice and, implicitly, argues that one of the most important skills a human being can possess is the ability to recognize just and unjust actions. As a result, his utter disinterest in the Socratic project of interrogating the nature of justice itself becomes all the more urgent and problematic. Three basic issues lead Cephalus to argue for the importance of justice in his speech: (1) the way in which old age modifies the desires of the elderly, (2) the role of money in a virtuous life, and (3) a consideration of what a person should anticipate following his or her own death. Cephalus argues that old age has brought him a sort of peace that he was incapable of finding while under tyrannical rule of certain violent passions, but it has also brought profound fears about what awaits him in death. To mitigate these fears, Cephalus finds the just use of money invaluable—by paying off any preexisting debts to men or gods, Cephalus can assure himself of tranquility in any afterlife and so enjoy his remaining years in peace. Justice is therefore invaluable for a happy life: the just person will be able to calculate how to avoid actions that will lead to punishment and how to make restitution for any injustices that are committed. Cephalus' basic intuitions about justice come from conventions pertaining to economics and business. Cephalus' model of a just person is a businessperson, someone well-respected in the community for not cheating, lying, or failing to pay off debts. Even if he is merely acting just to avoid future punishment, Cephalus nevertheless acts justly by imitating the conventionally regulated standards governing what a good businessperson should do. His disinterest in philosophy stems from a confidence that these conventional standards of justice have taught him all he needs to know concerning the just and the unjust.

Cephalus' financial orientation shows itself in the way that Cephalus thinks of old age as supplying him with a net profit: the cost of old age—the diminishment of certain pleasures—does not offset the benefits of old age—freedom from certain desires and freedom for cultivating new kinds of pleasure. He begins his speech by volunteering that "I want you to know that as the other pleasures, those connected with the body, wither away in me, the desires and pleasures that have to do with *logos* grow the more" (*Rep*. I 328 d 2-4).[7] While old age is responsible for the loss of certain pleasures, it also brings about the gain of new ones, such as the pleasures of *logos*. Conversely, it also frees the old person from the desire for those bodily pleasures that are so compulsive in youth. Cephalus' describes his friends as finding the waning of bodily pleasures a great hardship and something that makes old age practically inhuman, a living death. In contrast, Cephalus finds himself agreeing with Sophocles, who once was asked:

> "Sophocles, how are you in sex? Can you still have intercourse with a woman?" "Silence man," he said. "Most joyfully did I escape it, as though I had run away from a sort of frenzied and savage master." I thought at the time that he had spoken well and I still do. For, in every way old

> age brings great peace and freedom from such things (*Rep*. I 329 b 10-c 7).

Sophocles characterizes the bodily desire as fundamentally painful, and thus as something blissful to escape, and Cephalus agrees. These sorts of desire are bad in themselves, and a blessing in disguise of old age is that these passions no longer make a claim to rule. Thus, old age brings freedom *from* the slavery of this despotic ruler's demands. It is, as he first presents it, net profitable.

Old age is only profitable in this way, however, if one possesses a good character. Cephalus' friends do not experience old age as profitable on account of their poor character.

> But of these things [the sufferings of old age] […] there is just one cause: not old age, Socrates, but the character of the human beings. If they are orderly and content with themselves, even old age is only moderately troublesome; if they are not, then both age […] and youth alike turn out to be hard for that sort (*Rep*. I 329 d 2-6).

In contrast with his friends, Cephalus presents himself as someone with a good character. Unlike them, he is not so immoderate as to think being deprived of certain bodily pleasures is a great loss. He recognizes the tyrannical nature of the desire for such pleasures and is capable of enjoying other pleasures, like those of *logos*. At this point, the reader might wonder whether Cephalus' self-assessment concerning this matter can be trusted—indeed, Socrates' response to this speech is to wonder whether Cephalus is being disingenuous. Someone who thinks Cephalus is only civically virtuous could argue that a truly moderate person wouldn't have such overwhelming and tyrannical bodily desires in the first place, and would not require old age as a curative. Conversely, someone who thinks Cephalus is habitually virtuous could argue that he at least seems to have some longstanding sense that despotic bodily desires are intrinsically unprofitable, and that he presently seems to want to be free from them, unlike his cohorts for whom the diminution of these pleasures makes old age painful. On either reading, however, Cephalus' goal remains the same. He wants his old age to be profitable in the way that he describes.

Old age, however, has another hidden cost that complicates the effort to make it profitable for a person. Cephalus indicates that a new fear emerges for the old and threatens the peaceful serenity that old age could otherwise bring.

> When a man comes near to the realization that he will be making an end, fear and care enter him for things to which he gave no thought before. The tales told about what is in Hades—that one who has done unjust deeds here must pay the penalty there—at which he laughed up to then, now make his soul twist and turn because he fears that they might be true (*Rep*. I 330 d 5-e 2).

This passage marks the first instances of both justice, *dikaiosynē*, and of an afterlife myth in the *Republic*. The particular myths to which Cephalus refers all say that the unjust in life are punished in death. Cephalus says that the old turn back to such stories, and fears about injustice threaten to make old age unbearable.

> Now, the man who finds unjust deeds in his life often even wakes from his sleep in a fright as children do, and lives in anticipation of evil. To the man who is

> conscious in himself of no unjust deed, sweet and good hope is ever beside him (*Rep*. I 330 e 6-331 a 2).

Precisely which of these two figures Cephalus himself is supposed to represent once again hinges upon the overall interpretive strategy the reader adopts. Cephalus presents himself as the second sort, a person who is conscious of no (or at least few) unjust deeds. A more cynical reader, however, could interpret him as the first sort, someone living in constant fear of what awaits him in the afterlife and who in his last few years remaining is desperately trying to make up for past injustices. Cephalus certainly acts as if he were at peace with himself and his old age during his appearance within the dialogue, but there is no definitive way for the reader to know for sure that this appearance is not either deliberately or unconsciously deceptive. On both interpretations, however, acting justly is revealed to be of crucial importance to Cephalus. Either Cephalus must continue to act justly in order to preserve his clean conscience, or he must begin to act justly in order to make up for a lifetime of wrongdoing. Only then will his old age—and indeed his death—be truly profitable.

According to Cephalus, acting justly requires some measure of wealth. Despite the fact that Cephalus is fairly wealthy, however, he is not presented by Plato as possessing a particularly oligarchic soul.[8] He is not presented as someone who is fanatical about hording money or excessively resistant to spending his wealth, though he also does not spend frivolously (*Rep*. I 330 b1-10). As a result, Cephalus' orientation toward his wealth is quite properly instrumental. Wealth is valuable, according to Cephalus, insofar as it ensures that a person is able to both avoid injustices—for instance, to always be capable of paying off the debts one has accumulated—and to make amends for any injustice that a person discovers has been committed. Money, he says, is therefore of some value to the just person who seeks to be free of fears concerning injustice, but is of no use at all to unjust people, who will most likely use their wealth to commit further injustices: "the decent man would not bear old age with poverty very easily, nor would the one who is not a decent sort ever be content with himself even if he were wealthy" (*Rep*. I 330 a 3-6).

Thus, according to Cephalus' speech one of the central requirements of the just elderly person is the ability to distinguish between those actions which are just, and those which are unjust. To discover whether or not he has committed any unjust deeds, the virtuous person "reckons up [*analogizetai*] his accounts and considers whether he has done anything unjust to anyone" (*Rep*. I 330 e 5). *Analogizesthai* appears very rarely in the *Republic*. One such usage, as we shall see, is in a crucial juncture in the Myth of Er.[9] Cephalus claims that, because of this newfound importance of afterlife myths, an old man must look back through his life for injustices. The model here is plainly the conventionally well-respected businessperson. Such people are well-respected precisely because they successfully keep tabs on their wealth—and so avoid promising money they do not possess—and because they are adept at accurately gauging their debts and paying them off in a timely manner. Money is valuable, Cephalus holds, precisely because it aids the just man in coming out ahead in his balance sheet.

> For this I count the possession of money most worth-while, not for any man, but for the decent and orderly one. The possession of money contributes a great deal to not cheating or lying to any man against one's will, and, moreover, to not

> departing for that other place frightened because one owes some sacrifices to a god or money to a human being (*Rep*. I 331 a 10-b 4).

If the well-ordered man has money, he will be able to avoid being forced into situations that would require cheating or lying.[10] Moreover, decent people with money use their wealth to pay off their debts, both to the gods through sacrifices, and to men through more mundane means. The ability to reckon up one's accounts is thus revealed to be of central importance to Cephalus. Whether he has lived a moral life in the past or not, his task now is to evaluate his past and present actions with respect to their justice or injustice—to continue to act justly (if he has in the past), and to make amends for any discovered injustices.[11]

Given his speech, the reader should expect Cephalus to be quite concerned with the standards by which he gauges a particular action just or unjust. If his criteria for distinguishing just deeds from unjust ones are mistaken or poorly understood, then he will be incapable of "reckoning up" his accounts with any accuracy and in great danger of leaving behind unpaid debts. His condition would be analogous to that of the businessperson who does not know enough mathematics to accurately keep the books no matter how earnestly he or she attempts to do so. Socrates' seemingly abrupt transition from what old age is like to what makes a just action just is not as unprovoked as many commentators have previously argued.[12] The purpose of Socrates' response is, on my account, to get Cephalus (and the reader) to recognize that Cephalus is relying upon unexamined conventional standards for determining whether or not an action is just or unjust, and that it is not immediately apparent how these various conventional standards are supposed to cohere with one another.

> Socrates: Take this case as an example of what I mean: everyone would surely say that if a man takes weapons from a friend when the latter is of sound mind, and the friend demands them back when he is mad, one shouldn't give back such things, and the man who gave them back would not be just, and moreover, one should not be willing to tell someone in this state the whole truth.
> Cephalus: What you say is right (*Rep*. I 331 c 5-d 1).

Socrates here argues that it is better to lie and withhold the weapon from the insane friend, even if normally a just person keeps his or her word and pays debts swiftly. The model of the good businessperson that Cephalus has relied upon in discussing just action is potentially misleading if applied outside of a financial context.[13] The convention appropriate in that arena—that one must always pay off his or her debts—is not appropriate in the different arena of friendship, where one "owes" the friend more, and in a different way, than one owes a business associate.

However, Socrates does not take himself to be telling Cephalus something that he does not already know. Everyone, Socrates says, already agrees that the just friend or family-member would withhold the sword and the truth in this sort of circumstance, and Cephalus readily agrees. When considering justice with respect to friendship, Cephalus does not take as his conventional standard the one appropriate to the businessperson, but rather the one appropriate to the friend who should sometimes violate the normal requirements of fair treatment that one citizen owes to another.[14] Using

this different conventional standard, Cephalus is able to again correctly determine what the just behavior is in this new context. Indeed, everything that we see of Cephalus indicates that he is capable of shifting back and forth between these different conventional contexts as needed, and that he is generally confident in his ability to recognize the virtuous action in a given situation in this general manner. Rather than directly refuting Cephalus, I take it that Socrates is attempting to provoke him into recognize the complexities and various inconsistencies underlying the different conventional standards of justice held to be applicable in different contexts. So provoked, Cephalus would hopefully want to discover philosophically what justice in itself entails in a way that will explain why it looks different in different contexts.[15]

However, Cephalus does not respond to this Socratic challenge in the way that Socrates would have hoped. Instead, Cephalus politely leaves the conversation in the hands of his son Polemarchus. He then departs to tend to the sacrifices he had made before Socrates' arrival. Plato does not present this departure as a mere accident, or as a minor dramatic incident. At *Rep*. I 328 c, Cephalus began his speech by declaring his desire to converse with Socrates, and he was perfectly content to do so until the conversation began to seek non-conventional justification for why a particular act is just. The contrast between his initial desire to converse with Socrates and his abrupt departure once the conversation turned to philosophical questions is striking and deliberate.[16] Cephalus is presented by Plato as departing because the conversation turned philosophical. He evidently attaches no special value to acquiring philosophical accounts of the virtues separate from the conventional standards by which they are grasped in different contexts.[17] Instead, Cephalus prefers to carry out sacrifices to the gods, one form of actively paying off one's debts and thus being just toward the gods in accordance with conventional standards.[18] Everything that Plato writes about Cephalus suggests that he is already either habitually virtuous—certainly, this is how Cephalus presents himself—or at least now in his old age striving to act externally virtuous in order to avoid punishments in the afterlife. In either case, what value would the philosophical study of virtue offer to a person such as Cephalus? Or, to make the question even more urgent, is Cephalus in some way harmed as a result of his relying upon conventional standards of justice—standards that admittedly give him correct instructions concerning how to behave in normal circumstances—and turning away from philosophical accounts of these same matters?

3: THE DANGERS OF CONVENTIONAL VIRTUE AND THE MYTH OF ER

The answer to the preceding question suggested by the rest of the *Republic*, especially in Book X, is that those who are virtuous by merely obeying conventional standards (whether habitually or merely externally) are, despite their virtuous behavior, in great ethical risk in certain contexts. Indeed, I will argue that in some contexts such people are at even greater risk of damaging their souls than those who fall short of conventional standards of virtue without becoming completely vicious. The (basically correct) moral intuitions of the conventionally virtuous person only hold insofar as these conventional intuitions and standards are consistently reinforced and re-asserted within the city that promotes them. They are acquired by the conventionally virtuous person through

his or her adherence to *nomos*. The *Republic* suggests, however, that such ethical standards can never be fully internalized without also being accompanied by "true speeches" and "philosophizing in a healthy way" (*Rep*. VIII 560 a 6 and *Rep*. X 619 d 10, respectively). They can therefore be lost if not constantly reinforced, particularly in those who are constantly fighting unnecessary and potentially lawless immoderate desires. When the conventionally virtuous person is removed from this reinforcement—either through a regime change, relocation to a new city, or, in the mythic context, after 1000 years of walking the easy road of heaven—the conventional standards cease to guide that person's judgment, and are either replaced by whatever new standards have become conventional, or by whatever appetites were being suppressed by the old conventions. All that remains of the conventionally virtuous person's virtue is the self-confidence and self-assurance that he or she is a virtuous person who knows in what virtue consists. Such a person is described by Socrates as morally lazy, "unpracticed in labors", and he says that such a person tends to impulsively assume that however a situation superficially appears morally to him or her is correct (*Rep*. X 619 d 3). While this attitude was justified insofar as the person was fortunate enough to be raised up in a city with virtuous conventional standards, outside of that good fortune such an individual is susceptible to committing acts of extreme injustice that a more corrupt individuals would approach with hesitancy.

