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SUMMARY

PAPERS

Myth, Virtue, and Method in Plato's Meno[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the prevailing interpretations about the role and the function of recollection in Plato's *Meno* by suggesting that recollection is a cognitive process inaugurated by a myth. This process sets out the methodological and epistemological context within which two transitions are attainable: on the one hand, the methodological transition from the elenchus to the method of hypothesis, and on the other hand, the cognitive upshift from opinion(s) to knowledge. This paper argues, furthermore, that Socrates uses the myth of recollection just when Meno begins to object and tries to give up on their inquiry. Socrates' myth accordingly imprints on Meno's soul a true belief that facilitates the process of recollection by emboldening Meno to continue the inquiry.

Keywords: Recollection, Myth, Virtue, Socratic Elenchus, Method of Hypothesis

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I. INTRODUCTION.

Interpreters agree that in the *Meno* Plato uses the method of elenchus and the method of hypothesis. However, they disagree about the function and status of recollection. No fewer than five interpretations of recollection have been proposed. According to Guthrie (1956), Benson (1990) and Scott (2006), recollection is a robust method for acquiring knowledge that Socrates experimentally implements on the slave. In an alternative interpretation by Sternfeld and Zyskind (1978), recollection is only a myth used by Socrates to motivate inquiry. Moravcsik (1971), by contrast, suggests that recollection is a metaphorical account of how we learn empirically. Against all of these interpretations, Landry (2012) argues that recollection is but a hypothesis for learning. A fifth approach takes recollection primarily as a theory that 'accounts for the metaphysical horizon within which the method of hypothesis, coupled with elenchus and perhaps other dialectical methods, can lead us from opinions to knowledge' (Ionescu 2017, p.9).[2]

This paper offers an alternative interpretation: that recollection is a cognitive process inaugurated by a myth. This process sets out the methodological and epistemological context within which two transitions are attainable: on the one hand, the methodological transition from the elenchus to the method of hypothesis and, on the other hand, the cognitive upgrade from opinion to knowledge. Furthermore, this paper argues that Socrates uses the myth of recollection just when Meno begins to object and tries to give up on their inquiry. Socrates' myth imprints on Meno's soul a true belief that facilitates the process of recollection by emboldening Meno to continue the inquiry.

II. BEFORE THE MYTH OF RECOLLECTION: THE SOCRATIC ELENCHUS AND THE PARADOX.

At the beginning of the dialogue, Meno claims to know what virtue is and is challenged by Socrates to define it.[3] The young Thessalian then begins to present his false beliefs about virtue, and Socrates applies the elenchus in order to examine them.

In his first attempt to define virtue, Meno enumerates a series of virtues: the virtue of a man, the virtue of a woman, the virtue of a child, the virtue of an elderly man and many other kinds of virtue (71e1–72a5). He thus fails to give a unitary account of virtue, as Socrates points out.

Meno then provides a second definition, according to which virtue is the 'ability to rule over people' (73c9). However, the Socratic elenchus reveals this account to be problematic to the extent that it cannot be applied to children and slaves. The definition also fails because it does not specify the kind of ruling, and unjust ruling is clearly not virtue (73c–d).

In his third and last attempt to define virtue, Meno argues that virtue is 'to desire fine things and have the power to get them' (77b2–5). This third definition is more unified and complete than the previous two. Nevertheless, Socrates thinks it is insufficient for two main reasons. First, no one could desire bad things unless they have a false perception that leads them to believe that they, somehow, will be benefitted by those same things. Second, the acquisition of good things cannot be considered virtuous if is not combined with justice, prudence, and piety. However, justice, prudence, and piety are virtues (77b–79e), and as such, they cannot be included within the definition of virtue since the latter is still being explored

for. Defining virtue in such a manner breaks virtue into pieces and leads Socrates to reject two possible scenarios: that virtue can be defined in terms of its parts and that virtue's parts, such as justice, piety, and prudence, can be defined independently of virtue.[4]

The second criticism of the third definition of virtue sets the stage for the introduction of recollection. This becomes obvious if we reconstruct Socrates' argument as follows: if we know parts of virtue and we agree on them – just like Socrates and Meno at this point in the dialogue – then it is impossible not to know *somehow* what virtue is. The myth of recollection is then introduced to explain *how* we know what virtue is: it is through our soul's pre-empirical grasp of things like virtue.

After three unsuccessful attempts to define virtue, Meno is now embarrassed and reluctant to continue their inquiry into what virtue is. The Socratic elenchus has revealed to Meno that his beliefs are false, and he himself admits to being in *aporia* (80a). Meno consequently interrupts the inquiry and introduces the famous 'learner's paradox.' The paradox seems to demonstrate that learning is impossible. For if someone already knows something, he cannot learn it. But if someone doesn't know what he is searching for, even if he finds the object of his inquiry, he will not be able to recognize it (80d–81a). Given this paradox, any effort to seek what virtue is seems to Meno to be feckless and otiose. Even if by luck they came upon the essence of virtue, they wouldn't be able to recognize it.[5]

III. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MYTH OF RECOLLECTION.

In order to save their inquiry into virtue, Socrates tells a 'good' and 'true' story that introduces recollection (Weiss, 2001, p.46).[6] It is a story he heard from divine priests and poets who are able to 'give a reasoned account of their ministry.'[7] Socrates characterizes these poets in a way similar to that of the philosopher-poet in the *Phaedrus*. There, Plato propounds that there is a type of poet that is able to demonstrate the connection between their writings and the truth, and that is the philosopher-poet (*Phdr.* 278c–d). However, in the third and last part of the *Meno,* Plato sketches another kind of poet, whose work derives from divine inspiration and who therefore can narrate true things without knowing them. A poet of this kind is not wise in that he cannot justify in reason his true opinions. He is in the cognitive state of true belief (*Men.* 99b–100c).

There are consequently two kinds of poets in the *Meno*: (1) the divine and wise poets, who know what they are talking about and are able to justify the truth of their speeches or writings; (2) those who are inspired by the gods, who have true beliefs but cannot give a reasoned account of what they say or write. The fact that Plato chooses to present the first kind of poets as the supporters of the recollection doctrine indicates, in my opinion, that he struggles to conjoin the content of his myth with the dialectical method, and thus to give it validity and legitimacy.

Weiss (2001, p.62-76), by contrast, advocates that we should not take seriously the theory of recollection,[8] for three main reasons: first, because it is introduced by a myth, and the *mythos* that Socrates narrates is subordinate to the *logos* (the paradox) of Meno; second, because, by having Socrates narrate a myth, Plato seems to approve the thing that Socrates previously prevented Meno from doing – namely, referring to others' opinions and accounts; third, because Socrates hints that

the priests and the priestesses, who constitute the source of his myth, enunciated these assessments in order to justify and defend their ceremonies and duties.

But if we accept Weiss's opinion, we should accept the following absurdity: though Plato could use *logos* instead of *mythos* to introduce recollection, as he does in the *Phaedo*, he intentionally chooses to misfire at the most critical point of the dialogue. Additionally, if the myth of recollection was not a serious answer to Meno's paradox, as Weiss claims, then the inquiry into virtue's essence should have stopped at this very moment. Yet not only does the inquiry continue, but it continues with a new, more advanced method: *hypothesis*. Weiss's opinion accordingly fails for two main reasons: it not only deprives myth of any contribution to the dialectical argument of the dialogue, it also portrays myth as a misplaced choice by Plato at the most critical stage of the inquiry.

I will instead argue that Plato introduces recollection via myth at the very moment that Meno eristically attempts with the paradox to intercept the dialectical inquiry.[9] The myth functions as a sophistic and a rhetorical tool with which Meno, as a student of Gorgias, was fully familiar. It defuses the tension caused by the previous discussion, and, by doing this, encourages Meno to continue his search for what virtue is under Socrates' guidance.[10] The myth of recollection, therefore, serves as a methodological and gnoseological intermediate to the extent that, as we will see, it facilitates the methodological transition from the Socratic elenchus to the method of hypothesis, on the one hand, and the epistemological upgrade from opinions to knowledge, on the other hand. These transitions occur, as I will try to show, because the myth of recollection imprints in Meno's soul a true belief that encourages him to continue the inquiry about virtue. Such a true belief is necessary for the cognitive process of recollection to be performed.

IV. THE MYTH OF RECOLLECTION.

According to Socrates' myth, the soul is immortal and indestructible. Because of its immortal nature, it has been born in bodies many times and has acquired knowledge of all and everything,[11] in both this world and the nether realms, including virtue.

> For as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things,
> there is no reason why we should not, by remembering but one single thing—
> an act which men call learning—discover everything else,
> if we have courage and faint not in the search;
> since, it would seem, research and learning are wholly recollection.
>
> ***Meno,* 81c8-d6**

Clearly enough, the myth of recollection reopens inquiry's road after Meno's paradox tried to block it. This happens because the myth presents the soul as having the knowledge of everything, despite the fact that it has for some reason forgotten it. This makes it possible for the knowledge to be recollected through the learning and research. Learning is consequently not the acquisition of new knowledge but rather the retrieval – the recollection – of existing knowledge in the soul. Recollection seems to provide an alternative and sufficient answer to Meno's paradox. It enables Socrates to refute Meno's claim that we cannot learn what we already know, as we

already know it. In fact, he somehow even reverses the argument: the things we pre-empirically already know are the only things that we can learn, and the only way to learn (anew) these things is through recollection.

At this point in the dialogue, Plato gives us a key to unlock the mystery of *why* he uses a myth instead of a *logos* to introduce recollection. That key is the presupposition Socrates sets for the achievement of recollection: courage.[12] Only if one is courageous in research will he manage to recollect the things which his soul has seen before incarnation. The question then becomes, *how* is courage imprinted on a student's soul? The *Republic*, a dialogue composed a few years after *Meno*, provides us with an answer to this question by describing courage as the virtue that presides over a well-nourished spirited part. It is through the acquisition of true beliefs imprinted by mythology that a spirited part is effectively nourished (*R.* 429b–d; 442b–c).[13] In this light, it would seem that the myth of recollection nourishes Meno's spirited part with a true belief in order to make him courageous and willing to continue with the inquiry. This paper will elaborate on this notion and attempt to show that the myth of recollection serves as a true belief in the *Meno*.