The context in which Plato most directly argues to this effect is in the Myth of Er, though it will be helpful to appeal to earlier passages in the *Republic* in order to help interpret and demythologize the myth.[19] I will first indicate the basic interconnections between the myth and Cephalus' speech. Next, I will present some reasons why Socrates might choose to present his response to the problems raised by Cephalus in the form of a myth, and why he does not directly respond earlier in the dialogue. Finally, I will turn to a direct analysis of how a particular incident within the myth directly indicates the harmfulness of merely conventional virtue in certain contexts.

Plato's presentation of the Myth of Er at the end of the dialogue harkens back to the opening conversation between Socrates and Cephalus in multiple ways. Cephalus is the first figure in the dialogue to discuss afterlife myths at all—it is in the context of such myths, he indicates, that the elderly fear the coming of death. Afterlife myths then play a minimal role in the remainder of dialogue until Socrates presents the Myth of Er. Additionally, the language Socrates uses to frame his introduction of the myth directly refers back to Cephalus' main concern—the repaying of debts. Socrates presents this myth, he says, to repay a debt:

> Well […] they [the rewards earned in life for justice] are nothing in multitude or magnitude compared to those that awaits each when dead. And these things should be heard so that in hearing them each of these men will have gotten back the full measure of what the argument owed him (*Rep*. X 614 a 5-8).

Cephalus understands justice as having an instrumental value in the afterlife—the person who possesses it will be able to avoid displeasing the gods through unjust acts in life and thus will not face punishment in the afterlife. Socrates agrees with Cephalus that justice does in fact have a role to play in determining what a person faces in the afterlife—or at the very least, he believes that it is good for people to believe that their fate in the afterlife will hinge

on the just or unjust actions they committed in life. The argument will not be complete, then, and Socrates will not have paid off his debts to the listeners, until he comments about the relative merits of these myths, particularly since Cephalus indicates that these sorts of myths played an important role in inspiring his love of justice.

It is in response to this context, I argue, that Socrates frames his response to the challenge raised by Cephalus in the form of a myth, though to be sure a myth that can only properly be understood in light of the rest of the dialogue. Part of Cephalus' problem is that the myths to which he is beholden do not completely articulate the advantages of caring about justice, thus leaving Cephalus with an incomplete view of precisely how he should live with respect to justice in order to avoid the outcome that he fears. The central problem of the myths that Cephalus mentions is that they do not attribute any value to being capable of discerning just from unjust actions once a person has died. While Cephalus does not indicate precisely to what myths he is referring, it is apparent from his description that the sentencing of the gods is absolute: if a man is judged unjust, he will suffer for his crimes for presumably an eternity in the afterlife. Cephalus' focus is correspondingly entirely on this other world—he wishes to avoid this eternal punishment in the afterlife, and so only cultivates a love of justice insofar as it leads to being judged worthy by the gods. From such a perspective, all that would matter would be to satisfy the demands of the gods, and the ability to discriminate just from unjust actions is only relevant insofar as it helps a person live in conformity with the laws of the gods—which presumably correspond to the laws of the city.[20] The myths that have influenced Cephalus give him no reason for thinking that conventional standards are anything other than completely adequate for fulfilling the expectations of the gods and avoiding their punishment.

If conventional standards are not adequate for avoiding all moral danger, however, then these sorts of myths are poorly structured and do not instill the proper attitude toward the study of justice. Given that this is Socrates' considered position, a different sort of myth is required. Such a myth will have to highlight the moral dangers that would result from failing to study virtue philosophically while still preserving the sense in which the gods really do reward just deeds (whether supported by philosophy or not) and punish injustice. The Myth of Er is structured in such a way that it perfectly accomplishes both tasks. While the unjust are still sentenced to punishment in this myth —judges decree that the just walk a blissful upper realm and the unjust walk a lower realm of punishment—these sentences are not eternal outside the extreme case of the irredeemably vicious. Each journey lasts 1000 years, after which time both those who travel the upper road and those who are cursed to the lower road come to the Spindle of Necessity. Each soul must then pick from a multitude of possible lives, with the order determined by lot. After making a choice, each person is then reincarnated after drinking from the river of Carelessness and forgetting what has transpired. Given this mythic framing, the punishments undergone by the unjust souls compelled to walk the lower road are fundamentally educative, and not fundamentally vindictive or retributive. This myth therefore inverts Cephalus' initial understanding—justice is not for the sake of avoiding punishment, but punishment is itself for the sake of becoming better at judging what is just and what is unjust. The ability to distinguish justice from injustice remains invaluable even outside the context of civic religious life, particularly insofar as the

mythic choice of lives that awaits all those who die falls far outside the conventional context of the *polis*.

Now that I have shown the narrative connections between the Myth of Er and Cephalus' speech and presented an argument for why Socrates might want to respond to the challenge posed by Cephalus' departure in the form of a myth, I will now turn to Socrates' claim within the myth that those who are conventionally virtuous are in a sort of moral peril. I will first indicate Socrates' argument within this mythic context, and then attempt to demythologize the argument. Within the myth, Socrates argues that those who gauge what is virtuous only by relying upon the conventions of their society—those who walked the blissful upper road without studying philosophy—are more likely to choose their next lives poorly compared with those whose virtue was supported by philosophy. While this result might not be particularly surprising, his second contention is genuinely startling and has troubled many commentators.[21] He argues that the conventionally just are prone to do an even worse job of choosing than those who fell short of the conventional standards of their society—those who were forced to walk the painful lower road.

Within the context of the myth, the reason that the conventionally virtuous are worse at choosing their next life is because they are "unpracticed in labors." While presumably the upper road of heaven does not require extensive labor of any sort, in the context of the myth the most relevant sort of "labor" involved in the choice of lives is making concrete moral determination about which lives are better, and which are worse. The first person that Socrates describes as choosing a life picks a horrific tyranny.

> He was one of those who had come from heaven, having lived in an orderly regime in his former life, participating in virtue by habit, without philosophy. And, it may be said, not the least number of those who were caught in such circumstances came from heaven, because they were unpracticed in labors (*Rep.* X 619 c 6-d 3).

Within the context of the myth, those who walk the easy upper road quite literally are freed from certain kinds of toil and work during their walk.[22] As a result, they are described as unpracticed, poorly prepared for the difficult labors involved in choosing an entire life. The conventionally virtuous have been long separated from contexts in which they were able to exercise their virtue—there are presumably no sticky moral difficulties on the upper path, and so no cause to call upon the conventional standards of virtue in decision making. It would be entirely natural, then, for such people to have a diminished capacity to remember what those conventional standards actually are and to be out of practice in actually employing them in moral decision-making.

Yet it must still be explained why the conventionally virtuous—those who have lost their conventional intuitions about virtue due to time and the ease of the upper road—do a worse job with the choice of lives than those who did not behave virtuously in the first place. Socrates' answer to this question is that the journey along the lower path has taught the non-virtuous souls that avoided complete wickedness to approach moral decisions with more caution than the conventionally virtuous do.[23] "But most of those who came from the earth, because they themselves had labored and had seen the labor of others, weren't in a rush to make their choices" (*Rep.* X 619 d 2-5). Hard experience and punishment has taught those

who walked the path of the earth to approach moral matters with care. They were constantly confronted with the consequences of poor moral decision making and so are prone to act more cautiously and with less confidence in their immediate moral inclinations because such inclinations served them so poorly in life. In contrast, those who were conventionally virtuous have been taught by life and by their reward in the afterlife that they are good judges of what is right and what is wrong, and that their determinations of what is just and what is unjust will conform with the virtuous standards of the *polis*. Nothing they experience on the upper road will challenge their basic tendency be self-confident and self-assured in moral matters—indeed, these tendencies will have been reinforced, because there is no need to take great care in considering anything on the upper road.

This tendency toward quick self-confidence will have disastrous consequences, however, now that the moral intuitions that were instilled through convention in life have atrophied through disuse. All that will remain is the tendency to rely on an immediate impression of which life looks best, and such a quick look will—at the very least—miss all sorts of relevant details.

> The man who had drawn the first lot came forth and immediately chose the greatest tyranny, and, due to folly and gluttony, chose without having considered everything adequately; and it escaped his notice that eating his children and other evils were fated to be a part of that life (*Rep*. X 619 b 8-c 2).

Outside of the context of cultivated conventional virtues, all the immoderate desires that were suppressed by those habits are able to reassert themselves. Now what immediately seems best to this particular out-of-practice ex-conventionally virtuous person is the life of hedonism, and in making this choice the man elides the full consequences of the life that he has chosen. In this regard, those who came from the upper road without the study of philosophy are at greater risk for damaging themselves through injustice than the conventionally unjust, who have become cautious as a result of punishment for past injustices.

Let us now begin demythologizing the myth and connecting it to the earlier conversation with Cephalus and other books of the *Republic*.[24] The easy-goingness of the conventionally virtuous person can be understood as operative even outside the context of the myth. Conventionally virtuous people only behave virtuously by a sort of luck—they happen to be living in a regime whose conventions more or less reflect virtue.[25] That is not to say that there nothing praiseworthy in their virtue—a great many people live in the same regime and nevertheless fail to live in external accordance with the conventional standards that such societies hold up for virtuous behavior. Insofar as the conventionally virtuous rely on pre-given criteria (conventional standards of virtue) in determining what behaviors are virtuous, however, they do require the good fortune to live in a society that sets forward correct standards. In a tyrannical regime, as an example, one might well expect to find very different conventions, perhaps emphasizing slavish subservience to the tyrant as an example of courageous or moderate behavior. Examples of such regimes would include the Greek understanding of the Persians, the reign of the Thirty Tyrants, and even the reign of a "tyrannical" democratic majority that insists that virtue is gratifying the desires of the majority.[26]

Cephalus is lucky in this manner—the Athens in which he lives contains enough diversity that it does praise behaviors that are genuinely virtuous, and he has internalized these standards, particularly those relating to just businesspersons and Sophoclean moderation, to distinguish just from unjust actions.[27] He is additionally lucky because old age has silenced many of the despotic immoderate desires that would strain against the cultivation of these civic virtues, and indeed did strain against them in his youth.[28] This waning of desire is a bodily accident, not the result of deliberate decision or habituation. Thus, he is fortunate to have undergone this accident—at the very least, it has made his situation easier than it otherwise might have been for him.

Both sorts of luck are fundamentally unreliable, however. Just as in the Myth of Er the dead are tasked with the novel and unprecedented project of choosing an entire life for themselves, in non-mythic contexts the conventionally just may well be faced with many novel circumstances that do not have any obvious conventional standard, or circumstances in which the obvious standards are actually misleading in a given context and will lead to unjust actions.[29] Even worse, political instability is entirely capable of upsetting what is praised and blamed within a city for the worse. Indeed, the historical fates of Cephalus and his sons directly invoke political instability and the decline of a regime into tyranny and legal injustice. Everything that Cephalus has built in his life will soon be destroyed after his death by the reign of the Thirty Tyrants—his son Polemarchus will be killed along with countless others, and the estate he hoped to leave behind will be seized by the tyranny.[30] Given that the virtue of the conventionally virtuous relies entirely upon their conformity to certain conventional standards of virtue advanced within a city, once such a tyrannical regime seizes power and institutes new conventions, the conventionally virtuous person will begin to internalize these new, non-virtuous standards of in what virtue consists.[31] Indeed, based on the argument found in the Myth of Er, they will do so quiet swiftly and self-confidently, mistakenly assured that they possess the ability to distinguish just actions from unjust actions in some reliable way outside of convention. Such a person will go along with unjust actions just as readily as just actions in a different context, and the tyrannical regime has every motivation to reorient its virtuous citizens to vicious or slavish habits.[32] My central contention in this paper is that those who are only conventionally virtuous are in grave moral danger in this sort of circumstance—indeed, as per the Myth of Er, their conventional virtuousness makes them at an even greater moral risk of being persuaded to go along with the crimes of the new regime or of reacting horrifically in the face of a novel situation.

Plato alludes to this phenomenon in the *Apology* when Socrates describes the reign of the Thirty in Athens following the Peloponnesian War.

> When the oligarchy was established, the Thirty summoned me to the Hall, along with four others, and ordered us to bring Leon from Salamis, that he might be executed. They gave many such orders to many people, in order to implicate as many as possible in their guilt (*Apol.* 32 c 3-d 2).[33]

While Socrates violated the new *nomos*, most citizens, including many of whom presumably behaved justly under the old regime, went along with the new regime's crimes as

a matter of course. Some of the conventionally just citizens were likely motivated on account of a fear of death, and were willing to abandon their old standards of just and unjust behavior to avoid it now that their old habits no longer found conventional approval. Others, those who only obeyed the old conventions as a result of an external fear of punishment, were perhaps motivated on account of the promise of the tyrant to satisfy immoderate desires that were suppressed by the conventions found in the old regime but which are now free to rule the soul unopposed. Even more disturbingly, there were probably many who simply were used to doing what they were told and what won them praise, and put no thought into the difference between the virtuous conventions of the old regime and the vicious conventions of the new.

What is apparent in all such cases is that the conventional acquisition of virtue does little to prepare those just by convention for actually having to choose to live virtuously rather than viciously once conventional standards are no longer applicable. Indeed, the confidence and easygoingness with which the conventionally virtuous distinguish virtuous from vicious actions makes them especially susceptible to mistaken and hasty judgments about such matters. If this analysis holds, we can see that Cephalus' merely conventional acquisition of virtue is not morally adequate in those situations in which conventions are either undergoing change (as in a regime change) or unhelpful (as in a novel circumstance). What remains is to demonstrate why Plato thinks that the study of philosophy can serve as a corrective and helpful supplement to conventional virtue with respect to those cases where it is necessary to actually choose how to live virtuously outside of a conventional framework.

4: PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY

An immediate difficulty confronts any interpreter of the *Republic* who wants to argue that everyone, and not just the rare natures suitable for becoming philosopher-kings, would potentially be benefited by undergoing the Socratic elenchus. Plato's Socrates spends a great deal of the middle books of the *Republic* arguing that the study of philosophy is dangerous and corruptive outside of the confines of the *kallipolis*, and even within the ideal city its study should be reserved for those exceptional natures capable of mastering the dialectical study of the Forms, especially the Form of the Good.[34] I do not want to minimize these arguments, or the concerns of commentators who struggle to reconcile them with the broader Socratic elenchic practice found in dialogues like the *Apology*. However, I want to argue that Books I and X of the *Republic* at the very least complicate the position in the middle of the dialogue that the Socratic elenchus should not be practiced on most people. In this last section, I will attempt to show that Plato's Socrates holds that philosophy is the only way of training oneself to respond morally in contexts in which conventional virtue is of no use, or even actively harmful.

I will first return to the mythic context of the Myth of Er. With respect to the choice of lives, Socrates says:

> Now here, my dear Glaucon, is the whole risk for a human being, as it seems. And on this account each of us must, to the neglect of other studies, above all see to it that he is a seeker and student of the study by which he might be able to learn and find out who will give him the capacity and knowledge to distinguish the

> good and the bad life, and so everywhere and always choose the better from among those that are possible. He will take into account [*analogizomenon*] all the things we have just mentioned and how in combination and separately they affect the virtue of life […] From all this he will be able to draw a conclusion and choose—in looking off toward the nature of the soul—between the worse and the better life, calling worse the one that leads it toward becoming more unjust, and better the one that leads it to becoming juster (*Rep*. X 618 b 6-e 2).

The first thing to note in this passage is how strongly it invokes Cephalus' initial speech about the importance of justice. "Taking into account" here is *analogizomenon*, the same word Cephalus uses to describe the way the old man looks back upon his life for injustices and unpaid debts. Only whereas Cephalus was fundamentally concerned with taking stock of the justice or injustice of various actions, Socrates here advocates taking stock of whole ways of life and determining which lives, if any, contribute to virtue and thus happiness. To accomplish this reckoning, Socrates says that we must pay careful attention to "all the things we have just mentioned" in the course of the *Republic*, especially including the accounts of the soul, its virtues, and the effects of vice upon it. Indeed, we must neglect all other studies and activities for the sake of pursuing the ability to discern virtuous lives from lives that lack virtue. Conventionally acquired virtue, as we have already seen, is not enough for this task. It must therefore be supplemented with philosophical explorations of virtue and vice.

The purpose of the study of philosophy in this context is twofold. First, it is at least in principle capable of providing the conventionally virtuous person with a stronger and more permanent foundation for his or her moral intuitions. The dialectical philosopher will genuinely understand what the virtues are and the reasons why certain just conventions are held up as desirable within the city. However, even those who are incapable of attaining the full heights of dialectic can be benefited by discovering true accounts about virtue.[35] For instance, at *Rep*. VII 532 e-533 a, Socrates describes Glaucon and Adeimantus as being currently incapable of the dialectical science of the philosopher-kings, but they are still benefited by the non-dialectical philosophical methods found in the *Republic* that provide a rational account of what the virtues are and correct justifications of why the life of justice is superior to the life of injustice.[36] Such accounts can provide a foundation for virtuous behavior that is capable of surviving political instability and adapting to circumstances that lack obvious conventional standards. Elenchic practice is therefore potentially beneficial insofar as it is capable (though by no means assured) of providing a more secure foundation for virtuous beliefs than mere convention and habit alone.[37]

However, the study of philosophy is presented in the myth as providing an even more important function. The difficulty that those who are conventionally virtuous face in choosing their next life is not fundamentally that they have wrong beliefs about what is virtuous and what is not, though they well might. Rather, the central problem is that they are morally lazy: self-confident in their virtuousness despite the fact that their virtue is the result of luck instead of deliberate effort. If their luck changes, by the rise of a tyranny for instance, such individuals will lose the entire foundation that supported their virtuousness and so be cast adrift with nothing but confidence in their own rectitude. They thus choose to act in accordance

with their basic moral intuitions too quickly. Usually, this haste doesn't harm them insofar as the conventional standards they rely upon are correct. In contexts where those standards do not apply or have actively been replaced by new, vicious standards, however, this haste can become morally ruinous. Yet the sudden onset of bad luck that overturns virtuous conventions does not excuse injustice or ward off the harms of unjust actions. In the Myth of Er, the spokesman of the goddess Lachesis says:

> Let him who gets the first lot make the first choice of a life to which he will be bound by necessity. Virtue is without a master, as he honors or dishonors her, each will have more or less of her. The blame belongs to him who chooses; god is blameless (*Rep*. X 617 e 2-5).

In the context of the myth, though there is a lottery and thus some chance is involved in the procedure of choosing lives, there are enough virtuous lives available to souls that everyone has the potential to choose a virtuous life wherever their lot falls. Outside the mythic context, it is clear that Plato holds that virtuous action remains possible even in the worst—the most unlucky—circumstances. Socrates personally demonstrates this fact by his conduct during the reign of the Thirty. It is possible to disobey the corrupt commands of the tyrant, or to remain cautious in the face of novel circumstances. Because the conventionally virtuous are so convinced of their own virtuousness by habit, however, these sorts of people are not described by Plato as acknowledging their personal agency in these cases—they instead blame luck and the gods for their unjust deeds: "For he [the man who chose the tyranny] didn't blame himself for the evils but chance, demons, and anything rather than himself" (*Rep*. X 619 c 4-6). It is quite true that many people who commit terrible crimes would not do so if they had not found themselves in certain bad situations.[38] Plato's argument in the *Republic* is that the unjust actions of such people are not thereby excused.

Philosophy therefore has an even more important task than reinforcing correct beliefs about virtue and vice. It must also awaken a sense of responsibility and personal care for virtue within the souls of its practitioners. By encouraging individuals to care about what the virtues are, philosophy encourages them to care about the virtues *as such*: to honor virtue, as the goddess commands, rather than merely practicing virtuous actions. In this context, even the potentially destabilizing consequences of the Socratic elenchus has positive as well as negative value. Even if all the elenchus leaves behind is some small measure of *aporia* and knowledge of one's own ignorance, a person in such a condition might at the very least slow down and approach difficult moral considerations with care rather haughty self-assurance. Such an achievement, as Plato presents it, is no small advance. Cephalus will not be able to attain this achievement no matter how many sacrifices he attends to or how many debts he repays. All such actions will only reinforce his feeling of moral achievement. It is therefore correct to hold his departure in error and to assert the value of philosophy even amongst those virtuous by convention.

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ENDNOTES

1 I would like to thanks Dr. Michael Wiitala, Dr. Eric Sanday, and several anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments and feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

2 Beversluis 2000, 198 writes: "But although Socrates' counterexample refutes *that* definition, it does not refute Cephalus who advanced *no* definition. Indeed, in view of the striking contrast between the casual and slow-paced nature of the foregoing conversation and the formal and abrupt nature of Socrates' attack, it seems that the unsuspecting Cephalus has been pounced on quite unfairly." Building off of Beversluis, McKee 2008, 70 writes: "Cephalus' departure is an appropriate, urbane response to Socrates' gross misrepresentation that he had attempted a definition of justice", and that it does not indicate a moral failing on Cephalus' part. McKee 2008, 78 then argues that Plato presents Cephalus as an exemplar for philosophical education. "The judgments Cephalus makes in Book I identify him as a teacher of the kind envisaged in Book X." The Myth of Er ends with the demand that we measure the justice found in life as a whole. In this way, when we are confronted with the choice of what our next life will consist in, we will be able to choose correctly. The myth insists that we must find a teacher to teach us how to carry out such a reckoning of lives, and McKee believes that Plato wants Cephalus to serve as this exemplar.

3 Taylor 1966, 266-267 reads Cephalus as a conventional representative of the decent person, and thinks that Socrates uses his speech as an excuse to raise the question of justice: "From the simple observations of old Cephalus… Socrates takes the opportunity to raise the question of what *dikaiosunē*, taken in the sense of the supreme rule of right—'morality' as we might say—is". Though he doesn't mention Cephalus' departure from the conversation in any detail, he seems to find Socrates' interjection valid insofar as he thinks Cephalus implicitly holds a financial understanding of justice in his speech that cannot be taken as a "supreme principle of morality". See n6 for an extended discussion of Reeve's reading of Cephalus.

4 I am indebted to an anonymous referee of this paper, who forcefully and persuasively argued on behalf of this kind of reading of Cephalus.

5 Schleiermacher 1836, 353 writes that Cephalus "is already too far advanced in years" for serious philosophical dialogue and that Socrates "tacks the question as to the nature of justice" onto the end of Cephalus' speech. White 1979, 62-3 reads Cephalus as thoughtlessly parroting back conventional notions of various ethical concepts. On his reading, it is Socrates, and not Cephalus, that really focuses the conversation on the justice and its importance. Annas 1981, 20 reads Cephalus as fundamentally shallow—"His notion of doing right consists in observing a few simple rules or maxims like 'don't lie' and 'give back what isn't yours'. He thinks of them in a very external fashion: what matters is whether or not you perform certain actions, like sacrificing to the gods, and not the spirit in which this done."

6 Other commentators have also thought that this was the central difficulty raised by Cephalus' departure from the conversation. Reeve 1988, 6-7, for instance, who generally reads Cephalus as what I am calling habitually virtuous, argues "The problem Cephalus poses to Socrates… is that he is to some degree moderate, just, pious, and wise without having studied philosophy or knowing what the virtues are." However, Reeve concludes from this difficulty "that Cephalus is an inappropriate subject for the elenchus. He is already of good character and disposed to virtue. That is why Plato has him depart before he can be examined." Reeve holds that the Cephalus has already attained a kind of conventionally acquired virtue that does not entail a worse life than philosophical virtue: "the elenctically examined life is not guaranteed to be any better or more virtuous than the life of a traditionally brought up gentleman of means." While on Reeve's reading philosophical virtue is complete in a way that conventional virtue is not, he does not think that Cephalus' incomplete virtue would be benefited by further dialectical analysis. Bloom 1968, 313 also closely connects Cephalus' virtue with convention: "Cephalus typifies the ancestral which cannot, but must, be questioned. Although his appearance is brief, by means of a few circumspect inquiries Socrates manages to reveal his character and his principles and, hence, those of the tradition he represents. Then the old man is delicately set aside." Bloom argues that Socrates deliberately antagonizes Cephalus into leaving the conversation so that convention can be overcome by philosophy. Socrates does this by misconstruing the aim of Cephalus' speech as an attempt to define justice, which it in no way was, and by ignoring the importance of the gods. The reading found in Steinberger 1996 also identifies Cephalus as representing conventional virtue, and argues that he is in moral danger because of his profoundly un-philosophical fear of death, something that leaves his soul vulnerable to injustice. Like me, Steinberger reads the fate of the conventionally virtuous in Myth of Er as indicating this moral danger, though I think his fear of death is only a sign of a deeper moral issue revealed in the myth.

7 Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the *Republic* are those of Allan Bloom in: *The Republic*, 2nd ed., Basic Books 1968. References to the Greek text are from: *Politeia*. in *Platonis Opera Vol 4*, Oxford University Press 1902 <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0167>.

8 Socrates himself provides a witness to this effect when he says, with no recognizable irony that I can detect, that "you didn't seem overly fond of money" (*Rep.* I 330 b 8-c 1). Socrates argues that Cephalus does not value wealth for its own sake, and that he does not hold the accumulation of wealth intrinsically valuable. Cephalus did not have to work excessively to earn his wealth. Those who did, Socrates says, love money doubly: both because it is useful and as the product of their labor, as the artist loves his or her painting. Socrates thus agrees with Cephalus' self-assessment as not being a money-lover.

9 Besides *Rep.* I 330 e, it used three other times. At *Rep.* IV 441 c 1, using Homer, Socrates argues that the thing that reckons is the rational part of the soul (in contrast with the spirited part), demonstrating that the reckoning of one's accounts that Cephalus describes here would conventionally be considered a kind of calculation: "Here, you see, Homer clearly presents that which has calculated [*to analogisamenon*] about better and worse and rebukes that which is irrationally spirited as though it were a different part." The verb has a similar usage at *Rep.* VII 524 d 9: "Figure it out [*analogizou*] on the basis of what was said before." Its final usage occurs at a key juncture in the Myth of Er, *Rep.* X 618 c 6: "He will take into account [*analogizomenon*] all the things we have just mentioned and how in combination and separately they affect the virtue of a life." I will return to this passage in Section 4.

10 While Cephalus does not explicitly clarify what he means in suggesting that a person can be forced to lie and cheat another person "against one's will [akonta]," on a charitable interpretation there is no reason to interpret him as meaning anything terribly sophisticated or controversial. One sort of unintentional injustice, particularly common in the business world, would be when a person borrowed money in the past with every intention of paying off the debt at some future time, but then finds him or herself unable to do so in the future because of poverty. Annas 1981, 20 reads this passage in the same way.