This myth is offered at the very moment when Meno is possessed by timorousness and bewilderment. Meno himself admits that he stands perplexed and is no longer able to speak about virtue, even though he has given countless speeches on virtue on countless occasions. He describes himself as in a condition of complete puzzlement, numb in both soul and language (80a–b). He increasingly realizes – along with the people that are following the discussion – that he does not know what he claimed to know. Timid and reluctant to continue the inquiry, Meno introduces his paradox to avoid further embarrassment.[14] Socrates' myth is therefore inserted by Plato as a methodological and epistemological bridge in order to achieve the transition from the Socratic elenchus – which demonstrated Meno's beliefs as false – to the continuing of the dialectical inquiry using the method of hypothesis.

Plato purposely constructs this myth so as for it confer neither ignorance nor knowledge, but the intermediate cognitive state of true belief.[15] The myth places Meno between *poros* and *aporia* (See *Sym.* 203b–204c) inasmuch as it provides him with the belief that learning and research are possible to the extent that they constitute recollection. The myth thereby makes Meno wonder how this belief can be proven true (81e–82a). Thus, the eristic manner of Meno[16] gives way to the philosophical desire for knowledge of Socrates. Meno, who was more than ready to relinquish the inquiry, is now encouraged by the myth of recollection to forge ahead and expects Socrates to demonstrate his claim that learning is recollection.

The myth of recollection can, however, be interpreted in a more profound manner that fits in with the idea that it imprints a true belief in Meno's soul. Tarrant (2005, p. 46) observes that the myth establishes two kinds of recollection: one occurs through so-called teaching, the other through self-discovery. According to Tarrant, recollection in the *Meno* seems to be much more of the first kind. The *Phaedrus* seems to support such an interpretation insofar as the myths of dialecticians are portrayed as reminders (*ὑπομνήματα*) that seem to facilitate recollection by instilling true beliefs when used properly (*Phdr.* 249b-c; 276d–277a).

Dorter (2006, p.46) argues that by using myths, dialecticians provide their students with temporarily acquired opinions. Only a

student who understands the teachings can epistemologically upgrade from the acquired opinion to innate knowledge. The process of recollection carries out this transition since it indicates that we are able to discover the innate knowledge, which is already inside us, forgotten and not accessible to our senses. Only if we take the right dialectical guidance will this knowledge be activated.

I suggest that the myth of recollection in the *Meno* should be taken as a reminder. It is an acquired opinion which Socrates as dialectician imprints on Meno's soul, and as such, if it is understood by Meno, it could activate the innate knowledge in his soul. But the question that arises here is *how* a teaching could be understood by the student. Meno challenges Socrates to prove his claim that learning, and research are recollection. In other words, Socrates is challenged by Meno to verify and confirm in a rational way the belief he introduced mythologically. Socrates accepts the challenge and undertakes to prove the truth in his mythological account by examining Meno's slave.

V. AFTER THE MYTH OF RECOLLECTION: THE SLAVE'S GEOMETRICAL EXAMINATION.

Socrates poses a double geometrical problem[17] to the slave, who never had received geometrical education. Despite the relative deficit, the slave, guided by Socrates, reaches the correct answer. After examining the slave, Socrates summarizes the teaching using the following abductive reasoning: since solving a geometric problem requires geometric knowledge which the slave had not acquired in this life,[18] then he should have acquired it in a previous existence, and that is why he was able to recollect it (85d–86a). With the aforementioned abductive reasoning, Socrates secures two things: he not only connects the examination of the slave back to the myth of recollection but also recalls what the myth says about recollection.

Let us now take a look at how Socrates guides the slave during the process of recollection. He begins by making the slave realize that his initial estimations were false. This leads the slave to experience *aporia*. After this refutation, the slave is directed by Socrates to the right answer to the geometric problem he was trying to solve. According to Socrates, this right answer is only a true belief and does not yet constitute knowledge. Having true beliefs differs from having knowledge in that in the cognitive state of true belief, someone cannot give a reasoned account of the right opinion he or she has. There is therefore a third and final stage in the process of recollection through which the transition from true belief to knowledge is achieved.[19] This transition is achieved by fastening the true belief with causal reasoning (*Men*. 98a).[20]

It is safe to say that Socrates leads the slave through the first two stages of recollection. Under the guidance of Socrates, the slave first rejects the false beliefs he had, reaching *aporia*, and then moves from *aporia* to the acquisition of a true belief. Since he does not connect his true belief with causal reasoning, he never reaches the end of the cognitive process of recollection, which is knowledge. A true belief is, however, inferior to knowledge as it is not permanent and cannot serve as a constant guide for virtuous behaviour (97e-98c).

At this juncture, Plato seems to implement everything he attributes to the philosopher-poet of the *Phaedrus*. Let us be more precise: As we read at 278c-d, poets are considered philosophers *if* they meet three criteria,[21] specifically (1) that their writings are composed in accordance with the truth; (2) that they

have the ability to prove the truthfulness of their writing by examining and discussing that which they have written; and (3) that they can show by their own speech that the written words are of little worth. To determine whether all three criteria have been met, let us now turn back to the *Meno*.

Plato, firstly, places Socrates narrating a myth to introduce the belief that we can recollect things like virtue through learning and research as we already know them pre-empirically. Plato through Socrates, as we have seen, claims that this myth is good and true. By composing a myth in accordance with truth, Plato fulfils the first criterion. He then presents Meno contesting this belief's correctness. To prove the truth of this belief, Plato inserts Socrates' examination of the slave. At the same time as examining the slave, Socrates examines his mythological belief to prove its validity. In having the uneducated slave answer the geometrical problem which Socrates posed, Plato demonstrates the possibility of pre-empirical knowledge recollection. More precisely, he indicates that recollection can be activated[22] *only* under the dialectical guidance of a philosopher such as Socrates. Having proved the accuracy and truth of his writings, Plato meets the second criterion of the *Phaedrus*' philosopher-poet. Lastly, the philosopher argues that a true belief, such as the one I contend he introduced with the myth of recollection, is of little worth if not associated with causal reasoning. Hence, he seems to imply that, even though his own mythological, true belief activated the recollection process, this process cannot be accomplished without causal reasoning implemented through further investigation. Toward this end, as we will see, he introduces the hypothesis method. The third criterion for a philosopher-poet is satisfied by Plato by undervaluing his own writings.

In my judgement, the slave scene should be taken as a dramatic repetition of the method by which Meno was previously guided by Socrates. A brief retrospection of what was presented so far would be enlightening. The dialogue begins with Meno asking Socrates if virtue is teachable and the philosopher trying to steer the discussion toward the philosophical question of *what* virtue is. Meno, who at the beginning believes he knows what virtue is, attempts thrice to define virtue, insufficiently as the Socratic elenchus shows. With the right questions, Socrates impels Meno to get rid of the false beliefs he had about the essence of virtue and leads him to *aporia*. Meno's *aporia* comes to its peak with the so-called 'learner's paradox', by which he tries to abort the discussion. Then, Socrates narrates the myth of the soul's immortality and recollection, by which, as I suggested, he imprints a true belief on Meno's soul regarding the nature of knowledge. After that, Meno asks Socrates to prove his claim that learning and research are recollection, and thus, the episode with the slave is inserted. Plato wittingly places Meno in the viewer's position, so that he can watch a replication of the stages he already passed through: from false beliefs to *aporia* and from there to the acquisition of a true belief. The fact that the slave, despite his ignorance, succeeds in giving a correct answer to the geometric problem that Socrates sets for him encourages Meno to continue his own research on virtue under the philosopher's auspices.

VI. THE METHOD OF HYPOTHESIS.

After the geometric discussion between the slave and Socrates, Plato introduces a new kind of method, the method of hypothesis.

Most commentators consider this method as inferior to the dialectical method presented in the *Republic*,[23] but superior to the Socratic elenchus.[24] The so-called higher dialectic of the *Republic* constitutes the highest form of theoretical research, since through it reason upshifts from sensory perception and changeable opinions to the unchangeable intelligible entities of knowledge, i.e., the Forms. According to Berns (2011, p. 108-109), the essence of each object is its Form, so the 'higher dialectic' investigates the essence of things. The ultimate goal of this method is the ascension of *logos* to the unhypothetical first principle of everything, the Form of the Good. The method of hypothesis, by contrast, is the 'second-best method' for Plato, since its object are not essences, but rather particular beliefs deemed beneficial to society.

However, as has already been said, most scholars deem the hypothetical method superior to the Socratic elenchus, since the latter leads inquiry into a deadlock, while the former equips them with a sufficient hypothesis with which to resume their research. In the so-called elenctic dialogues, Plato presents Socrates as implementing a method which cannot achieve anything more than examining the opinions of the philosopher's interlocutors. This method fails because it cannot succeed in its initial goal of acquiring knowledge of the most important things, like the knowledge of the good and the evil (Benson 2003, p.98). So, although the Socratic method succeeds each time in exposing the false opinions of interlocutors, it fails to equip them with any knowledge. The hypothetical method is intended to help meet this need.

In any case, Plato introduces the method of hypothesis right after the slave's examination. Meno again insists on his question as to whether virtue is teachable. The inquiry continues, escaping the pitfall of Meno's paradox, but with a significant concession from Socrates, according to the scholars. For Socrates allows the conversation to focus not on the question of the essence of virtue, but rather on Meno's question as to whether virtue is teachable. This is why many commentators either characterize the hypothetical method as inferior to the dialectic method or instead suggest that this method is just Plato's contrivance (e.g., Beddu-Addo, 1984, p. 3) by which Meno eventually turns to consider the nature of virtue.

Benson (2003, p.98) disagrees with both interpretations. He suggests that the method of hypothesis explains *how* someone who is aware of their false beliefs should proceed with their inquiry. The Socratic method is necessary for someone to move from false beliefs and ignorance to *aporia*. The new method of hypothesis is essential for overcoming this *aporia* since it leads one to restart inquiry by providing a hypothesis to examine. And, as has already been stated, only someone courageous in research can recollect the knowledge of the things he already has seen.