11 I do not find anything that Cephalus says in his speech to be particularly shocking or un-Socratic, at least with respect to his discussion of why justice and wealth are important. Socrates certainly does not object to the substance of Cephalus' speech in his response: "What you say is very fine indeed, Cephalus" (*Rep.* I 331 c 1). To be sure, Cephalus' account of justice predominantly is concerned with its consequences, and not with its intrinsic value, but Cephalus neither was asked about nor intended to speak about the value of justice in itself. He is certainly correct to say that a just person, elderly or otherwise, would have to possess a calculative capacity that aids that person in "reckoning up" which actions are just

and which unjust. And Cephalus' discussion of the value of money for the just person closely matches the account offered by Socrates at *Euthydemus* 278 e-282 b, as Cashen 2011 argued in a paper delivered at the 2011 meeting of the Ancient Philosophy Society. In that passage, Socrates says wealth really is valuable, but only insofar as it is employed rightly.

12 Even amongst readers who otherwise greatly differ in their reading of Cephalus, there is a widespread sense that Socrates is misconstruing Cephalus' speech, deliberately or otherwise, as an account of justice in a way unfair to what Cephalus himself intended. See for instance Schleiermacher 1836, 353, Bloom 1968, 314, Beversluis 2000, 198, and McKee 2008, 70.

13 While Cephalus has not presented a 'definition' of justice in his speech that is restricted to only financial matters, later comments from Polemarchus (his son) give some support to the claim that there is a danger in overlooking non-financial instances of injustice. Polemarchus is presented as the "heir of the argument" (*Rep*. I 331 e 1), and as carrying on the conversation in the departed Cephalus' stead. Polemarchus explicitly presents justice as a matter of finances, saying that justice is primarily useful "in money matters" (*Rep*. I 333 b 10).

14 As an example, think of Amphitryon's treatment of his son, the insane Heracles, in Euripides' *Heracles*. Amphitryon refuses to tell his son what has happened—that in a fit of madness, Heracles murdered his family—and leaves him bound up against his will until he is sure that Heracles has returned to sanity.

15 There is nothing unusual in the way that Socrates approaches Cephalus in this regard. For instance, Euthyphro first gives examples of pious actions (*Euthyphro* 5 d), and then is called by Socrates to give a definition (*Euthyphro* 6 d). Laches and Socrates do the same concerning courage (*Laches* 190d-192 b), and Theaetetus and Socrates do the same concerning knowledge (*Theaetetus* 146 c-d and 148 d). This common Socratic challenge does not necessarily indicate that there is any problem with the examples his interlocutors employed in first attempting to understand a given concept—Laches, at the very least, is quite correct to say that soldiers who hold their ground on the battlefield in the face of danger are courageous. The fact that courage does not reduce to this one example does not make it a bad example or does not imply that Laches' moral intuitions about courage are incorrect, it only means that his example is not philosophical.

16 The contention in Beversluis 2000 that Cephalus is ambushed by this unexpected Socratic shift in the conversation would indicate that Cephalus is not familiar with Socrates and his style of argumentation. This reading seems at odds with the familiarity between the two that the text seems to suggest.

17 Beversluis 2000, 200-201 defends Cephalus' departure on the grounds that acting justly is a practical and not theoretical concern: "his fundamental decency and resultant contentment and tranquility of mind are the hard-earned fruits of a lifetime, and Plato does not allow Socrates to deprive him of them. Cephalus' inability to defend his views does not call his life into question. It reveals that his practical ability to be just outstrips his theoretical ability to explain justice. Theoretical inability does not entail moral bankruptcy." The problem with Beversluis' reading is that Cephalus' own account indicates that just behavior requires a kind of calculation concerning which actions are just and which unjust. Cephalus is content to rely upon conventional standards for justice in this calculation. Plato, however, ultimately argues in the *Republic* that this approach puts a person in a kind of moral danger.

18 McKee 2008, 79 defends Cephalus' departure because modern gerontological studies have determined that the elderly "typically have an increased interest in ritual. Seen in this light, Cephalus' preference for participation in religious rites over philosophical dialectic is natural for his advanced age, not a personal failing." Even if this is true, and even if the results of modern empirical social sciences can fairly be applied to the ancient Greeks, just because something is the case does not mean that it ought to be the case. Even if the elderly generally prefer religious ritual to philosophy, that does not mean that they must, or that they ought. The actions of a rather old Socrates in the *Phaedo* and the *Crito* clearly demonstrate an example of an elderly person who at the very least makes room for philosophy along with ritual practices. For McKee to be correct, Cephalus ought to prefer religious ritual to philosophy, if not in general then at least in this case. And the Myth of Er strongly indicates that he is not correct to prefer ritual to philosophy, either as a young man or an old one. Indeed, interpreting Cephalus as some sort of paragon of Greek religious life has itself been challenged. Dobbs 1994, 672, for instance, has quite compellingly argued that Cephalus represents a rather shallow and inadequate understanding of pious religious life, in comparison with both Socrates and even his own son, Polemarchus.

19 That there seems to be a connection between the myth and Cephalus' speech has been remarked elsewhere in the scholarship. For instance, see instance McKee 2008, 73-75, who argues that Cephalus is the exemplar that the hearer of the myth is supposed to emulate, and Bloom 1968, 436 and Steinberger 1996, 194, both of whom argue that Cephalus' condition is like that of the man who chooses the worst tyranny within the myth.

20 Describing Cephalus, Bloom 1968, 315 writes: "For Cephalus the just is identical to the law of the city, and the law is protected by the gods. The problem of justice is simply expressed in his view: if there are no gods, there is no reason to be just or to worry; if there are, we must simply obey their laws, for that is what they wish." While Cephalus himself never expresses any real skeptical doubts about the existence of the gods, Bloom's reading here seems basically correct, if the "law" in question is not interpreted strictly as the written laws of the city but rather as the broad *nomos*, both written and unwritten, that governs the intuitions of the citizens. This qualification is necessary, as Cephalus is more than will-

ing to agree with Socrates that the written laws governing economic exchanges might be unjust under certain circumstances, like if you promised your insane friend a sword. Still, what motivates Cephalus in agreeing that the return of the sword under these conditions is unjust is the conventional attitudes of the Athenians, and so can still be characterized as *nomos*.

21 See for instance Halliwell 2007, 451-452, 465-466.

22 Socrates spends little time talking about precisely in what this journey consists, other than that it involves witnessing beautiful sights, at *Rep*. X 615 a. That the path is free of toil, however, is implied by his comments in this passage.

23 Souls that fall prey to extreme, irredeemable viciousness and wickedness are trapped in the lower realm and doomed to eternal torment, as it says at *Rep*. X 615 c-616 a. The myth does not directly address how such people would do in choosing their next lives, insofar as they are not allowed to make the choice either way. One presumes, though, that they would do far worse than the conventionally virtuous, who are described as making bad choices by carelessness rather than deliberately.

24 See also Thayer 1988, 370, who similarly reads the myth as illustrating what occurs in concrete moral deliberation. "I believe that one purpose of Plato's myth is to illuminate these two aspects of choice in any and every instance where moral choice occurs. But, of course, the examples presented to us in the myth are exceptional and the most dramatic that can be imagined: one's choosing to live a certain kind of life. The drama simplifies the otherwise complex contingent and incidental factors involved in real choices; the essential features are clarified and vivified in the idealized setting."

25 By referring to "luck" in this context, I am attempting to make sense of a passage that I will discuss in greater detail in the last section of the paper: "For he [the man who chose the tyranny] didn't blame himself for the evils but chance, demons, and anything rather than himself" (*Rep*. X 619 c 4-6). As I am reading this passage, the conventionally virtuous person has it backwards—it is not luck that caused him to choose poorly in this specific context, but rather luck that allowed him to choose well in his earlier life and in other contexts—the conventions in those contexts that he was raised accidentally happened to guide him correctly.

26 See for instance *Rep*. VIII 558 b 8-c 2: "How magnificently [such a city] tramples all this underfoot and doesn't care at all from what kind of practices a man goes to political action, but honors him if only he says he's well disposed toward the multitude." For other dialogues where Socrates raises similar points, see also *Gorg.* 513 a-c and *Apol.* 32 b-c.

27 To be sure, however, Athens holds incorrect standards of virtuous behavior as well. Democratic regimes are described in *Republic* VIII as containing a plurality of different regimes within themselves on account of their diversity and freedom, as said at *Rep*. VIII 557 d. It therefore would contain contradictory standards of virtuous behavior—for instance, parts of the city would praise and part would condemn the example of the tyrant. Indeed, the same person in such a city could plausibly both envy and condemn a tyrant at different times and in different contexts.

28 In terms of descriptions of the various kinds of souls in Book VIII, Cephalus therefore most resembles the fortunate democratic-souled person. "Then, I suppose that afterward such a man [the democratic souled person in whom unnecessary and useless pleasures have emerged] lives spending no more money, effort, and time on the necessary than on the unnecessary pleasures. However, if he has good luck and if his frenzy does not go beyond bounds—and if, also, as a result of getting somewhat older and the great disturbances having passed by, he readmits a part of the exiles [oligarchic desires for moderation and financial justice] and doesn't give himself wholly over to the invaders [immoderate unnecessary pleasures]" (*Rep.* VIII 561 a 4-b 2). This sort of democratic-souled person is described as fundamentally flighty, and drifts back and forth between imitating whatever exemplary figures strike his or her fancy: "… and if he ever admires soldiers, he turns in that direction [i.e. toward cultivating courage]; and if its money-makers, in that one [i.e. toward cultivating moderation and justice understood in terms of financial standards]" (*Rep*. VIII 561 d 5-6). It is this last figure that Cephalus most fully resembles—he is one who admires businesspeople and so is concerned with making himself like the conventionally just businessperson in accordance with the conventional standards of the Athenian society in which he currently lives.

29 McCoy 2012, 136 similarly sees the myth as contrasting the habitual life of virtue with the philosophical, and praises the philosophical life as better able to deal with novel circumstances in which tradition applies only ambiguously. "Habit proves to be insufficient for virtue insofar as the future presents us continually with novel situations… Socrates himself navigates these novel situations remarkably well. In the *Apology*, he offers the jurors examples of two different situations in which he chose a just act rather than an unjust one." Her account agrees with the one I am advancing insofar as it emphasizes that philosophical virtue is the only secure foundation for moral life. Habitual attitudes toward justice and injustice will always encounter some circumstances in which it will not be immediately obvious what action is best.

30 See Nails 2002, 84-85, 190-194, 251 for a discussion of the life of Cephalus and his family.

31 Plato advances a similar argument in the *Laws*. The Athenian argues that a tyrannical regime will be able to change the habits of its citizens far more easily than in any other owing to its unique capacity to provide an exemplar for the citizens to follow in the person of the tyrant and the ability to mix persuasion with unrestrained violence. "Athenian: You'd see that if a tyrant wishes to change a city's habitual ways, he doesn't need to exert great effort or spend an enormous amount of time… He need only first trace out a model in his own conduct of

all that is to be done, praising and honoring some things while assigning blame to others, and casting dishonor on anyone who disobeys in each of the activities. Kleinias: And why do we suppose that the other citizens will swiftly follow someone who has adopted such a combination of persuasion and violence? Ath: Let no one persuade us, friends, that there will ever be a quicker or easier way for a city to change its laws than through the hegemony of all-powerful rulers" (*Laws* IV 711 b 2-c 3). Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the *Laws* are from Pangle 1988.

32 In discussing *Republic* VI, White 1979, 168 sees Plato making an argument similar to mine. Philosophical natures are corrupted outside of the *kallipolis*, on White's reading, because "The potential philosopher is misled into following the multitude in its view of the good, and in expending his energies in an attempt to please it." As White argues here, conventional attitudes compel those not liberated by philosophy into going along with whatever the conventional understanding of justice and injustice is operative in the city.

33 Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the *Apology* are from the G.M.A. Grube translation in Cooper 1997.

34 For a particularly strong recent interpretation of the *Republic* along these lines, see Lublink 2011, who argues that Plato has joined Socrates' accusers from the *Apology* and asserted that Socratic questioning really does harm the young. In response to Lublink, I would point to the already discussed passages from X and the Myth of Er. While Plato does view the elenchic method as dangerous, it is clear from these later passages that the conventional life of virtue is not safer, at least in certain contexts.

35 The distinction between properly dialectical philosophy and the sort of philosophy practiced in the main text of the is best explicated in Miller 2007, 310-311. Dialectical philosophy is characterized by the way in which it attempts to move beyond imagistic ways of thinking about the Forms and the method of combining and dividing Forms found in dialogues like the , , , and .

36 See for instance VIII 560 b, which describes the corruption of the democratic soul. "I suppose they took the acropolis of the young man's soul, perceiving that I was empty of fair studies and practices and true speeches, and it's these that are the best watchmen and guardians in the thought of men whom the gods love." The conventionally just person engages in (at least some of) the practices that are conducive to preserving virtue, but lacks the fair studies and true speeches that could truly secure their virtue in the face of all challenges.

37 To be sure, Socrates also argues that this kind of philosophy, particularly when practiced by the young, is also capable of having the opposite effect and actually destabilizing conventionally acquired virtuous habits (see especially VII 538 c-539 a). See Lublink 2011, 4-9 for a discussion of this and other relevant passages. It is this passage that leads many commentators to argue that Plato holds in the that philosophy should not be practiced by most people. There is a real tension between the discussion of the usefulness of philosophy in Book VII and in Book X that cannot be easily swept aside. All I am arguing here is that Book X does have a use for philosophy that would benefit the conventionally virtuous person in some circumstances, even if it could also be dangerous to such a person in other contexts.

38 Ogihara 2011, 10 also emphasizes the way in which the myth is intended to inspire personal responsibility in its listeners. "However, some individuals strike us as being victims of bad luck, such as a very ill person, and someone who is given the chance to be a tyrant and who takes the chance and becomes miserable in the end. Such cases might lead us to think that luck exercises decisive power over human destiny… The implication of the myth that at least some of our misfortunes, which may look to happen by bad luck, are really a result of our choice has the effect of preventing us from being impressed too much by the power of luck."

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Inspiration and *Τέχνη*: Divination in Plato's *Ion*

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ABSTRACT

In Plato's *Ion*, inspiration functions in contradistinction to *technē*. Yet, paradoxically, in both cases, there is an appeal to divination. I interrogate this in order to show how these two disparate accounts can be accommodated. Specifically, I argue that Socrates' appeal to Theoclymenus at *Ion* 539a-b demonstrates that Plato recognizes the existence of intuitive seers who defy his own distinction between possession and technical divination. Such seers provide an epistemic model for Ion; that he does not notice this confirms he is not an exemplary rhapsode.

Keywords: Ancient Philosophy; Plato; Ion.

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INTRODUCTION

In Plato's *Ion*, inspiration functions in contradistinction to *technē*.[1] Since Ion's rhapsodic expertise does not stand up to Socrates' epistemological critique, his performances of Homer cannot stem from knowledge, but from elsewhere, from divine inspiration. The two are presented as a strict disjunction. Yet in both cases there is an appeal to divination. If rhapsody, and poetry by extension, cannot synthesize the two, why does Socrates seem to think that divination can?[2] This puzzle has caused quite a bit of consternation about the value and subject matter of the dialogue.[3] In particular, it is unclear what Socrates thinks about the nature of poetic and rhapsodic inspiration. In this essay, I will argue that divination constitutes an alternate, and improved, framework for Ion to model his expertise on. By clarifying the role and scope of divination in the *Ion*, I aim to show that Socrates' disjunctive account – inspiration or *technē* – can actually be integrated. In so doing, I argue that there are in fact positive philosophical theses latent in the dialogue.

In part I, I rehearse the contrasting accounts of divination in the dialogue. In the first argumentative exchange, divination is referenced as a paradigmatic *technē*. The seer is best equipped to speak about the contrasting depictions of divination given by Homer and Hesiod. When Ion fails to meet Socrates' questioning, the argument changes direction. Ion's ability is now the result of divine inspiration; again, Socrates cites divination as akin to what Ion purportedly experiences.

In part II, I interrogate the final reference to divination, which occurs when Socrates appeals to the Homeric Epics. Ostensibly, Socrates is trying to show Ion that the best person to judge literary depictions of a *technē* is a practitioner

of that *technē*. In each case, and for slightly different reasons, I show that Socrates fails to do justice to Homer. It is not that Socrates is only engaged in eristic with Ion, but that a deeper philosophical point lurks in the background. Divination is Socrates' final example and is quoted twice – first, Theoclymenus' vision of the suitors' destruction, and second, a bird omen appearing to the Trojans. I argue that Theoclymenus is what I call an 'intuitive seer' in that he can simultaneously practice his *technē* and claim to be divinely inspired. In other words, he is a model for Ion to emulate.

In part III, I sketch a related, but fundamentally distinct, account of divination offered by Brickhouse and Smith 1993. They too are interested in the relationship between *technē* and inspiration. Their account claims that the *technē* of a possessed seer like the Pythia consists of *knowing how* to enter into an inspired state. Once in this state, the god who possesses the seer takes over and the seer can no longer be thought of as in control of his or her thoughts, utterances, and actions.[4] In contrast, and drawing on Diotima in the *Symposium*, I argue that intuitive seers are *simultaneously* divinely inspired and self-aware. They are able to reflect and interpret their own divinations. I will argue that intuitive seers like Theoclymenus and Diotima cannot be explained according to the model proposed by Brickhouse and Smith.[5]

There is both a narrow and broad purpose for developing this interpretive possibility in the *Ion*. From a dramaturgical perspective, Theoclymenus and seers like him offer Ion an epistemic alternative on which to model his purported expertise. His failure confirms that he is not an exemplary rhapsode.[6] More broadly construed, this serves to blur the distinction between having a *technē* and being divinely inspired. When this distinction usually crops up, it is immediately undermined. But seers like Theoclymenus and Diotima, together with Socrates' *daimonion*, complicate affairs and carve out space for visionaries who always retain their *nous*.

PART I: TWO REFERENCES TO DIVINATION

The first reference to divination occurs at the beginning of the dialogue. Ion's specialty is Homer, but can perform the works of other poets (531a)?[7] Since Homer and Hesiod often engage with the same subject matter, Socrates reasons that he who can recite the former can also recite the latter. He urges Ion to consider those subjects like the seer's art (*mantikēs*), upon which Homer and Hesiod disagree (531b). Which person can speak better about divination – Ion or a seer? Ion replies that it would be the seer. In fact, Socrates explicitly connects Ion and divination by asking "Suppose you [Ion] were a diviner…" (*ei de su* ēstha *mantis*) (531b7), wouldn't you be the person best equipped to explain the similarities and differences between the two poets?

The second reference to divination occurs in the famous magnet section (533d-534e). Ion cannot explain his ability to perform Homer. Socrates introduces a new concept – a divine power (*theia de dunamis*) – in strong contrast to *technē*.[8] Like the power of the magnet, Ion, together with the epic poets, is divinely possessed. Not only does the magnet attract the iron ring, it implants power into the ring itself, thereby enabling the ring to pull other rings. Similarly, the Muse inspires Homer, who in turn inspires Ion, who is finally able to enchant his audience. Although Socrates introduces the concept of inspiration, specified as the rhapsode's complete lack of *nous* (*ho nous mēketi en autō enē*) (534b4-5), Ion heartily subscribes to it.

For Socrates, if a person is in possession of their intellect, they are unable to create poetry or sing prophecy. The particularity of Ion's expertise is the best evidence that he is inspired by the Muse. According to Socrates, what happens to Ion is analogous to "prophets and godly seers" (*tois khrēsmōdois kai tois mantesi tois theiois*) (534d2) in the sense that no one thinks it is the seers themselves who divine.[9] Rather, it is the gods who use the seer as a medium.[10] Note, furthermore, that Socrates connects seers with prophets (*khrēsmōdois*), which etymologically means 'singer of oracles'.[11]

In the next section, I examine the final portrayal of divination in conjunction with the other *technai* discussed – chariot driving, medicine, and fishing. My aim is to see how each example functions in the Homeric Epics. In the case of divination, I argue that Theoclymenus is best conceptualized as an intuitive seer, someone who experiences visions but nevertheless remains self-aware. This is important because it serves as a potential model for individuals like Ion.

PART II: THE HOMERIC QUOTATIONS

Socrates' use of Homer is perplexing, due in large part to his claim that a literary depiction of a *technē* requires the relevant practitioner to adequately judge it. What about aesthetic expertise? In what follows, I rehearse Socrates' quotations as they function in the Homeric texts. I show that each example, when considered in context, does not support Socrates' claim. In each case, there is a slightly different problem with Socrates' argument. This serves to open up alternate interpretations to what Socrates overtly states. In the case of divination, the final example, I stress its affinity with the kind of expertise claimed by Ion and rhapsody.

The first example is chariot driving. Socrates prompts Ion to quote what Nestor tells his son about turning post in the chariot race during Patroclus' funeral:

> Lean yourself over on the smooth-planed chariot just to the left of the pair. Then the horse on the right – goad him shout him on, easing the reins with your hands. At the post let your horse on the left stick tight to the turn so you seem to come right to the edge, with the hub of your welded wheel. But escape cropping the stone… (*Iliad* 23.335-340 qtd. at 537a8-b6,)
>
> κλινθῆναι δέ, φησί, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐυξέστῳ ἐνὶ δίφρῳ ἦκ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοῖιν: ἀτὰρ τὸν δεξιὸν ἵππον κένσαι ὁμοκλήσας, εἶξαί τέ οἱ ἡνία χερσίν. ἐν νύσσῃ δέ τοι ἵππος ἀριστερὸς ἐγχριμφθήτω, ὡς ἄν τοι πλήμνη γε δοάσσεται ἄκρον ἱκέσθαι κύκλου ποιητοῖο: λίθου δ' ἀλέασθαι ἐπαυρεῖν.

For Socrates, an expert in chariot driving is better able to interpret this passage than Homer, or a performer of the Homeric epics like Ion. Undoubtedly, chariot driving, like automobile driving, requires skill. But does it qualify as a *technē*? In fact, Nestor initially qualifies his instruction by stating that Zeus and Poseidon have 'taught' (*edidaxan*) his son every form of chariot driving and that there is no need for his 'instruction' (*didaskemen*).

Nevertheless, Nestor goes on to say that Antilochos' horse is slower than the other racers, and that he must therefore use his 'cunning' (*mētis*) if he is to be successful. It is in this context that he offers advice on how best to round the post. In fact, references to cunning litter Nestor's speech:

> So then, my friend, your task is to use all the skill (*mētin*) you can think of, so that the prizes do not slip past you. It is skill (*mēti*) you know that makes the good woodcutter, much more than strength. By skill (*mēti*) again the helmsman keeps his quick ship running straight over the sparkling sea, though the winds are buffeting. And it is by skill (*mēti*) that charioteer beats charioteer (*Iliad* 23.313-18).
>
> ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ σὺ φίλος μῆτιν ἐμβάλλεο θυμῷ παντοίην, ἵνα μή σε παρεκπροφύγῃσιν ἄεθλα. μήτι τοι δρυτόμος μέγ' ἀμείνων ἠὲ βίηφι·μήτι δ' αὖτε κυβερνήτης ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ νῆα θοὴν ἰθύνει ἐρεχθομένην ἀνέμοισι·μήτι δ' ἡνίοχος περιγίγνεται ἡνιόχοιο.

As Detienne and Vernant demonstrated long ago, *mētis* does not only mean intelligence but also designates guile.[12] For its connotations of deception and resourcefulness, this concept is understandably absent from the epistemological theses developed in the *Ion*.[13] But it goes without saying that anyone familiar with Homer would make the connection. The chariot driving example most likely alludes to Ion's devious character, which emerges immediately prior to the chariot driving example.

Despite acquiescing to Socrates' claim that he is divinely possessed when he performs Homer, Ion is ever the performer. He remains attuned to the ebb and flow of the audience:

> You see I must keep my wits and play close attention to them [the audience]: if I start them crying, I will laugh as I take their money, but if they laugh, I shall cry at having lost money (535e3-5).
>
> δεῖ γάρ με καὶ σφόδρ' αὐτοῖς τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν ; ὡσ ἐὰν μὲν κλαίοντασ αὐτοὺς καθίσω, αὐτὸς γελάσομαι ἀργύριον λαμβάνων, ἐὰν δὲ γελῶντας, αὐτὸς κλαύσομαι ἀργύριον ἀπολλύς.

Ion's ability to adapt in front of his audience demonstrates that his expertise, purportedly a *technē*, encompasses *mētis*. Far from being a virtue, as it is in Homer, Ion's association with *mētis* is a strike against him.

Socrates' second example is medicine. He quotes the formulation of a medicinal drink:

> …over wine of Pramnos she [Hecamede] grated goat's milk cheese with a brazen grater...and onion relish for the drink (*Iliad* 11.639-40 with 630, qtd at 538c4-5).
>
> οἴνῳ Πραμνείῳ, φησίν, ἐπὶ δ' αἴγειον κνῆ τυρὸν κνήστι χαλκείῃ · παρὰ δὲ κρόμυον ποτῷ ὄψον·

In this section of the *Iliad*, Nestor has rescued Machaon out of the fighting. The two men return to Nestor's tent and are served a medicinal drink by Hecamede. It is instructive to note that nowhere is Hecamede characterized as a doctor. All that is known of her is that she is Nestor's servant, beautiful as a goddess, and knowledgeable about making a medicinal drink. Does knowing how to make a medicinal drink qualify as knowing medicine? Socrates considers it a literary depiction of medicine. Consider this example in relation to the argument of the *Ion*. A *technē* is comprehensive, and since Ion only knows how to perform Homer, he cannot have a *technē*. By analogy, Hecamede is not a doctor because she can only make one medicinial drink.

The penultimate example of a *technē* is fishing. Socrates asks Ion whether a fisherman or a rhapsode is best able to interpret the Homeric passage:

> Leaden she [Iris] plunged to the floor of the sea like a weight that is fixed to a field cow' horn. Given to the hunt it goes among ravenous fish, carrying death (*Iliad* 24.80-82, qtd. at 538d1-3).
>
> ἡ δὲ μολυβδαίνῃ ἰκέλη ἐς βυσσὸν ἵκανεν, ἥ τε κατ᾽ ἀγραύλοιο βοὸς κέρας ἐμμεμανῖα ἔρχεται μηστώῃσι μετ᾽ ἰχθύσι πῆμα φέρουσα·

The speaker is not a fisherman, but the Homeric poet, the speaker of the poem. It is a literary trope – a simile – about Iris, the divine messenger, diving like the weight on a fisher's horn. In order to make a successful simile, one needs to know both sides of the comparative. Accordingly, given that the simile is deployed in a divine context – Iris seeking out Thetis at the bottom of the ocean – it is doubtful that a fisherman could adequately interpret this use of language if their expertise *qua* expertise is fishing.