At 86d3–e4 of the dialogue, Socrates invites Meno to join in inquiring whether virtue is teachable employing the method of hypothesis. To understand what this method requires and how Plato uses it in the *Meno*, we should examine *why* it is inserted at this particular point of the dialogue. We accordingly need to answer *who* usually uses the method of hypothesis and *why*. The method of hypothesis is the method that geometers use when they do not know the answer to the question they are trying to answer. In such a case, geometers choose a hypothesis, the implementation of which they think will lead them to the right conclusion (Benson, 2003, p. 104-105). Meno and Socrates at this point of the dialogue are

in a similar position: they are struggling to determine whether virtue is teachable. Because they do not know the answer to this question, they are forced to begin their inquiry anew using a hypothesis.

In order to determine whether virtue is teachable, Socrates suggests they first have to find out whether virtue is knowledge (87b–c).[25] For only if virtue is knowledge could it be teachable. By doing this, Socrates effectively returns them to the question concerning the nature of virtue.[26] The inquiry shows that virtue is neither teachable, and so cannot be identified with knowledge,[27] nor something inherited by nature. Meno and Socrates agree that virtue comes to us by divine dispensation (100a–c). Divine men, like statesmen, soothsayers, poets, and diviners, do and say the right things without having knowledge of them (99c–d). The conclusion is then reached that 'correct action is guided either by true opinion or by knowledge' (96d5–98c). That is, true opinion is as good a guide to right action as knowledge (97b). The argument for *why* virtue is action-guiding true opinion can be formalized in the following way:

P1: Only knowledge and true opinion guide us to right action (96d–98c).

P2: The rightness of action is the outcome of virtue (97a; 99c-d).

P3: Virtue is not teachable, so it is not knowledge (89a–96d).

C: Therefore, virtue is the true opinion that guides us to right action.

It becomes obvious that along with the question as to whether virtue is teachable, the question of virtue's definition is still under research. The method of hypothesis seems to be a device by which Socrates deludes Meno into thinking that their inquiry will turn to the question he chose. Yet, this only happens ostensibly as the philosophical question concerning the essence of virtue is examined at the same time. By using dialectical reasoning, Plato's dramatic characters indirectly define virtue through the method of hypothesis. This definition is stated in the conclusion of the aforementioned argument.

VII. MYTH AND METHOD.

In the *Meno*, Plato uses two methods, an old and a new one: the Socratic elenchus and the method of hypothesis. In between those, the myth of recollection is inserted. The dialogue's structure and form may be used to summarize the relationship between these two methods and the myth of recollection, indicating that the myth serves as a bridge between the method of examining beliefs, namely the Socratic elenchus, and the method of hypothesis, which aims at knowledge. But why is the myth so inserted? In this paper, I have argued that the answer lies in the myth of recollection itself, as it introduces a process that advances through three cognitive states. (1) from false beliefs to *aporia*, (2) from *aporia* to true belief and (3) from true belief to knowledge by fastening the true opinion with causal reasoning. The first stage is the objective of the Socratic elenchus; the second is the target of the myth of recollection, and the third is the purpose of the method of the hypothesis. But let me be more specific:

The Socratic elenchus is the method Plato uses in all his early dialogues. It helps Socrates' interlocutors to realize they have false opinions about the object under investigation. We could say that it is a method of preparation insofar as it prepares the student's soul for knowledge by cleansing the soul of untrue beliefs and

leading it into a state of *aporia*. The Socratic elenchus, however, does not provide a motivation for the student to continue his research. It only leads to deadlock and puzzlement. We find this in the *Meno*: after being subjected to Socratic elenchus, Meno realizes that he does not know what virtue is and so attempts to end the discussion with his paradox. Having arrived at *aporia*, Meno seems to have completed the first stage of recollection. But, as has been argued, he cannot proceed to the second stage because he lacks courage.

In order to instil this courage, Socrates offers the myth of recollection and thereby attempts to imprint a true belief in Meno's soul. The belief which the myth imprints in is confirmed by the geometric examination of the slave. In this way, the myth provides Meno with a new perspective about the acquisition of knowledge, as something already existing in our souls. At the same time, it makes him wonder *how* this belief can be confirmed. The myth, therefore, encourages Meno and renders him willing to continue the inquiry.

Thereafter a new method is introduced: the method of hypothesis. This method allows them to overcome the deadlock brought about by the Socratic elenchus. It does so by providing a hypothesis about virtue for them to examine. I have tried to show that, although this method seems to turn the inquiry *away* from the definition of virtue to the question of its teachability, in point of fact it investigates both questions. Even if the inquiry is not entirely successful, the method of hypothesis enables Socrates and Meno to reach their first indirect definition of virtue, using dialectical reasoning, as the belief that leads to the right actions. That is why, contrary to what most scholars believe, the method of hypothesis is not inferior to dialectic, but rather a mechanism through which dialectic operates. As such it appears to be part of the method for acquiring knowledge. The method of hypothesis does not replace the Socratic elenchus, as many believe,[28] but complements its weaknesses and defects (Benson, 1990, p. 129-130).

In summation, it becomes clear that no transition – either methodological or epistemological – would be feasible if the myth of recollection was not part of the dialogue. This is because, on the one hand, Meno would have remained fearful, cowardly, and in total puzzlement of the *aporia* into which the Socratic elenchus led him. On the other hand, even if cleansed of false beliefs, Meno would not have been able to move to the cognitive state of true belief, which – as we saw – is necessary for the process of recollection to be achieved. Thus, the dialogue would have come to a deadlock like all the other early dialogues of Plato. Moreover, we would not have had the introduction of the hypothetical method: a new method that not only enables the continuation of inquiry after its being stalled by the Socratic elenchus but a method that also initiates the pursuit of genuine knowledge by means of dialectic.

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ENDNOTES

1 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of PLATO JOURNAL for their constructive suggestions and comments. They provided me with valuable feedback that significantly improved my article.

2 All five interpretations are insufficient. The first seems problematic to the extent that it takes recollection to be a method of acquiring knowledge but fails to clearly define its objects. It simply takes for granted that refutation (Socratic elenchus) examines beliefs (*doxai*), while the hypothetical method examines hypotheses. The problem with this interpreta-

tion is that though it considers recollection as only complete when true belief is fastened with explanatory reasoning it also incorrectly sees the method as employed by Socrates in his refutation of the slave, who only reaches the cognitive state of true belief. The second interpretation, which takes recollection as a mere myth motivating inquiry, fails to connect the myth both epistemologically and methodologically with the rest of the dialogue. The third one is inconsistent with Plato's intention to connect recollection to the *a priori* beings which the soul has grasped before its incarnation. The fourth interpretation, according to which the recollection myth should be taken as a hypothesis, falls into epistemological and methodological errors in that it seems to conflate true belief and hypothesis, and consequently does not demarcate the methodological limits of the Socratic elenchus from those of the hypothetical method. The last interpretation seems to be incomplete in that it does not define the 'other possible dialectical methods' to which it refers. For the failure of the first three accounts, see also Landry 2012, p. 144.

3 Balaban, 1994, p. 266 points out that Plato's interpreters have traditionally understood *Meno* as only ostensibly addressing the question "What is Virtue?".

4 See also Bluck who claims that such a definition "amounts to the statement that *that is virtue which is done with a part of virtue* -an absurdity which involves both the fragmentation of virtue, and circularity." (Bluck, 1961, p.5).

5 Klein, 1965 claims that Meno's paradox is consistent with his reluctance to put in as much effort as the inquiry requires under Socrates' guidance. Moline, 1969, p. 155–159 argues that Meno's reaction, at this point of the dialogue, is sarcastic and emotional, because he suspects that Socrates is pretending not to know what virtue is. On the other hand, Guthrie 1975, p.238–239 does not detect sarcasm in Meno's question. Devereaux 1978, p.118-120 suggests that Meno here implies that it is only with the help of the sophists-teachers that we learn.

6 Some commentators argue that the theory of recollection is introduced by Socrates in order to overcome Meno's paradox. See for example Berns, 2011; Landry, 2012; Benson, 2015 and Ionescu, 2017. Other scholars, on the contrary, argue that the theory of recollection is introduced neither to solve the paradox in a serious way nor to give an answer to Meno's sophistic dilemma. See for example Ebert, 1973; Rohatyn, 1980; Jenks, 1992; Weiss, 2001 and Scott, 2006. Cf. also Anderson, 1971 who suggests that Socrates' solution to Meno's paradox consists of two parts: the theory of recollection and the demonstration with the slave-boy.

7 Unless otherwise noted, I am using Lamb's, 1967 translation.

8 See also Ebert, 1973, p.163 who argues that the theory of recollection "is of little genuine philosophical interest' because it does not provide a philosophical answer but only pretends to solve Meno's paradox".

9 See *Men*. 80e, where Socrates emphasizes the eristic manner in which Meno expresses his paradox.

10 In the *Symposium* we encounter an analogous incident. After Socrates refutes Agathon (198a–201c) and drives him to *aporia* about the nature of *Eros*, he introduces Diotima's myth. Similarly, in the *Phaedrus*, when Socrates leads Phaedrus to *aporia*, he introduces the central myth of the dialogue so the inquiry about love will continue normally.

11 Scholars disagree about what 'all things' (πάντα χρήματα) mean here. For example, Scott, 2006, p.96 suggests that this term refers "to the soul's experience of particular events, both when incarnate and when in Hades," whereas Moravsick, 1978, p.60 interprets the same term as referring to *"a priori* concepts and propositions." See also Bluck, 1961, p.288, who suggests a broader meaning, according to which 'all things' refer to "everything that exists".

12 Similarly, Carelli, 2015 argues that in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Republic* courage appears to be a prerequisite for philosophical investigation. See also *Phaedo* 89d-90e, where Plato claims that someone ought to be courageous and eager to research *if* he wants to become a philosopher and avoid falling into the trap of becoming a misologist.

13 More specifically, one is characterized as courageous when his or her spirited part preserves in the midst of pains and pleasures true beliefs about what should and should not be feared. These beliefs are inculcated by musical, mythological education (*R*. 429b–d; 442b–c).

14 Meno, at this point of the dialogue, compares Socrates to a flat torpedo sea-fish (80d). Socrates uses the same simile to speak to the slave's condition after he examines him (84b), which strengthens my forthcoming argument, according to which the examination of the slave by Socrates constitutes a repetition of the same cognitive stages that Meno went through.

15 At *Sym*. 202a Plato presents true belief as this sort of cognitive intermediate between ignorance and knowledge.

16 According to many commentators, Meno's paradox is inspired by Gorgias' sophistic teachings. See Ebert, 1973, p. 91 and Canto-Sperber, 1991, p. 247–248, note 104.

17 There is a debate amongst scholars whether the two problems of geometry presented in the *Meno* are connected to each other and to the method of hypothesis. I will not further address this issue here, as it goes beyond the present study's framework. See, respectively, Iwata, 2015 and Bagce, 2016.

18 See also *Phd*. 76c11–13, where Plato repeats the argument that knowledge is recollection, as our souls encountered and learned mathematical concepts before their incarnation.

19 According to Dimas, 1996, p. 4, note 9, "Socrates asserts that recollection's *end* result is knowledge."

20 There are various interpretations of *αἰτίας λογισμῷ*. For example, Desjardins, 1985, p. 265 identifies it with causal or deductive reasoning, whilst Scott, 2006 define it as 'explanatory reasoning'. Cf. also Gulley (1962,14), who argues that Plato associates "the chain of causal reasoning" with the method of hypothesis.

21 On this, see also Moore, 2015, p.74.

22 I only claim that Socrates' examination triggers the cognitive process of recollection, not that the slave completes this procedure. See also Franklin, 2009, p. 351 who claims that recollection is a two-stage course of learning "that begins at the inception of speech and thought and proceeds through philosophical inquiry to knowledge.".

23 Cf. Seeskin, 1993, and Berns, 2011.

24 According to Benson, 2015, p. 94, "this reading of the method of hypothesis is reinforced by the manner in which the method is introduced … in the *Phaedo*.". In that dialogue, the hypothetical method is introduced as a 'second sailing' (*δεύτερος πλους*), 'which has generally been taken to mean a "second best."' On the subject, see Tait, 1986.

25 There has been wide disagreement among scholars in regard to the main hypothesis of the argument. Most scholars identify it with the simple proposition 'virtue is knowledge' (see Bedu-Addo, 1984; Benson, 2003; Bluck, 1961; Canto-Sperber, 1991; Scott, 2006). Others take it to be the conditional 'if virtue is knowledge, it is teachable' (see Wolfsdorf, 2008), and some think of it as the biconditional 'if virtue is knowledge, it is teachable, but if not, it is not' (see Weiss, 2001). On this scholarly debate, see also Zyskind & Sternfeld, 1976.

26 See Ionescu, 2017, p. 16; Benson, 2003, p. 109–115, and Benson 2015, p. 95–102.

27 The outcome of this syllogism is that virtue cannot be identified with knowledge. However, the possibility of virtue being a kind (or maybe a part) of knowledge, not knowledge itself, is still open.

28 It is commonly believed that Plato replaces elenchus with recollection and the method of hypothesis. See on this Ionescu, 2017, p.9; 15.

HESIODIC INFLUENCE ON PLATO'S MYTH OF THE CICADAS

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that Plato's Myth of the Cicadas from the Phaedrus (258e-259d) alludes to Hesiod's Myth of the Golden Race (Op. 109-126). Among other parallels, Hesiod's Golden Race and Plato's Cicadas are comparable with respect to the manners of their diets, deaths and rapports with the gods. The paper points both to the similarities and the poignant differences between the Golden Race and the Cicadas, drawing attention to Plato's vision of the Golden Age, which, unlike Hesiod's, featured dangers and ambiguities, as symbolized by the Cicadas, who are able to punish or reward humans, depending on their behavior.

Keywords: Plato, Phaedrus, Cicadas, Politicus, Hesiod, Golden Race

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There has been a recent rise in scholarly interest in Plato's reception of Hesiod. A particular focus has been on the famous Myth of the Races (*Op.* 106-201), especially the account of the Golden Age (*Op.* 109-126), the traces of which have been recognized in a number of Plato's dialogues: *Protagoras* (320d-322d), *The Republic* (III 414-415), *Politicus* (268d-274e), *The Laws* (677a, 713e-714a).[1] I suggest that there is an allusion to Hesiod's Golden Age also in Plato's *Phaedrus*, in the Myth of the Cicadas (258e-259d), which seems to have so far remained undiscussed.

While the myth of the Cicadas in the *Phaedrus* has long been recognized as Plato's own invention (see Robin 1933: cxii-cxiv; White 1993: 183; Egen 2004: 69), several Hesiodic elements in it have already been noted in previous scholarship. First of all, Plato takes the names of the Muses from Hesiod (*Theog.* 77-79), and adopts "the idea of connecting their names with the activities they supervise" (*Theog.* 63-74, see Yunis 2011: *ad* 259c6). Furthermore, the presence of the Cicadas in Hesiod's famous Summer Landscape (*Op.* 582-583) has been acknowledged as a possible model for their role in the *Phaedrus* (see Werner 2012: 136; Capra 2015: 106-114). Capra (2015: 106-114) also sees a more general connection to Hesiod, as he compares Socrates' encounter with the gift-granting Cicadas with Hesiod's famous account of his own encounter with the Muses who gave him the gift of poetry (*Theog.* 22-35). Leven (2021: 97-98), on the other hand, sees reflexes of *Theogony*'s cosmological idiom even though in Plato's myth the γένος of the Cicadas came into being through metamorphosis rather than birth. We should also mention a recent study (Boys-Stones 2010) which suggests (48-50) that *Works and Days* inform the structure of the *Phaedrus* outside the myth and on a more general scale, as Socrates' two versions of the speech on Ἔρος in the first part of the dialogue can be compared to the two versions of Hesiod's story of Ἔρις.

Therefore, since the tone of the dialogue and especially of the myth of the cicadas already seems imbued with Hesiodic references, we should not be surprised to find one more. There are, in my view, several striking parallels (similarities, as well as poignant divergences) between Plato's Myth and Hesiod's account of the Golden Race:

(1) *Mythological chronology.* First of all, both the men of the Golden Age and Plato's Precicadic Men can be described as "previous generations of men", as they are both set in an undetermined, but remote past. It is unnecessary to search for an exact place for the Precicadic Men in Hesiod's chronology. It is sufficient to recognize that both myths - the myth of the Golden Race, as well as the myth of the Precicadic Men - deal with a very remote period of human history before the birth of the Muses, i.e. before the defining features of the current human civilization had been introduced. Such a setting for the myth may have been a means for Plato to call Hesiod's famous myth to mind and prepare the reader for the parallels that ensue.

(2) *Living with the Gods.* In terms of the relationship with the gods, the Golden Age was not only the time of Cronos' (and ultimately Zeus') rule, but also the time when humans enjoyed a close connection to the gods. Hesiod says so explicitly (120 φίλοι μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν). The Precicadic Men (both before and after their metamorphoses) had a very special relationship with the Muses, since it is their eagerness to honor the Muses in song that led them to an early grave, after which they entered their service in another capacity, as the Cicadas. As such, they are able to make others

dear to them (259d ποιοῦσι προφιλεστέρους), with a possible verbal reminiscence to Hesiod's passage cited above. However, the motif of life with the Gods proceeds in a different way and with a different outcome in the two cases: while Cronos provides for the needs of the men of the Golden Race, the Muses distract the Precicadic Men from seeing to those same vital needs. There does seem to be an allusion to Hesiod in Plato, but with a poignant difference.

(3) *Death of the Cicadas.* There is a parallel between the manners in which Hesiod's Men of the Golden Race and Plato's Precicadic Men die. Hesiod's men die "as if overcome with sleep" (116 θνῇσκον δ'ὥσθ'ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι), which must mean that they die without any kind of agony or, in other words, without noticing that they are dying. This is exactly how Plato describes the Precicadic Men as dying (259c ἔλαθον τελευτήσαντες αὐτούς). Again, while the death of the Precicadic Men seems to allude to the death of Hesiod's men, it is not reenacting it, since there is an important difference: the mere absence of agony in the first case corresponds in the second to the unhealthy infatuation which is in fact the cause of the early demise of the Precicadic Men.

(4) *The diet of the Cicadas.* The question of food is also discussed in both passages. Hesiod stresses that the Earth gave as much food to the Golden Race as they needed (116-118), but it is nevertheless implied that they did not enjoy feasts beyond measure - they led a simple life, without need to till the earth or to travel by sea (cf. Dillon 1993: 23, 27). The point is not that they ate with appetite, but rather that they *did not have need* for more food.[2] Plato's Precicadic Men similarly *felt* no need for food, in the sense that they had "forgotten" all about it (259c ἠμέλησαν σίτων τε καὶ ποτῶν), but with a very different, and dire, outcome: an early death. Furthermore, that is precisely the nature of the gift that was, according to Plato, granted to them after death - "they need no food, but without food or drink sing continually" (259c μηδὲν τροφῆς δεῖσθαι γενόμενον, ἀλλ'ἄσιτόν τε καὶ ἄποτον εὐθὺς ᾄδειν). Again, as in the previous cases, Plato may be seen as alluding to, but also radically changing, Hesiod's account. What was self-sufficiency in the first case, became death and loss of human form in the second.