Socrates' final example is divination. First, in the *Odyssey*, he quotes Theoclymenus, who is a prophet of Melampus' sons:

> Are you mad? What evil is this that's upon you? Night has enshrouded your hands, your faces, and down to your knees. Wailing spreads like fire, tears wash your cheeks. Ghosts fill the dooryard, ghosts fill the hall, they rush to the black gate of hell, they drop below darkness. Sunlight has died from a sky run over with evil mist (537b1-8) (*Odyssey* 20.351-57; Plato omits line 354).
>
> εἰλύαται κεφαλαί τε πρόσωπά τε νέρθε τε γυῖα, οἰμωγὴ δὲ δέδηε, δεδάκρυνται δὲ παρειαί· εἰδώλων τε πλέον πρόθυρον, πλείη δὲ καὶ αὐλὲ ἰεμένων ἔρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον· ἠέλιος δὲ οὐρανοῦ ἐξαπόλωλε, κακὴ δ᾽ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀχλύς·

The language is poetic and ambiguous and is noteworthy for being the only purported example of possession divination in all of Homer.[14] The passage foretells the future ruin and death of Penelope's suitors. In fact, given the Homeric poet's own account of the scene, which occurs prior to Theoclymenus' divination, it is clear that the seer and Homeric poet are in concord. The preceding description to the divination section:

> …but among the suitors Pallas Athena roused unquenchable laughter, and struck away their wits. And now they laughed with jaws that were not their own, and they ate flesh that was defiled with blood, and their eyes were filled with tears, and their spirits wanted to cry out (*Odyssey* 20.345-49).
>
> …μνηστῆρσι δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη ἄσβεστον γέλω ὦρσε, παρέπλαγξεν δὲ νόημα. οἱ δ᾽ ἤδη γναθμοῖσι γελοίων ἀλλοτρίοισιν, αἱμοφόρυκτα δὲ δὴ κρέα ἤσθιον· ὄσσε δ᾽ ἄρα σφέων δακρυόφιν πίμπλαντο, γόον δ᾽ ὠΐετο θυμός.

The passages are remarkably similar in tone and language. What gives the divination legitimacy is not something external to the text, but rather confirmed by the literary context, both in terms of when it appears, and in the consequences to the suitors. In other words, a divination implanted in a literary context is functionally indistinguishable from a concept like foreshadowing. [15] But the seer does not specialize in literary concepts and so does not constitute an expert in this case.

Augury, one of the most dramatic divinatory methods, is Socrates' example of technical

divination.[16] He quotes from the *Iliad* during the battle of the wall. The Iliadic poet states:

> There came to them a bird as they hungered to cross over an eagle, a high-flier, circled the army's left with a blood-red serpent carried in its talons, a monster, Alive, still breathing, it has not yet forgotten its warlust, for it struck its captor on the breast, by the neck; it was writhing back but the eagle shot it groundwards in agony of pain, and dropped it in the midst of the throng, then itself, with a scream, soared on a breath of the wind (7.200-207).
>
> ὄρνις γάρ σφιν ἐπῆλθε περησέμεναι μεμαῶσιν, αἰετος ὑψιπέτης, ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ λαὸν ἐέρψων, φοινήεντα δράκοντα φέρων ὀνύχεσσι πέλωπον, ζῳόν, ἔτ' ἀσπαίροντα · καὶ οὔπω λήθετο χάρμης. κόψε γὰρ αὐτὸν ἔχοντα κατὰ στῆθος παρὰ δειρὴν ἰδνωθεὶς ὀπίσω, ὁ δ' ἀπὸ ἕθεν ἧκε χαμᾶζε ἀλγήσας ὀδύνῃσι, μέσῳ δ' ἐγκάββαλ' ὁμίλῳ · αὐτός δὲ κλάγξας πέτετο πνοιῇς ἀνέμοιο.

For Socrates, it is for the seer to "examine and judge" (*skopein kai krinein*) (539d2) these passages. What is presupposed in both examples is that divination constitutes a legitimate *technē*. Although the technical/possession distinction is never explicitly made in the *Ion*, these two Homeric quotes come closest.[17] In fact, it is sometimes overlooked that both possession and technical divination are treated as genuine *technai*.[18]

The bird omen does not occur to anybody specific, but is open to interpretation. Polydamas, a soldier, interprets the event, and it is never mentioned whether or not he has any specific divinatory skills. All the Trojans seem to interpret the omen as a negative sign. This suggests that one does not require any special expertise like the *technē* of divination, which contradicts Socrates' claim that the omen can only be adequately judged by a specialist, the seer. If lots of people can judge literary depictions of a bird omen, then it does not constitute a *technē*.

There is something else peculiar about divination, particularly the claim that the first quotation of Theoclymenus' constitutes the only instance of possession divination in the Homeric texts. There is certainly something unnerving about it.[19] It is Erymachus, Polybus' son, who accuses Theoclymenus of being "out of his mind" (*aphrainei*) (20.360). This implies that Theoclymenus' is indeed possessed. Yet it is a suitor who makes the claim, and the suitors reject the divination as laughable. In this sense, the claim that Theoclymenus is out of his mind is a claim that he is mad, as opposed to actually inspired. Shortly thereafter, Theoclymenus retorts that he has a "sound enough head" (*noos en stēthessi tetugmenos ouden aeikēs*.) (20.366) on his shoulders to make his own exit. In fact, he subsequently interprets his divine episode:

> I see advancing on you all a catastrophe which you cannot hope to survive or shun, no, not a single one of you with your brutal acts and reckless plots here in the home of godlike Odysseus (20.367-370).
>
> τοῖς ἔξειμι θύραζε, ἐπεὶ νοέω κακὸν ὔμμιν ἐρχόμενον, τό κεν οὔ τις ὑπεκφύγοι οὐδ' ἀλέαιτο μνηστήρων, οἳ δῶμα κάτ' ἀντιθέου Ὀδυσῆος ἀνέρας ὑβρίζοντες ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάασθε.

According to the standard account of divination presented in the dialogues, possessed seers cannot interpret their divinations.[20]

Therefore, Theoclymenus appears to be a different sort of seer. He has visionary expertise minus the mediumistic possession of seers like the Pythia.

Flower introduces the concept of intuitive divination, which is distinct from both technical and possession divination.[21] He defines it as a special ability wherein the seer spontaneously 'sees' reality or the future but does not depend on being possessed. For example, consider Calchas in the Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. From witnessing two eagles, he prophesizes that Troy will fall. A sacrifice is needed. Calchas is not possessed but he does intuit, or see, future events. This concept can be fruitfully applied to Theoclymenus; he uses the same ocular imagery that Calchas uses (20.367).

Socrates cites two examples of divination because they constitute distinct types, and it has been thought that this must mean Socrates' first Homeric quote is possession divination.[22] But careful attention to the Homeric epics shows that the situation is more complicated. The difference between the two Homeric quotations is not one of possession and technical, but intuitive and technical. This solves the problem of interpreting literary instances of a *technē*. If it is the case that Theoclymenus is an intuitive seer, not a possessed one, then he can interpret his prophetic vision. A degree of self-awareness is retained.[23]

In the next section, I analyze an account that seeks to bridge the gap between possession divination and the concept of *technē*. Smith and Brickhouse argue that the technical component of possession consists in knowing how to trigger possession. Although I think this argument has merit in the context of possession divination, Theoclymenus flouts the ordinary senses of possession divination. Theoclymenus, in Homer, represents an intuitive seer, someone who can 'examine and judge' literary depictions of a divination.

PART III: *POSSESSION* DIVINATION IS A *TECHNĒ*

At the beginning of the *Ion*, divination is characterized as a *technē*. Then it is characterized as the complete opposite of a *technē*, namely as a result of a divine power. At first glance, the third case of divination seems to combine the two, that is, as characterizing possession divination as a *technē*. In their analysis of divination in Plato's dialogues, Brickhouse and Smith point to various passages in the dialogues where divination is characterized as a *technē*.[24] If it is a *technē*, then divination must constitute some form of knowledge. They conclude that the possessed seer possesses "a genuine – though relatively paltry – craft, and thus a… certain – though relatively paltry – form of knowledge" (37). What buttresses their analysis are two sections in the *Statesman* (260e1, 290c4-6) that distinguish between two sorts of *technai*. The first initiates commands; the kingly *technē* is the paradigmatic example. The second, by contrast, merely apes the commands of the first. Such *technai* include: "the interpreter, the person who gives the time to the rowers, the seer, the herald, and many other sorts of expertise related to these" (*eis tauton meixomen basilikēn hermēneutikē, keleustikē, mantikē, kērukikē, kai pollais heterais toutōn tekhnais suggenesin, hai sumpasai to g' epitattein ekhousin*) (*Statesman* 260d11-e2).

But according to the *Apology*, seers "know nothing of what they say" (*isasin de ouden hōn legousi*) (22c1-4). How can a seer be ignorant yet still possess a *technē*? More to the point, the reason seers do not know what they say is because they are mad.[25] In response to this, Brickhouse and Smith 1993, 42 state:

> What needs to be explained then is the relationship between the diviner's craft

> and the knowledge which constitutes it and the truths or commands they divine when they are "mad" and "out of their minds.

For Socrates, poets are akin to seers in that they function not according to knowledge, but to "a sort of natural talent and by inspiration" (*alla phusei tini kai enthousiazontes*) (*Apology* 22b8-c2). When a seer divines, they are not self-aware, and so can hardly be thought of as utilizing a *technē*. Consequently, they are not qualified to offer an interpretation of the divination.[26]

The only thing the seer might reasonably know is that they have had an authentic divinatory episode.[27] For Brickhouse and Smith 1993, the answer lies in the ability of the seer to enter into a state of madness or frenzy:

> …even if this *technē* only enables the diviners to enter into the state of receptivity to the god – a state in which they are *ekphrones* – the knowledge that constitutes their *technē* is hardly trivial (45).

Seers do possess a *technē*; it consists of the ability to enter into a state of frenzy. The Pythia knows the necessary conditions to enter into a state of possession. Brickhouse and Smith maintain that the seer can access superlative moral truths. The problem, of course, is these moral truths remain something of a mystery. The gods' motivation for communicating them is unclear.[28]

Brickhouse and Smith's argument has a pleasing synthesis. They combine both horns of divination in such a way that preserves (1) the mediumistic nature of possession together with (2) the features of a *technē*. I agree with their account for possessed seers like the Pythia, but their argument glosses over a seer like Theoclymenus. In particular, their account is unable to account for a seer who has a divine gift, experiences visions, and furthermore is the person most qualified to "examine and judge" (*skopein kai krinein*) (539d2) relevant passages in Homer. Seers who undergo possession cannot examine and judge their divinations.[29] Moreover, such a seer cannot be characterized merely as a technical seer, an augur for instance, because their expertise includes a visionary element.

When Socrates introduces the two examples of Homeric divination, he does so in order to show Ion that rhapsody does not have a distinct subject matter. Since a genuine *technē* requires its own subject matter, rhapsody is not a *technē*. More specifically, he shows Ion that the relevant craftsperson, not the rhapsode, is best able to interpret literary instances of their *technē*. According to the epistemological reasons already outlined, it is difficult to see how a possessed seer could 'examine and judge' what occurs to Theoclymenus.[30]

One difficulty with this argument is that the focus is too much on Theoclymenus as he is depicted in Homer. In the context of the *Ion*, together with evidence drawn from dialogues like the *Phaedrus*, it is easier to think that the possibility of a seer like Theoclymenus is rejected. This would be persuasive if there was no evidence of seers like Theoclymenus in Plato's dialogues. But one paradigmatic example of an intuitive seer is Diotima in the *Symposium*. She is depicted as a seer, she hails from Mantinea (*mantis* – seer), and is responsible for delaying a plague for ten years by recommending the appropriate sacrifices.[31]

Although a thorough investigation of Diotima is beyond the scope of the present paper, it suffices that she is both (1) a seer, and (2) depicted in an argumentative exchange with Socrates. She is not a philosopher but she knows

the nature of *Eros* as well as the Form of Beauty. Her knowledge is the result of her particular expertise – divination. The crucial point is not necessarily what she knows, but that she is able to conceptualize and articulate it in a discursive exchange.[32]

Her particular knowledge befits a philosopher like Socrates.[33] She twice sketches the different stages in the ascent toward the Form of Beauty, which only a philosopher can ever know. She first gives a more detailed account (210a-212a), but within this she also provides a short synopsis (211b-d) not altogether identical with what we see in the longer account. Furthermore, not only does she enlighten Socrates about the nature of *Eros*, but she also explains the deficiencies of Socrates' own account. He was, she claims, mistaken in focusing on 'being loved' as opposed to the proper *explanadum*, namely that of being a lover (204c).

Diotima's ability to 'examine and judge' her divinations demonstrates that Theoclymenus is not as antithetical to the epistemology Plato develops as it might first seem. Since Diotima can argue for her position, she is not a seer of the usual Platonic sort. In fact, in her ability to argue and extrapolate a position, she seems to act much more like Socrates, despite the fact that she is not a philosopher.[34]

Smith and Brickhouse's argument demonstrates how the possessed seer has a *technē*. I have outlined reasons for thinking that such an account fails to explain how a seer is best qualified to interpret Theoclymenus' vision. In order for such an analysis to take place, the intuitive seer must retain a degree of self-awareness, which is precluded for possessed seers. Why is the distinction between inspiration and *technē* undermined? I submit that this undermining tacitly offers Ion a way out of the epistemological labyrinth erected by Socrates. Recall that it is Socrates who commits Ion to a false dichotomy: either he is possessed by a god, and therefore does not have *technē*, or he does have a *technē* and can therefore (1) apply it to the whole subject matter, and (2) interpret literary depictions of it. Since Ion can do neither (1) nor (2), he is possessed by a god when he performs Homer.

CONCLUSION

When Ion shows that he is aware of the effect he has on his audience (535e), he contradicts Socrates' account of divine inspiration.[35] Insofar as he is aware, Ion is not divinely inspired in the mediumistic sense. The claim to be divinely inspired is ersatz and self-serving. He wants money. Of course, monetary concerns are compatible with divine inspiration, but in the context, it ought to set off warning bells. So, far from being out of his mind, Ion is intimately aware of his abilities and his effect on audiences. He admits to catering his performance to the audience.