(5) *After death.* There is also a striking parallel between the careers of the Golden Race and the Precicadic Men after they die. Hesiod's people of the Golden Race become benevolent spirits (122 δαίμονες ἁγνοί) who "keep an eye on the judgements and cruel deeds" (124 οἵ ῥα φυλάσσουσίν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα) and are also "givers of wealth" (126 πλουτοδόται). Later in the poem we also find out that they are also charged with "denouncing all who oppress others with crooked judgements and lack respect for the gods" (250-251 φράζονται, ὅσοι σκολιῇσι δίκῃσιν ἀλλήλους τρίβουσι θεῶν ὄπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες).[3] On the other hand, Plato's Precicadic Men, once they turn into the Cicadas, serve as the informants for the Muses, just like Hesiod's people of the Golden Race do for Zeus. Moreover, they too are able to act both as benefactors and as punishers. In Plato's account the Cicadas, upon dying, inform the Muses about those who honored them on earth and "make them dearer" (259d ποιοῦσι προφιλεστέρους) to the particular Muse they have honored. Socrates also pointedly describes this service as a gift they are able to confer on the humans (259b ὅ γέρας παρὰ θεῶν ἔχουσιν ἀνθρώποις διδόναι), which readily evokes Hesiod's πλυτοδόται (126). The Cicadas also seem to be able to exact punishment, if only by *not* mentioning a particular human to the appropriate Muse. This potentially danger-

ous aspect of the Cicadas is elaborated by Socrates (259a) as he expresses fear that, if he and Phaedrus should stop conversing, the Cicadas would scorn them and consequently deny them the gift of the Muses. As with the previous points, the resemblances between the two myths are underscored by important differences: while Hesiod does not say so explicitly, it is likely that the posthumous service was granted to the Golden Race as a result of their piousness and moral uprightness; the same cannot be said of the Cicadas, who owe their metamorphosis to the unbalanced devotion which led them to death. Just as the Golden Race described by Plato in the *Politicus*, to which we will return shortly, the Cicadas are not imagined as an example to be followed, unlike Hesiod's Golden Race. While the parallels between the posthumous careers of Hesiod's Golden Race and the Cicadas are clear, the underlying differences contribute to the ambiguity of the myth of the Cicadas, which was absent from Hesiod's description of the Golden Race, and to which we will return in the concluding remarks.

(6) *Lexical parallels*. We should also mention a couple of further notable lexical parallels between Hesiod's and Plato's account. First of all, Hesiod's Golden Race is referred to as χρύσεον... γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων (Op. 110), while Plato's Precicadic Men are described as τεττίγων γένος. Even more importantly, the gift of a posthumous service, which is the award to both races by their respective divinities, is in both cases referred to as γέρας (*Op.* 126 τοῦτο γέρας βασιλήιον ἔσχον; 259c γέρας τοῦτο παρὰ Μουσῶν λαβόν), a very specific term signifying a gift of honor (see Görgemanns 1993: 131, n. 27).

(7) Finally, it may also be instructive to compare the Myth of the Cicadas to some of Plato's other descriptions of the Golden Age, especially the one in *Politicus*, where the reference to Hesiod is more explicit. While such connections do not provide a direct link from the Myth of the Cicadas to Hesiod, they can show that Plato consciously used the Golden Race imagery in the Myth of the Cicadas, thus pointing by extension to his use of Hesiod, as the most famous poet of the Golden Race. In *Politicus*, a close connection to the gods is a given. Indeed, the Stranger from Elea instructs young Socrates by analogy that at the time the men where shepherded by the god just like the lower animals are shepherded by the men (*Pol.* 271e). The analogy between humans and animals is certainly relevant for the Myth of the Cicadas in which humans become actual animals. Furthermore, the men of the *Politicus* myth are said by Plato to have risen from the Earth (272a ἐκ γῆς γὰρ ἀνεβιώσκοντο πάντες), and the Cicadas were also often imagined in ancient thought to be earth-born (Davies and Kathirithamby 1986: 125-126; Beavis 1988: 97). While Plato does not mention this specifically, he was certainly aware of the tradition, since his fellow Athenians liked to think of the Cicadas as symbolic of their own earth-born - and thus truly autochthonous - ancestors (cf. Egan 2004: 71).[4] Furthermore, the setting of the Golden Age in the *Politicus* is described as a *locus amoenus* very comparable to that of the *Phaedrus*. Strikingly, the Age of Cronos in the *Politicus* features "soft beds... from the abundant grass growing from the earth" (*Pol.* 272a-b μαλακὰς δὲ εὐνὰς εἶχον ἀναφυομένης ἐκ γῆς πόας ἀφθόνου). Such a delightful depiction of the grass, climactically placed at the end of the Golden Age description, cannot fail to recall Socrates' delighted depiction of the grass in the *Phaedrus*, which had also been placed at the end of his description of the *locus amoenus*, and also featured an emphasis on its quality as a place to lie down

onto (*Phd*. 230c πάντων δὲ κομψότατον τὸ τῆς πόας, ὅτι ἐν ἠρέμα προσάντει ἱκανὴ πέφυκε κατακλινέντι τὴν κεφαλὴν παγκάλως ἔχειν). Parallels between the Myth of the Cicadas in the *Phaedrus* and the Golden Age in the *Politicus* thus reinforce the conclusion that Plato was indeed reacting to Hesiodic Golden Age in both cases, and not just in the *Politicus*.

All the aforementioned parallels lead to the conclusion that Plato's description of the Precicadic Race alludes to, but also subverts Hesiod's description of the Golden Race.

But Plato did not insert the Myth of the Golden Age into his Myth of the Cicadas just for the virtue of doing so. What reason could have driven him to include Hesiod's myth? We will necessarily need to base our answer on an interpretation of the Myth as a whole, as well as its role within the *Phaedrus*. The challenge in doing so is that the scholarly assessments of the Myth of the Cicadas have been polarized, with the interpretations falling into roughly two batches - those that see the Cicadas and their fate as negative and those that see them as positive.

The main argument in favor of the negative interpretation of the Myth is the metamorphosis of the Precicadic Men from a human into a sub-human status (Carson 198: 183-185; Nicholson 1999: 220-221), characterized by empty garrulity which might hold appeal for Phaedrus, but not for true philosophers (De Vries 1969: *ad* 158c6-7; Griswold 1986: 166; Ferrari 1987: 29). Most recently, Werner (2012: 100) summarizes this position by arguing that "the fate of the pre-cicadic men is one of demoting and degeneration, as they devolve from human creatures capable of rational discourse into sub-human creatures capable only of monotone droning", a position reflected also in Männlein-Robert (2002: 146-146) who describes the Cicadas' song as "nur Klang... nichts, was auch dialogisch-dialektisch differenziert vermittelt werden könnte."[5]

The positive interpretations, on the other hand, starting with Nawratil (1972: 157-160) equate the Cicadas to philosophers. Most importantly, Gottfried (1993: 180) objected to the negative interpretation on the grounds that Socrates himself argued in the *Phaedrus* that the divine beings cannot be mean (242d). For him, the Cicadas' forgetfulness of food, i.e. material needs, is "a divine sort of madness" (191) and thus a mark of true philosophers. Gottfried's article managed to change Ferrari's opinion on the Cicadas to the extent that he issued a Palinode of his own (2012). This line of interpretation is also supported by Capra (2015: 106-114), who argues that the "Cicadas stand for music and philosophy, in that they both sing and dialogue."[6] Reflecting on the Cicadas' diet, Leven (2021, 98) goes even further and suggests that "the ascetic cicada is closer to gods who need no sustenance to speak of than to animal who eat their food raw."

Now, can the parallels noted between the Myth of the Cicadas and Hesiod's Myth of the Golden Race offer support to either camp?

In Plato's other dialogues, the Golden Age does not have the positive connotations like in Hesiod's account. It is rather ambiguous, problematic and threatening. This is especially true for the *Politicus*, the connections of which to the myth in the *Phaedrus* have already been discussed. Vidal-Naquet (1981: 291-296) drew attention to the ambiguous nature of Cronos in *Gorgias* 523b-e (where his rule represents an era of arbitrary judgements) and in the *Republic* 378a where he is an example of a type of story not to tell children. Furthermore, the Golden Age in the *Politicus* is, according to Vidal Naquet "an animal paradise" (294) and as such unsuitable for humans, who rather need a political structure. Dillon (1993) similarly

compared the Golden Age described by Plato in the *Politicus* and the *Laws* 676a-682e to Homer's description of Cyclops' abode (Book 9) and argued that Plato envisaged it as ironic. According to Dillon (1993: 32), "Plato is hostile to, or at least skeptical of the idea of an age of primitive simplicity" because his is "the ideal of total organization, as opposed to primitive freedom and lack of structure."

These considerations also feed into and are supported by the larger context of the *Phaedrus*. The relationship of nature and men is one of the themes of the dialogue, heralded by the dialogue's setting in a *locus amoenus*. According to the influential interpretation of Erler (1989), Socrates' description of nature is ironic and, along with the parable of the farmer later on in the dialogue (276b), is meant as a challenge to Prodicus' views that the human civilization is owed to Nature as the universal teacher. This interpretation ties in very well with the subversion of the Golden Age imagery in the Myth of the Cicadas in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Politicus*, where, as we have seen, Plato expressed doubt about man's ability to thrive in a primitive, natural environment.

We should also take a closer look at how the Stranger of the *Politicus* assesses the possibility of happiness in the Age of Cronos (272b-d): if the denizens of the Golden Age used their leisure "to pursue philosophical enquiry" (272c ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν), then, according to the Stranger, "they were immensely happier than we are today" (272c τῶν νῦν οἱ τότε μυρίῳ πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν διέφερον). The Stranger claims that, on the contrary, they will not have been happy, if they wasted their time in trivial exercises such as eating and drinking their fill (272c σίτων ἄδην καὶ ποτῶν), exercises that the Cicadas notably abstain from.

These considerations are strikingly similar to the ones Socrates warns Phaedrus about in the preamble to the Myth of the Cicadas. If the two of them fall asleep (259a νυστάζοντας καὶ κηλουμένους ὑφ'αὐτῶν δι'ἀργίαν τῆς διανοίας), fulfilling thus a material need parallel to the vulgar eating and drinking in the *Politicus*, then they will lose the opportunity to obtain the gift of the Muses. If they, on the other hand, continue their (philosophical) discussion (259a διαλεγομένους), the Cicadas will deliver a favorable report about them to the Muses.

Furthermore, this dangerous, ambivalent aspect of the Cicadas and their Golden Age setting connects them to the central theme of the dialogue - the art of rhetoric, and the dangers of speeches that are false, but convincing. Not unlike the famous parable of the ass (260b-c), which concludes by imagining the disastrous consequences of a competent orator promoting evil under the guise of good, the Cicadas of the central myth, along with the *locus amoenus* as their natural setting, are capable of seducing those who encounter them into making wrong choices, such as to sleep instead to discuss philosophy. The Golden Age of the Plato's Cicadas is thus a dangerous place whose influence must be resisted, just as the infatuation of the Cicadas, which led them to starvation and death, must not be followed.