It is too strong, I think, to conclude that divine inspiration is wholly rejected. The notion that the best poets are divinely inspires permeates the dialogues.[36] In the context of the *Ion*, the rhapsode's passivity is emphasized by appeal to possession divination. But since Ion remains sensitive to his effect on the audience, he is not totally passive, not a medium through which Homer and the gods operate. Nevertheless, the dialogical exchange between Socrates and Ion reveals the possibility that an exemplary rhapsode can combine the alleged paradoxical features of Ion's expertise.

Divination, deployed at each argumentative stage of the dialogue, provides the syncretic model for Ion to emulate, and navigate out of Socrates' dichotomy. A seer like Theoclymenus is simultaneously inspired and self-aware; Ion

could try to explain his expertise in this manner. That he does not perceive this means of accommodating Socrates' questioning demonstrates that he is not as prestigious as intuitive seers like Theoclymenus or Diotima. Rather, like most seers, rhapsodists, and poets, Ion is ignorant of his abilities.

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NOTES

1 Harris 2004, 189-198 argues that Socrates distorts the relationship between *technē* and inspiration in order to subvert poetry's prestige.

2 Bloom 1970, 57 states, 'By reflecting on divining we can penetrate what Socrates wishes to teach us about rhapsody and poetry'.

3 Socrates' account of divine inspiration, in particular, is a common target of ironic interpretations. Woodruff 1983 writes, "The first thing to notice about Plato's account of inspiration is that it is literally false" (8). For other ironic accounts, Tigerstedt 1969, 26-29; Bloom 1970, 55-56; Murray 1996, 10-12; Liebert 2008, 202-25.

4 Brickhouse and Smith 1993, 37-51. Epistemologically, possessed seers can access true beliefs, but not knowledge, since they cannot give an explanation of their claims. Cf. *Meno* 99c-d.

5 My argument has affinity with Trivigno 2012, 283-313. Both of us agree that the *Ion* contains a "serious philosophical point" (283), which lies in-between the polarized account of rhapsody given by Socrates. Both of us see divination as to providing Ion with a model. Our disagreement lies in how we argue for such a position. Trivigno accepts the distinction between possession and technical divination. His justification for combining them into what he calls 'oracular divination' is two-fold. First, poetry and divination are connected in other dialogues, notably the *Apology* (22a-c) where the Delphic Oracle is central. Second, since oracular divination resolves the tension between technical and inspired accounts, the move is "irresistible" (300) to make. The strength of my reading, by contrast, is to mine the richness of Theoclymenus as depicted in *The Odyssey*. As I show in Part II, Theoclymenus is best understood to be an oracular seer, or what I call, following Flower 2008, an 'intuitive seer'. As such, he constitutes a model for Ion.

6 Trivigno 2012, 309-311 argues that the dichotomy is undermined so as to gesture toward an anti-authoritarian oracular model of rhapsody. By this, he means that good poetry ought to provoke self-reflection and critical thought, not blind adherence to authority. Ion, when challenged, seems to fall back on the authority of Homer.

7 As noted by many, Socrates oscillates between interrogating Ion's purported ability to perform and his ability to interpret Homer. This is particularly noteworthy because it points to the complex, often ambivalent, account of the *technai* associated with inspiration. Baltzly 1992, 30; Guthrie 1965, 218; Grote 1888, 125; Grube 1965, 41.

8 Harris 2004, 189-198; Havelock 1963, 155-156 on the cleavage between inspiration and *technē*. Both Murray 1996, 1-5 and Halliwell 1999, 271-273 note how Plato distinguishes between inspiration and *mimesis* as it figures into the operational mode of the poets. Inspiration and *mimesis* "pull the understanding of poetry in opposite directions" (Halliwell 1999, 272). Whereas *mimesis* depends crucially on the theory of Forms, which is absent from the *Ion*, inspiration depends upon the activity of the gods. I am not at all certain that such a strong division can be maintained, however, especially once attention is turned to the *Symposium*. For in Diotima's ascent passage there is both the language of inspiration and the Form of Beauty.

9 All quotations are translations from Cooper 1997.

10 In the *Republic*, Socrates characterizes the Pythia as the 'Delphic Apollo' and as the god who sits at the center of the earth (427c). Legislation is the topic under consideration and Socrates asserts that since he and his interlocutors have no knowledge of how best to serve the divine (i.e., what sorts of temples need to be constructed, what sacrifices to be made, etc.), it is prudent that they follow Apollo as he manifests himself in the Pythia. Note, then, the co-extensiveness between the Pythia and Apollo; when the seer is possessed, she is literally Apollo. Her words are actually Apollo's words.

11 This pairing is unique to Plato. Mikalson 2010, 125-126, following Parker 2005, 111-112, speculates that the *chresmodoi* might refer back to the 5th century *chresmologoi*, who were collectors or interpreters of oracles. Importantly for Plato, the former are inspired while the latter are never depicted as such.

12 Detienne and Vernant 1991, 1-5.

13 Terms to account for *metis* include "flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years" (Detienne and Vernant 1991, 3).

14 Liebert 2010, 191; Murray 1981, 94; Lowenstam 1993, 26-27.

15 Accordingly, "the prophecy functions rather as a narrative device, an instance of foreshadowing and dramatic irony, and not an instance of divination per se" (Liebert 2010, 192).

16 Flower 2008, 25.

17 Liebert 2010, 190 notes how Socrates "chooses

two literary examples of the same craft which illustrate the paradoxical aspects of that craft".

18 Murray 1996, 105-106 dispels the paradox of divination's dual function in the *Ion* by appeal to the distinction in the *Phaedrus*. Also, Trivigno's argument claims that as a private experience, no seer would be able to interpret Theoclymenus' vision. This is so because they would need to have access to the vision itself. Trivigno fails to notice that Theoclymenus' himself interprets the vision, which shows that he remains self-aware while experiencing the vision.

19 Liebert 2010 quotes several scholars who characterize it as "the most eerie passage in Homer," (Russo 1992, 124) and part of "a very remarkable and macabre scene." (Stanford 1948, 353).

20 Cf. *Phaedrus* 244d-e; *Timaeus* 71a-72.

21 Flower 2008, 87-91 also characterizes this type of divination as 'second sight' or an "innate faculty of divination (*emphutikos mantikē*)" (87). It is crucial to note that Flower connects technical with intuitive divination. Many seers, such as Calchas in *The Odyssey*, were both an augur and had a "prophetic intuition" (88). This is important in the sense that it explains why Socrates quotes a passage from Homer that depicts technical divination. Dodds 1963, 70-71 also makes reference to this alternate form of divination, drawing together Theoclymenus, Cassandra of the *Agamemnon*, and the Argive seer of Apollo, all for whom prophetic madness was "spontaneous and incalculable" (70). Dodds distinguishes between the visionary divinations of these figures and the enthusiasm, or strong possession, of the Pythia.

22 Murray 1981 notes: "It has long been recognised, however, that, with the exception of Theoclymenus at Ody. XX. 351-7, prophecy of this visionary nature is absent from Homer" (94).

23 Flower 2008, 88-89 also distinguishes between two sorts of possession. The first is the familiar sort where the seer's self temporarily departs, such that the god literally occupies the body of the seer. The seer's self-consciousness is absent. In the second sort, by contrast, the seer retains some semblance of self-identity. Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* is an example. Even though she prophesizes, she is aware of the content of her prophecy, which in this case is her own death. In fact, I disagree with Flower 2008 who seems to think that Theoclymenus does not interpret his vision, since he is an "altered state of consciousness" (79), but leaves the interpretation to the audience. The text shows that Theoclymenus interprets his vision to mean the future ruin of Penelope's suitors.

24 cf. *Ion* 538e; *Laches* 198e-199a; *Phaedrus* 244c

25 cf. *Phaedrus* 244a6-d5; *Ion* 534b5.

26 Instructive here is *Timaeus* 71e-72b wherein Plato introduces the need to appoint official interpreters of seer. For Plato, "as long as the fit remains on him [the seer], the man is incompetent to render judgment on his own visions and voices" (72a3-4) (τοῦ δὲ μανέντος ἔτι τε ἐν τούτῳμένοντος οὐκ ἔργον τὰ φανέντα καὶ φωνηθέντα ὑφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ κρίνειν). We might take this to mean that the seer is permitted to interpret their own divinations once they have regained their cognitive faculties. Instead, Plato asserts the need to appoint official interpreters and further states that these individuals should not be misinterpreted as seers themselves (72b). These interpreters would have a degree of interpretive skill and could therefore be thought to possess a *technē*. Such interpreters are needed because they are in their 'right mind' and can 'recollect and ponder' what was said or described while the seer was asleep or in a visionary state. One might think it obvious that one could remember the content of a prophetic dream, but important here is Plato's claim is words "spoken [out loud] in dream".

27 Smith and Brickhouse 1993, 45.

28 McPherran 1996, 196-197 agrees with Brickhouse and Smith that Socrates grants seers "a certain kind of menial craft knowledge; namely, the knowledge of how to put themselves into a position to receive a god's revelations (196-197). Of further interest is McPherran's claim about Socrates' *daimonion*. According to McPherren, the adjectival character of the *daimonion*, together with other considerations, give credence to the idea that Socrates does not experience an all-consuming possession of the sort experienced by seers. Rather, what seems to occur is "the other sort of psychological disassociation recognized by late – and so possibly early – antiquity, where 'subjects' consciousness persists side by side" (McPherran 1996, 196). This idea of compartmentalization has affinity with my own thesis concerning intuitive seers.

29 Important here is to distinguish between the official interpreters that can be trained to interpret divinations (*Timaeus* 71a-72) and seers themselves. The former does not jive with Socrates' argument in the *Ion*, which stipulates that only practitioners of a *technē* can judge (literary) depictions of that *technē*. Since one could train an official interpreter, could Theoclymenus' divination, then, be an instance of possession divination? I do not think so because Socrates' argument exclusively deals with experts judging (literary) depictions of their own *technē*. The problem with treating Theoclymenus' vision as an instance of possession divination is that a possessed seer cannot formulate such judgments. This should trigger serious reflect on the part of the reader as to what Socrates is thinking by deploying divination as his final, and indeed most sustained, example.

30 The 'examine and judge' criterion also opposes Trivigno's claim that no seer could judge what occurs to Theoclymenus because of the fundamental privacy of the vision. To judge the vision adequately, a seer would need to experience the vision themselves. But this underestimates the breadth of what Socrates is asking – can a seer judge whether or not a divination in Homer is well or badly composed? I do not think much else can be asked than drawing on one's experiences and training.

31 Cf. *Symposium* 201d.

32 Consider the structure of the *Symposium*. The only participant not to give a speech is Socrates who instead speaks about a retold discussion he had with

Diotima. As her central function is to be a discussant, it is most important that she be able to examine and judge her divinations.

33 Incidentally, it is useful to keep in mind Socrates *daimonion*, which emerges repeatedly in Plato's dialogues (*Apology* 31c-e, 40a-c, *Euthyphro* 3b, *Euthydemus* 272e, *Republic* VI 496c, *Phaedrus* 242 b-c; *Theaetetus* 151a). His sign is never characterized as the possession *cum* passivity that the Pythia experiences. One reason is that Socrates usually characterizes his *daimonion* as a sign (*Apology* 31d3, *Phaedrus* 242c2) and not as the actual possession of a god. In this way, Socrates retains a degree of self-awareness. Another reason is that the *daimonion* only discourages (*Euthydemus* 272e; *Phaedrus* 242b-c; *Apology* 40a-c). This coalesces with Socrates' privileging of reason. The *daimonion* causes him to reflect on something, which his reason then takes up and evaluates. For these reasons, Socrates' *daimonion* is thought to be different than what occurs to seers when they divine. So, for instance, Van Riel 2013, paraphrasing McPherren 1996, writes "this *daimonion* is not of the same order as is recourse to divine inspiration or divination, or even a dream. Take for example the divine inspiration of poets (such as discussed in the *Ion*), or the Homeric hero possessed by a god, or the possession of the Maenads: each time, the subject is deprived of reason, and an external divine force takes control of his actions. There is none of this with regard to Socrates' *daimonion*…Divination and dreams, for their part, are occasional interventions of the divine, signs given by a god outside of us" (34). Van Riel is correct as far it takes us, but I think that this does a disservice to intuitive seers like Theoclymenus and Diotima. These seers are able to interpret their divinations, thereby giving credence to the notion that they remain self-aware when they divine.

34 Diotima is also variously characterized as "wise" (*Symposium* 201d3, 208b8) and this underscores the notion that she is not a possessed seer.

35 Tigerstedt 1969, 21.

36 cf. *Symposium* 209 b-e; *Phaedrus* 245a; *Laws* 692a, 811c9-10, 817a.

BOOK REVIEWS

C. Huffman (edited by), A History of Pythagoreanism

Cambridge University Press, 2014, 530 pp., $ 70.00.

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Pythagoreanism has always been, over the centuries, one of the most elusive and ambiguous phenomena of Ancient Greek philosophy. As Domenico Musti says, if the origin of the concept of *Megale Hellas* cannot be directly linked to Pythagoras and his followers, we can undoubtedly be sure about relating the disappearance of Pythagoreanism with the general crisis and decline of Magna Graecia. Why, then, is such a significant and influential reality so difficult to grasp definitely? The volume edited by Carl Huffman explains it perfectly. The title of the book gives us a first hint: Pythagoreanism cannot be considered separately from its history. This means that we cannot give a sufficient account or express a valuable analysis of Pythagoreanism without dealing with the interpretations and the judgments of ancient and contemporary interpreters. Comprehension of Pythagoreanism, in fact, necessarily passes through the reading of late sources and through the understanding of a constantly renewed interest – differently motivated in different eras – in the figure of Pythagoras and in his doctrines.