Socrates and Phaedrus have been transported into this hostile Golden Age of the Cicadas and it is now up to them to use its features for the right and philosophical, rather than the wrong and material, purposes, just as it was up to the denizens of the Age of Cronos in the *Politicus*. The Cicadas themselves, in their own way, fulfill a function comparable (although certainly not identical) to that of Hesiod's spirits of the Golden Race - they are πλυτοδόται in that they can confer "that gift which the gods bestowed on them to grant humans" (259b ὃ γέρας παρὰ θεῶν ἔχουσιν

ἀνθρώποις διδόναι), but also - *pace* West (1978: *ad* 124-125) - a "secret police" that informs the gods (or, in this case, the Muses) about the men who do not honor them.

To sum up. The Cicadas in Plato's myth can be seen as a twisted reflection of Hesiod's Golden Race. The many parallels between the two myths urge the reader to consider them jointly, but the differences, which are no less important than the similarities, show that Plato's vision of the Golden Age was much less idealistic than Hesiod's. In his other treatments of the Golden Age myth, as well as in the Myth of the Cicadas, Plato problematizes the benefits and exposes the dangers of primitive, natural simplicity, as symbolized by the example of the famous *locus amoenus*. The connection to the Golden Race myth thus sheds some new light on the Myth of the Cicadas, but it also provides a helpful tool for thinking about the *Phaedrus* more generally: Plato uses the Cicadas, with their alluring, but ultimately problematic Golden Age setting to present his philosophical concerns about the danger coming from deceitful rhetoric, which is one of the central concerns of the dialogue.

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ENDNOTES

1 Solmsen 1962: 181-195 and Dillon 1993: 21-33 discuss *The Republic, Politicus* and *The Laws*; Fago 1991 discusses *The Republic*. More recent studies include Van Norden 2010: 176-199 (*The Republic*); 2015: 89-167 (*Protagoras, The Republic, Politicus*); El Murr 2010: 276-297 (*Politicus*); Vezir 2019: 53-88 (*Politicus*, *The Laws*); De Luise 2020 (*Politicus*).

2 It could be instructive to compare the self-sufficiency of Hesiod's Golden Race with Socrates' description of the life of the early people in *The Republic* (372a-d) featuring such sober frugality that Glaucon felt compelled to jump in with a dry comment that Socrates may be "catering for a Republic of Pigs" (372d ὑῶν πόλιν).

3 West (1978) marked 124-125 as interpolation arguing that the benevolent spirits of the Golden Age cannot at the same time also work as "secret police." Consequently, he does not identify the divine informants of lines 249-255 with the spirits of the Golden Race. Verdenius (1986: *ad* 124-125) objected against bracketing 124-125 and warned against making a too strict distinction between punishers and benefactors, since "in Hes's view prosperity and justice are closely connected." Moreover, Plato may well have identified the two even if Hesiod did not, and there is no reason to believe that his manuscript of Hesiod did not include 124-125 (cf. Solmsen 1962: 195 n.2; West 1978: *ad* 124-125).

4 Plato seems aware of certain traditions about the Cicadas that he does not bring up explicitly in the Myth. Apart from their provenance from the earth, the tradition that they feed on dew (Arist. *HA* 532b10-13 may be partly behind Plato's assertions on their eating habits.

5 Burger (1980: 74) also adduces an additional point - namely, that the Cicadas stand for the seduction of the written word, as opposed to the dialectic.

6 It is important to keep in mind that the positive interpretation of the myth of the Cicadas does not deny its dangers for the "intellectually lazy" (Ferrari 2012: 106), or, in the words of Gottfried (1993: 1990), for "those who lack the desire for truth which characterizes the philosophers."

Choosing and Desire in Plato's *Republic* 4

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ABSTRACT

Donald Davidson's causal theory of action greatly influenced a dominant analytic interpretation of the argument, in *Republic* 4, for parts of the soul. According to Davidson, actions are caused by a combination of belief and desire (pro-attitude). In the interpretation inspired by this account, parts of the soul have distinctive beliefs and desires, which cause action; thus, parts are distinct agents. As well, the argument in *Republic* 4 is taken to show that, while reason desires the good, appetite is a desire which is good-independent. Then, since appetite is not a desire for the good, its being a distinct agent implies the possibility of *akrasia*—appetite could overcome reason's judgment about the better course of action. In fact, the possibility of akratic conflict is taken to be integral to the distinction among parts. By contrast, this paper offers an interpretation which shows that the causal theory is not needed to establish the parts of the soul. As a consequence, *akrasia* has no role to play in distinguishing parts of the soul.

Keywords: soul, desire, tripartite, reason, appetite, akrasia

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I

In the middle of the last century, there was a lively philosophical controversy about reasons and causes. Roughly put, the idea was that reasons for acting are different from causes because the logic of reasons is different from the logic of causes. One might say, e.g., that the reason Socrates stayed in jail is that doing so was just; however, what caused him to act this way are certain psychological states. In a very influential article, however, Donald Davidson argued that reasons are just a kind of cause. The primary reason for an action is a combination of a desire—or pro-attitude—and a belief. The pro-attitude is a general desire for a kind of thing, e.g., a general desire for chocolate; the belief is that some specific object is an instance of what is desired (Davidson, 2001, pp. 4-9). The appeal of this account was that it makes the explanation of an action causal; desire and belief form a causal nexus. This causal nexus is effective because it works in a specific way: the desire for X, by itself, is not effective, does not move one to act. What triggers the desire is the belief that some specific object is X. Of course, the belief by itself does not lead to action either. For instance, my desire for chocolate leads to action only when I believe some specific object is chocolate. In turn, my belief that such-and-such is chocolate does not lead to action unless I also desire to have chocolate.

It is a thesis of this paper that the causal explanation made its way into the dominant analytic interpretations of the argument in *Republic* 4 for the subdivision of the soul. In these interpretations, subdivision of the soul implies the possibility of *akrasia*, of being overcome by pleasure or emotion, against one's better judgment. In this telling, before *Republic* 4, Socrates argued against *akrasia*; his argument was fitted into a framework that is essentially Davidsonian. All desire in the soul is for the good; so that, if one believes an action is good, she does it, *ceteris paribus*. However, if someone does what is not good, she does so because she holds a false belief about some particular's goodness; thus, the explanation of this mistake fits the causal model according to which an action is explained by the combination of desire and belief. However, the causal model is also found in the argument for subdividing the soul, which allows other desires than the desire for the good into the soul. These other desires, which are good-independent, can motivate actions that are not good. Still, the desire for the good persists in the rational part; and in the rational part the causal model appears again, where actions result from a combination of reason's desire for the good and its belief about what is good to do (Penner, 1990, pp. 37, 49, 50-53; Bobonich, 2002, pp. 217, 220, 235-242; Irwin, 1995, pp. 208-218). The distinction among parts, then, rests on this causal account. For instance, reason desires the good and follows its beliefs about the good; but appetite is different from reason because it is a desire that is good-independent and follows its belief-like grasp of what will satisfy it. The consequence is that, each part's being a distinct agent, the possibility of akratic action arises, where appetite, e.g., causes an action that reason holds is not good.

In the following, I will offer an interpretation of the argument for subdividing the soul which will challenge the idea that the causal theory is at work in *Republic* 4.[1] What I wish to show is that Socrates' argument lays the groundwork for an understanding of the way the soul functions in acting, which does not fit the causal model. Socrates gives us—in a non-technical vocabulary that depends on

periphrasis—an account of the soul choosing to act. This interpretation shows that Socrates' argument distinguishes between what the soul does and what its parts do; it does not dissolve the functions of the soul into the functions of its parts. The soul is distinguished from its parts in that the soul has the function of choosing to act; the parts offer motivations to act, which are not themselves choices to act. Socrates' argument for distinguishing among the parts of the soul depends on the way the different parts offer distinct motivations for acting to the soul, whose job, then, is to choose which to follow. As we shall see, the soul chooses what is good because it is good. To explain this choice there is no need to attribute to the soul a desire for the good as that is understood in the causal theory. As we shall see, this view of choice has important implications for the claim that the soul always pursues the good and does everything for the sake of the good (505d11-e2).

II

This interpretation, then, begins with the first two principles of the argument. The Principle of Opposites:

> (I) It is obvious that the same thing will never do or undergo opposite things in the same respect (κατὰ ταὐτόν) in relation to the same thing (πρὸς ταὐτὸν) at the same time (ἅμα) (436b8-9).

The principle itself does not refer to parts or subdivisions. Three occurrences of 'the same' in (I) seem to be clear enough. However, it is the referent of 'in the same respect' that is the hardest to grasp and it is the one that is the basis for the claim that the soul has subdivisions. The principle for subdividing the soul follows immediately.

> (II) So that if we ever find these things (ταῦτα) happening among those things (ἐν αὐτοῖς) we will know that there is not the same thing but many (436b9-c1).

It might be useful to point out one of the little-noted consequences of this principle. If a pair of opposites cannot be attributed to any of the last three terms of (I)—relation, time, or respect—then the pair cannot hold for the subject; the subject term is either P or not-P, or perhaps neither P nor not-P. This situation arises, in particular, with verbs that cannot be attributed to parts, subdivisions, or respects. For instance, it is not possible to say that Alice runs toward an object at a certain time in one respect (or with one part) and does not run toward the same object at the same time but in another respect (or with another part). The reason is that 'run' is a verb that belongs to the whole body and cannot be used of a part. In turn, as we will see, this distinction is relevant to Socrates' careful distinction, throughout this passage, between what the soul does and what the parts do.[2]

Since (II) is a very abstract principle, Socrates clarifies by applying it to two physical examples. Next, he turns to psychological opposites. However, he does not give an example but a list of opposites that the same thing might do or undergo.

> (III) Assent (ἐπινεύειν) is opposed to dissent (ἀνανεύειν), striving after something (ἐφίεσθαί) to rejecting (ἀπαρνεῖσθαι), embracing (προσάγεσθαι) to repelling (ἀπωθεῖσθαι); these are opposites either in the category of action or of passion (437b1-3).

This list of opposites seems fashioned to fit the opposites mentioned in the Principle of Opposites. However, instead of applying (II) to (III), as we might expect, he leaves the list of opposites aside in order to advance his argument in another direction. He asks, "What about hunger and thirst, and the appetites (ἐπιθυμίας) in general, and further wanting (ἐθέλειν) and wishing (βούλεσθαι)?" In the first place, he is talking about positive states and not pairs of opposites. Second, he adds another, and more abstract, terminology to striving after, embracing, and assenting: appetites (ἐπιθυμίας), then wanting (ἐθέλειν) and wishing (βούλεσθαι). He says that they should put all of these somewhere in the class of things they were just talking about (437b7-c1). The 'somewhere' indicates a qualification to the way they are classified, suggesting that ἐπιθυμίας, ἐθέλειν and βούλεσθαι are not exactly the same as assenting, dissenting, striving after, rejecting, embracing, and repelling. With these refinements made, Socrates then says:

> (IV) Always the soul of the one desiring (ἐπιθυμοῦντος) either strives after (ἐφίεσθαι) what it desires (ἐπιθυμῇ), or (ἢ) embraces (προσάγεσθαι) what it wishes (βούληταί) to have, or (ἢ), insofar as it wants (ἐθέλει) something to be provided to it, it assents (ἐπινεύειν) within itself to having this thing—as though someone were asking a question—stretching towards its attainment (437c1-6).

The first thing to notice is that desiring (ἐπιθυμοῦντος) is not like the desire in the causal account. The latter is inert without the belief that activates it, whereas desiring is already active, and no mention is made of a belief that activates this desire. Second, (III) mentions no subject for the actions listed whereas in (IV) the soul is the subject. Third, the three positive actions in (IV) are paired with desiring, wanting, and wishing; striving after is paired with desiring, embracing with wishing, and assenting with wanting.

This third feature is the most interesting. In other dialogues, ἐπιθῦμειν, βούλεσθαι, and ἐθέλειν are unadorned by these circumlocutions, borrowed from (III). Still, in these contexts, desiring, wishing for, and wanting are not just states of inclination; they are tied to acting to obtain what is desired, wished for, or wanted. When Socrates says, in the *Meno*, that everyone who desires fine things desires good things, it is understood that they will act to get what they desire when the time for acting arises (*Meno* 77b6-7). When, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates says that men do not wish for (βούλεσθαι) what they do each time but they wish for that for the sake of which they do what they do, he again assumes that wishing for wisdom, health, or wealth is tied to acting to get these things (*Gor.* 467c5-e1). But what he does not describe is the way desire, wishing for, and wanting pass over into action. In (IV), however, striving after, embracing, and assenting to are added to desiring, wishing for, and wanting. While the first set of verbs is more concrete than the second, the first set could just be redundant; so that the meaning of 'wishing for x' is not enhanced by adding 'embracing x' to it. However, if (IV) is not redundant but is making a substantive claim, then it means something like the following; desiring, wishing for, and wanting become specific by, or are actualized in, striving after, embracing, assenting to. Instead of assuming that the soul that wishes to drink, e.g., will move to have a drink, (IV) describes its moving to have a drink by saying this soul embraces what it wishes to have. The context

of (IV) makes clear that this description is not about embracing drinking as a policy but about embracing drinking in a particular situation.

In fact, (IV) is laying the groundwork for a notion of choice. Of course, choice suggests two alternatives, one of which is chosen. And in (IV) there are no alternatives to be chosen. Still, in it we find what is necessary for choice—the definitive direction of the soul, which leads to the physical act. Desire (ἐπιθυμῇ) in combination with 'strives after,' wishes for (βούληταί) in combination with 'embraces' and wants (ἐθέλει) in combination with 'assents to' show that the soul has adopted a definitive direction, that issues in action. This claim is especially clear with the last two clauses. It is hard not to see these phrases as describing a decision. If the soul of the desiring person, wishing to have some wine, embraces it, then one would drink. If the soul of the desiring person, insofar as it wants or wills wine to be provided to it, assents within itself to having wine, as though someone were asking a question ["Would you like some wine?"] one would drink. Suppose the opposite. The soul of the desiring person, wishing to have wine, embraces it; but one does not drink. The soul of the desiring person, insofar as it wants or wills wine to be provided to it, assents within itself to having wine, as though someone were asking a question; but one does not drink. Something else has happened. Perhaps, this person has changed her mind or has been denied what she wants. So, when the soul, wishing to have something, embraces it, it is taking a definitive direction.

To see this point, consider the following argument. If the sentence 'the soul embraces what it wishes for' does not describe a definitive direction for the soul, then it could occur with its opposite. However, the soul cannot embrace what it wishes for and, at the same time, reject what it wishes not to have. Nor can the soul, insofar as it wants wine to be provided to it, assent within itself to having wine and, at the same time, insofar as it wants not to have wine to be provided to it, dissent within itself to having wine. Since embracing and rejecting are opposites, the Principle of Opposites implies that the soul cannot do these opposite actions at the same time with respect to the same thing. Nor can the impossibility be resolved by attributing these opposites to different parts of the soul. Since the soul is the cause of motion in the body (*Phdr* 245c-246d; *Laws* 894c-897b), it would follow that one of the ways the soul causes such motion is by embracing what it wishes to have. If some soul, say Tom's, wishing to have a drink, embraced what it wishes to have but did not move the body to drink, then Tom would not drink. If Tom does not drink, then the claim 'Tom's soul, wishing to have a drink, embraces what it wishes to have' seems to have no meaning. Now, suppose one part of the soul embraces what it wishes to have, e.g., to drink this drink. On the one hand, if this part of the soul did not move the body to drink, then 'embracing what it wishes to have' when applied to a part of the soul does not mean the same as it means when applied to the soul. An analogous argument holds of 'rejecting what it wishes not to have.' So, if 'embracing what it wishes to have' and 'rejects what it wishes not to have' do not mean the same when said of the soul and of a part of the soul, then the problem of attributing opposites to the soul cannot be solved by attributing them to different parts. On the other hand, if the part which embraces what it wishes to have does move the body to drink this drink, then another part simultaneously rejecting what it wishes not to have would cause the body to refrain from drinking However, by

the Principle of Opposites, the body cannot, e.g., drink and refrain from drinking at the same time with respect to the same thing; nor can it drink with one part and refrain from drinking with another part, at the same time with respect to the same thing. Either the whole body moves to drink or the whole body refrains from drinking. Since the body cannot move and be at rest in these opposite ways, the parts of the soul cannot simultaneously cause the body to move and to refrain from moving. Consequently, it cannot be correct to say one part of the soul embraces what it wishes to have and another part rejects what it does wish not to have; and the problem of attributing opposites to the soul cannot be solved by attributing them to the parts.

In the next step, Socrates admits opposites to wish, want, and desire. These are to be unwilling (ἀβουλεῖν), not want nor desire (μὴ ἐθέλειν μηδ' ἐπιθυμεῖν) (437c8-10). There is a difference between not wishing to have something and wishing not to have something. If this list is to be of the opposites to desiring, wishing for, and wanting, it must have the second sense—as ἀβουλεῖν, to be unwilling, seems to indicate. If so, there should be a negative version of (IV); Using (III) as a guide, we can say:

> (IV') The soul of the one desiring-not either rejects what it does not desire, or repels what it does not wish to have, or, insofar as it does not want something to be provided to it, it dissents within itself to having this thing, as though someone were asking.

This formulation describes a definitive direction that is negative.

At this point, Socrates adds a significant qualification to ἐπιθῡμία, focusing on the bodily desires of hunger and thirst. He says that, insofar as it is thirst (καθ' ὅσον δίψα ἐστί), we do not say that it is for anything other than that of which it is a desire in the soul. Socrates explains this claim by an example: (we do not say) thirst is thirst for hot or cold drink, or for much or less drink. But if it is qualified by heat, it is thirst for cold drink (437d8-e2). The import of this claim is seen a few lines later when Socrates says that we should dismiss the idea that no one desires (ἐπιθυμεῖ) drink but good drink since everyone desires good things (438a1-4). This passage, of course, has been taken to imply a momentous innovation in the moral psychology of the dialogues—viz., that bodily desires for food, drink, and sex are independent of the good.

This claim implies that appetite, in seeking to be satisfied, is heedless of the good. For instance, Irwin (1995, p. 208) says "opposition to acting on appetite is opposition to acting without regard to the good." This claim means either that opposition to acting on appetite is the same as opposition to acting without regard to the good or that all opposition to acting on appetite is opposition to acting without regard to the good. At a minimum, then, all opposition to acting on appetite is opposition to acting without regard to the good. If so, all acting on appetite is acting without regard to the good. Otherwise, one might act on appetite but not act without regard to the good. But then not all opposition to acting on appetite would be opposition to acting without regard to the good. Acting without regard to the good implies that, if one discovers acting is not good, one would act anyway. So, acting without regard to the good is acting heedless of the good. If acting without regard to the good does not imply that, if one discovers acting is not good, one would act anyway, then reason would not always oppose acting without regard

to the good—because it is possible that acting without regard to the good is compatible with the fact that, if one discovers acting is not good, one would not act anyway.[3] In Irwin's account, then, appetite's being heedless of the good is the basis for distinguishing it from reason. However, as we shall see, it is doubtful that Socrates' account of *epithumia* will support such a notion of good-independence.