This explains exactly why this volume has to be regarded as the most complete book about Pythagoreanism published in the last years. Moreover, it also shows why it works both as a very detailed introduction to the argument and as an insightful analysis for already experienced readers. It is an arduous task to do justice to the volume, made up of twenty-one essays, in a short review. Every essay, in fact, deals with a specific chronologically and conceptually well-focused argument and the book as a whole covers the enormous timespan from the sixth century BC to the seventeenth century AD. The risk of being inaccurate is completely warded off: every issue which has ever been associated with Pythagoreanism is covered. This is why

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every essay would deserve an appropriate and extensive discussion. In addition, the general approach of the essays is to raise questions rather than giving definitions. This approach, especially if speaking about Pythagoreanism, is the most profitable.

Already in the first chapter – which follows an exhaustive introduction of the essays by Carl A. Huffman –, Geoffrey Lloyd warns us against labels. By presenting the evidence in the early sources, in the fourth century and the in the later sources, and, by doing so, giving an historical account of the most important readings of Pythagoras, the author introduces us to the enigmatic world of Pythagoreanism. Accordingly, right from the start the reader is informed about the necessary caution needed by the subject and about the impossibility for scholars to come to an agreement about the main issues. At the same time, however, he is not left with a disorientating sensation.

Pythagoreanism, in fact, slowly emerges by reading the following chapters. Chapter 2 (by Daniel W. Graham) and 3 (by Malcom Schofield) deal with Philolaus and Archytas, the most famous figures related to Pythagoreanism. The picture is enriched in details by chapter 4 in which Leonid Zhmud suggests the use of the *family resemblance criterion* as the only way to partially consider the overlapping but never homogeneous interests of the Pythagoreans of the sixth, fifth and fourth century BC. Chapter 5 (by Catherine Rowett) examines the political impact of Pythagoreans on the city-states of Southern Italy. The author suggests to look at the tie of friendship and at the principle of common property as the key to Pythagorean's leadership; chapter 6 (by M. Laura Gemelli Marciano) gives a careful account of Pythagorean *akousmata* which are reintegrated in the ritual role of the *polis* and connected to an individual consciousness and receptiveness of the divine presence in the world, that promotes a profound attitude to reality. Chapters 7 to 9 (in order, by Gábor Betegh, Reviel Netz and Andrew Barker) deal with the main topics commonly related to Pythagoreanism, such as religion and its connection with Orphism, mathematics and harmonics. Chapters 10 to 14 (in order, by John Palmer, Oliver Primavesi, John Dillon, Carl A. Huffman and Stefan Schorn) explore Pythagoreanism applying to the Academic and Peripatetic experiences and to the historical tradition. Pythagoreanism is thus described in its reception by Plato, Aristotle, the Early Academics, Neopythagorean authors, Peripatetics and the historians. This change of perspective enables a new and differentiated comprehension of the phenomenon, stimulating our awareness of the intentions shared by single authors and, eventually, by different traditions. Chapter 15 (by Bruno Centrone) focuses on the pseudo-Pythagorean writings. Under the heterogeneity of the forgeries, probably composed in different periods and places, we can nonetheless recognize – between the numerous contributions – a general tendency towards a reconciliation of Platonic doctrines with Aristotelian patterns. The next chapter (by Jaap-Jan Flinterman) is committed to introducing Pythagoreanism in Rome and in Asia Minor. Taking as a starting point the *renovatio* of Pythagoreanism by means of Nigidius Figulus witnessed by Cicero, the author then moves to Asia Minor and takes into consideration enigmatic figures such as Apollonius of Tyana and Alexander of Abonouteichos, whose deeds can be situated in the borderland between legend and reality. Chapters 17 to 19 (in order, by André Laks, Constantinos Macris and Dominic J. O'Meara) focus their attention on Diogene Laertius' and Porphyry's *Life of Pythagoras* and on Iamblichus' *On Pythagoreanism*, while chapters 20 and 21 (respectively by Andrew

Hicks and Michael J. B. Allen) follow the reception of Pythagoreanism in its itinerary from late antiquity, through the Middle Ages, to the Early Renaissance.

It is precisely in regard of the reception of Pythagoreanism that is possible to make the only critical comment about the present volume. In chapters 12, 15 and 19 in particular, but also in chapters 17-18, beyond the specific topics of the essays, it is possible to get a glimpse of the question of the legitimization of wisdom. Indeed, even if the issue is constantly touched and pervades the pages of the book, it is never explicitly thematized. Notably, the experiences of the Academy and the Lyceum produced a strong awareness of the question of philosophical identity. To be rooted in the groove of tradition – thus implying a clear consciousness of both the personal orientation and of the content of the philosophical belonging – also meant a crucial concern for a *protos heuretes*. Identifying the germs of the successive theoretical addresses in the thought of an ancestor was no careless choice and it obviously caused considerable consequences. For example, in order to validate the skeptical shift of the Academy while remaining within the Platonic tradition, Arcesilaus recognized in Socrates' thought the seeds of his position. Pythagoreanism, as immediately evident by the phenomenon of pseudo-Pythagorean writings, does perform, in this perspective, a leading role. The later authors, strongly committed to a well-defined philosophical identity, make a diffuse use of Pythagoreanism in order to authenticate their own views and the one of their masters, invoking the blessing of Pythagoras. The reason why Pythagoreanism undergoes so many metamorphosis over centuries has in fact to be ascribed also to this tendency: Pythagoreanism assumes different shapes according to the different needs – authoritative ones too – claimed by different eras and authors. A clearer display of this habit can be traced in Iamblichus' *On Pythagoreanism*; even if the author declares to be committed to the ancient and original Pythagoreanism, the book can be considered a very personal expression of it, accurately and consciously built – as O'Meara shows in his essay in relation to *VP* – through the pages of his writings. Therefore, Iamblichean Pythagoreanism can legitimately encompass in the definition of its identity a huge variety of philosophical contributions and nonetheless present itself as genuine and authentic.

In conclusion, the book is strongly recommended because, similarly to the effect Pythagoreanism has always had on ancient and contemporary interpreters, it intrigues the reader and leaves him with a puzzling, but not unclear, impression, and the desire to know more.

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S. B. Levin, *Plato's Rivalry with Medicine. A Struggle and its Dissolution*,

Oxford University Press,
New York 2014, 299 pp, £42.00.

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The identification of a technical model that was epistemologically valuable and could represent the foundations of his philosophical doctrine was among Plato's main concerns. The Platonic production, in fact, often deals with the enquiry about the principles characterising a *techne* as opposed to the empirical praxis. The confrontation Plato had with the *technai* of his time, including their epistemological premises and their status, nurtured his production from his early writings until the very last ones. Medicine plays a particularly important role in this framework. This discipline, in fact, frequently represents a term of comparison, and Plato's approach to it has not always been the same. Undoubtedly, the medical inquiries had an important influence on Plato's epistemological and political thought, although his interpretation of the medical tradition was not completely faithful to the doctrines and aims of their authors.

Susan B. Levin's new book, *Plato's Rivalry with Medicine: A Struggle and its Dissolution* belongs to those studies dedicated to the analysis of the relationship standing between Plato's doctrine and the 'technical' models of Antiquity, and aims to define the philosopher's position regarding the medical art. In the introduction, the Author explains how, from her point of view, scholars have very often underestimated the role played by medicine and by its epistemological paradigm in the development of Platonic philosophy. As a consequence, the aim that Levin attributes to her volume is to analyse the relationship between Plato's thought and the medical art according to the different conceptions that appear in the dialogues. Hence, the volume represents the reconstruction of Plato's views on medicine and their evolution, starting from the early dialogues until those composed towards the end of his career. The Author constantly highlights the links that

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connect the different dialogues, thanks to a broader and systematic view of the subject matter, that includes all the variations that the Platonic doctrine regarding the *technai*, and more specifically medicine, underwent.

The first two chapters of the volume are dedicated to the *Gorgias*. They respectively deal with the theme of the Good and the body-soul relationship (chapter I), and the double relationship existing between philosophy and medicine (chapter II). First, Levin points out the positive consideration Plato took medicine into compared to rhetoric, and then she highlights the limits he attributes to it, as epistemologically weaker than philosophy. Levin then leads her attention towards other dialogues: the *Symposium*, and in particular the character of the physician Eryximachus (chapter III); the *Republic* and the critique moved towards medicine as a discipline that cannot be considered as a *techne* (chapter IV); the *Statesman*, in which the political and social consequences of medicine are emphasized (chapter V); and the *Laws*, that introduces a solution to the opposition between philosophy and medicine (chapter VI). The last chapter proposes an interpretation of the Platonic inheritance in relations to contemporary bioethics, with particular stress on the concept of *paideia*.

Let's now move closer to some crucial themes of the volume. As already mentioned, the main focus of the volume is to analyse the several points of view on *iatriche techne* that appear in the *Corpus Platonicum*, and to underline its epistemological as well as its political implications. Furthermore, Levin aims to clarify both the merits that led Plato to the appreciation of the medical art, and also the reasons leading him to reject medicine as a technical model.

In her description, the Author places great emphasis on the famous distinction between *techne* and *empeiria*, together with the resulting possibility to distinguish what *episteme* is, from what it is not: "The dialogue's highly normative concept of *techne* gives Plato, at a stroke, a philosophical lens through which to (1) delineate what activities do and do not merit pursuit (*technai* and *empeiriai* respectively), and (2) defend hierarchical claims about *technai* vis-à-vis one another" (cf. p. 7). In other words, in the *Gorgias*, Plato unequivocally presents the definition of *techne*, in order to be able to distinguish the real *technai* from empirical practices lacking any kind of causal explanation. Thanks to such approach, it will be possible to distance philosophy from sophistic rhetoric, due to the different epistemological status of the two disciplines.

The thorough analysis of the *Gorgias* allows Levin to identify a double characterisation of medicine. In a way, in fact, medicine's method is opposed to that of the sophistic rhetoric, as it follows the conception of competence, often evoked by Plato. Medicine has an object, which is the body, and has knowledge of the causal relationships that govern it. In order to make his point clear, Plato compares it to cookery, which is dedicated to the body as well, but merely to the hedonistic aspect, aimed at flattering its beneficiary and not at maintaining health. In conclusion, medicine is conceived as an art aspiring to a higher Good: the health of the body. In this way, medicine becomes a powerful ally in the fight against rhetoric, the art of persuasion, thanks to the knowledge on the causes altering the bodily *eukrasia* and, then, the remedy that can restore it (in this framework, diagnosis and prognosis, two elements of Hippocratic medicine are crucial).

The digression the Author proposes regarding the influence exerted by the Hippocratic literature on the Platonic concept of medicine is very interesting (pp. 42-53). The contribution of texts such as *Ancient Medicine*; *Airs, Waters and Places*; *Regimen* and other treatises of the

Hippocratic Corpus is pivotal in the definition of medicine as a *techne*, thanks to the identification of some elements that characterize the medical art, and to the refusal of the role played by *tyche* in the context of their professional praxis. Hence, Plato is highly indebted with the Hippocratic medicine, as Levin points out. Nonetheless, one great merit has to be acknowledged to Plato: that of the systematisation of the doctrines scattered all over the Hippocratic medical treatises.

On the other hand, though, Plato did not accept that medicine could be recognized as the technical model *par excellence*. Such impossibility derives from the fact that, being an art dedicated to the body, it cannot entail the higher goods –*agatha*- as those only pertain to the domain of the *psyche* (cf. p. 41 e ff). In line with this point of view, the Author affirms: «In the *Republic*, Plato cashes out the implications for medicine of the flaws the *Symposium* diagnosed in its views of *physis* and *eudaimonia*. The *Republic* circumscribes the terrain of medicine such that lifestyle, to which right handling of the Big Three is central, becomes instead the province of philosophy» (p. 110).

A different point of view is presented in the *Laws*, where the distinction between the free and the slave physician implies a new openness towards medicine. In fact, Plato's critique here is directed only to those who learn the medical art by the sole means of experience. From such practitioners, he distinguishes the physicians who can explain phenomena – *logon didonai*- and have deep knowledge of their art and its method and procedures. Both medicine and the physician then gain back their value and recognition, as confirmed by Plato in book IX of the *Laws*, when he has the Athenian stranger affirm: «For of this you may be very sure, that if one of those empirical physicians, who practice medicine without science, were to come upon the gentleman physician talking to his gentleman patient, and using the language almost of philosophy, beginning at the beginning of the disease and discoursing about the whole nature of the body, he would burst into a hearty laugh» (cf. 857c-d). As in the *Gorgias*, then, medicine's characterization establishes a comparison that brings medicine closer to philosophy, strengthening Plato's consideration of this discipline.

Levin herself admits that the analysis of the relationship between philosophy and medicine has been restricted to the dialogues we have briefly mentioned so far, while it does not include, for example, the *Phaedrus* or the *Timaeus*, where Plato's opinion on medicine appears modified from his early writings, but also opposed as the one supported in the *Republic*. It would have probably been interesting to include a section dedicated to these dialogues in order to obtain a more complete picture of the complex Platonic consideration about the *technai*. In particular, not much attention is dedicated to the different attitudes Plato demonstrates in regards to medicine, as for example in the case of the *Phaedrus*, where he states that the method of medicine and the good rhetoric (i.e. philosophy) is more or less the same, as both disciplines rely on *synagoge* and *diairesis* (*Phaedr.* 270b).

Overall, Levin's volume contributes to livening up the discussion about the influence medicine exerted on the development of Platonic philosophy by proposing an interpretation that, thanks to a diachronic analysis of his dialogue, resolves tensions and fluctuations of Plato's position regarding medicine.

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