Although Socrates holds that the argument at 438a1-4 is wrong, Glaucon seems to think that there is something right about it. To back up his criticism of this argument, Socrates launches into a lengthy analogy about relative terms. Starting at a high level of abstraction, he says that relative terms which are of a particular sort are related to terms of a particular sort and other relative terms which are just themselves are related to terms that are just themselves. He illustrates the first type with greater and lesser; whatever is greater is greater with respect to what is lesser (438b-c). Before applying the analogy to appetite, Socrates extends it to include knowledge; in doing so, he introduces a distinction between knowledge as such and particular types of knowledge. Unfortunately, the distinction is not very clear; nevertheless, it is vital for this argument. Although he gives no example of knowledge as such, the knowledge of house-building is offered as a particular type. Knowledge as such is relative to (the vaguely described) whatever can be known, whereas the particular knowledge of house-building is relative to house-building. It seems unlikely that knowledge as such is something like the genus of knowledge because, then, knowledge as such would not exist apart from its species, i.e., particular forms of knowledge. So, it appears that knowledge as such is knowledge in a very general form—as knowledge of whatever is knowable—without respect to its being organized into disciplines, in contrast to knowledge specified in house-building or in medicine. Next, he now applies the knowledge analogy to thirst. Just as there is knowledge as such of whatever can be known, there is thirst as such for drink as such. However, just as knowledge can be specified by its relation to a particular kind of object of knowledge, thirst can be specified by its relation to a particular kind of object of desire (438e-439a).

By comparing thirst—and appetite in general—to knowledge, Socrates is introducing the idea that thirst is intentional. It aims at something just as knowledge aims at something. In addition, in the analogy between thirst and knowledge, Socrates distinguishes knowledge in itself from particular kinds of knowledge in order to make a distinction between thirst as such for drink as such and particular thirst for a particular kind of drink. So, given that they are intentional, thirst as such for drink as such aims at drink as such and particular kinds of thirst for particular kinds of drink aim at particular kinds of drink (Carone, 200, pp. 118-120). As a consequence, thirst as such for drink as such is distinguished from particular kinds of thirst because thirst as such does not aim at a particular kind of drink.

Now we can see that thirst as such for drink as such is not capable of overcoming one's judgment about the better course of action—as it would have to do according to the causal account. Thirst that is capable of overcoming one's better judgment is thirst for a drink whether the drink is good or not. This kind of thirst is different from thirst for a drink without reference to whether it is good or not. Suppose Tom is so thirsty that he wants to drink something whether it is good or not; this thirst would aim at drinking even if doing so is not good. This kind of thirst could overcome one's better judgment. Then suppose Tom is thirsty for something to drink

but he has not thought whether what he wants to drink is good or not; this thirst does not aim at drinking even if doing so is not good. This kind of thirst could not overcome one's better judgment. Now, thirst as such for drink as such aims at a drink without reference to whether the drink is good or not; so, it does not aim at a particular kind of drink. By contrast, thirst which aims at a drink whether it is good or not aims at a particular kind of drink; it aims at a drink even if the drink is not good. However, that thirst as such aims at a drink without reference to whether it is good or not still leaves it open whether actually satisfying such a thirst could have bad consequences. Even though his thirst aims at a kind of drink that is quite generic, Tom's actually satisfying it can still be bad for him.

However, this result only brings into relief the other two terms in (IV): ἐθέλειν and βούλεσθαι. If thirst as such aims at drinking without reference to whether the drink is good or not, wanting and wishing are essentially linked to the good. In the *Meno*, Socrates argues that no one wishes for (βούλεσθαι) bad things, knowing them to be bad. Everyone desires (ἐπιθῦμειν) good things. The idea that we want the good is also found in the *Gorgias* where Socrates argues that we wish for (βούλεσθαι) good things when we do anything. So, when people take medicine, which is neither good nor bad in itself, what they wish for (βούλεσθαι) is health, which is something good (*Gor.* 467c ff). So the use of βούλεσθαι in this context raises anew the idea that its object is the good (Irwin, 1995, p. 205-8). We have good reason to take seriously the fact that Socrates uses βούλεσθαι in this passage as aiming at the good. If he wanted to change its association with the good, he could have done so; βούλεσθαι and ἐθέλειν continue to have the sense of wishing for or wanting what is good.

At this point, Socrates has set the stage for the argument that the soul has distinct parts. In its first phase, the argument distinguishes between reason and appetite, by means of a conflict between the two. Steps (1) and (2) are moments in a dialectical development from a soul without conflict to one in conflict. To express the first, Socrates applies (IV) to a familiar situation:

> 1) The soul of the one who is thirsty, insofar as it is thirsty, wishes for (βούλεται) nothing except to drink; this is what it reaches out for (ὀρέγεται) and sets out to get (ὁρμᾶι). (439a9-b1)

First of all, what should not be overlooked is that, in (1), the soul is the subject of 'wishes for'—not appetite. Then, (1) qualifies the soul of the one who is thirsty by 'insofar as it is thirsty.' Since Socrates has just explained, at length, the notion of thirst as such for drink as such, it hard to deny that he is now describing a soul moved by thirst as such—a soul moved, not by thirst for hot drink or cold drink, for good drink or bad drink, but just by thirst as such. Next, Socrates specifies this wishing-for by 'reaches for' and 'sets out to get'. This combination of βούλεσθαι with 'reaches out to get' and 'sets out to get' recalls (IV) where βούλεσθαι is combined with 'embraces'. Once again, the definitive direction of the soul is set. This soul has decided to drink, driven by thirst as such for drink as such.

In the interpretation based on the causal account, the soul in (1) is acting on an appetite that is heedless of the good (Irwin, 1995, pp. 208-9). In fact, this step is the only one in this argument which might be construed in this way, as we shall see. So, we should pay close attention to this step to see how much it will bear the weight of this interpretation.

We will focus on two aspects of (1): the phrase 'insofar as it is thirsty' and the verb βούλεσθαι. According to the interpretation in question, the phrase must refer to a thirst that is heedless of the good. However, we have seen that the phrase refers to what Socrates has just been explaining, i.e., thirst as such for drink as such. So, this interpretation takes thirst as such for drink as such to be thirst that is heedless of the good; thus, it confuses thirst which aims at drinking without reference to its being good or bad with thirst which aims at drinking whether it is good or bad. Next, in this interpretation, the soul in the grip of thirst that is heedless of the good wishes for a drink whether it is good or bad. As a consequence, this reading contradicts the link between wishes for (βούλεσθαι) and the good since it implies that in (1) the soul wishes for something heedless of the good. However, if (1) is read so that thirst is too generic to be heedless of the good, then it does not imply that the soul wishes to drink heedless of the good. Still, even though thirst as such for drink as such is too generic to aim at good or bad drink, the soul, for its part, can wish to drink as something good to do.

In the next step, the situation changes and conflict is introduced into the soul. In addition, Socrates abruptly moves from talking about what the soul does to what the parts of the soul do:

> 2) Then if ever there is something that pulls the soul back (ἀνθέλκει) when it is thirsting (αὐτὴν … διψῶσαν), it would be something different in the soul from that which is thirsting and leading it (διψῶντος καὶ ἄγοντος) like a beast to drink (439b3-5).

These impulses come from different parts of the soul; at this point, the soul is not acting on either impulse. (2) does not describe an opposition between the soul deciding to drink and its deciding not to drink. In (2), the soul is not the agent, rather the putative parts are. Nor does (2) describe one part as having decided to drink and another part as having decided to refrain. One part has not embraced drinking as what it wishes to have and the other has not rejected drinking as what it wishes not to have. Rather, 'something that pulls the soul back when it is thirsting' describes a fluid situation in which nothing has been settled; opposing impulses are contending, indicated by Plato's use of present participles.

First of all, if partition depended on the soul's acting on an appetite that is heedless of the good, this step—which does not describe the soul acting on such an appetite—must at least be the beginning of an argument for the soul's so acting; but the rest of the argument is not about the soul acting on an appetite that is heedless of the good. In fact, by the end of the argument, the opposite happens, i.e., the soul follows the command of reason (439c5-7). The opposing impulses are not part of an argument for the possibility of *akrasia*; rather, they are competing motivations.[4] Motivation is a source of possible motion or action in the soul that itself does not lead to action; choice is the way motivation becomes the definitive direction of the soul. While I might have a motivation, impulse, or inclination to drink a cup of wine, I need not choose to drink. If I act on the motivation, I choose to drink.

In the next step, Socrates invokes (I), the Principle of Opposites, in order to back up the claim in (2) that there are two distinct parts of the soul. As Socrates says, in justifying (2):

> 3) For the same thing does not do opposite things with the same thing at the

same time in relation to the same thing (439b5-6).
We can specify (3):
(3') For the same thing (the soul) does not do opposite things (leading and holding back) with the same part at the same time in relation to the same thing (the act of drinking).

Not only is the soul's acting on an appetite that is heedless of the good not found in steps (2) – (5) of this argument, now we can see that the soul's acting on an appetite that is heedless of the good is not needed in the argument for subdividing the soul. By invoking (I) at this point, he shows that the distinction between parts depends only on their offering opposing motivations. It does not depend on the possibility of appetite overcoming reason since (2) does not describe the possibility of appetite overcoming reason. This interpretation of the argument for the tripartite soul, then, differs from the tradition which holds the parts of the soul are agents that can cause the body to move—and, thereby, implies the possibility of *akrasia*. Rather, this interpretation of tripartition places it in the framework of choice, where the differentiation of parts follows from their offering opposing motivations for acting, one offering a motivation to act and the other opposing this motivation.

Now that there are two alternatives facing the soul, we have the second feature of choice. The soul must choose between the two. (4) – (5) describe the choice. In these two steps, we find a pattern similar to that outlined in (IV). First:

> 4) Sometimes those who are thirsty want not to drink (οὐκ ἐθέλειν πιεῖν) (439c2-3)

Unlike the situation in (2), here a choice has been made, indicated by ἐθέλειν. Moreover, the situation in (4) also contrasts with that in (1), where the soul wishes to drink. In (1), there is no choice between drinking and not drinking; the soul, so to speak, sees no reason not to drink. In (4), there is a choice, elaborated in the next step:

> 5) There is within the soul of these people that which commands (τὸ κελεῦον) and something different within the soul, i.e., that which forbids (τὸ κωλῦον) to drink, that overpowers (κρατοῦν) that which commands (439c5-7).

In (5) the wanting not to drink is represented by the command not to drink overcoming the command to drink. The command not to drink overcomes the command to drink because, according to (4), a choice has been made not to drink.

Next, Socrates claims that what holds the soul back from such actions arises, when it arises, from calculation (ἐκ λογισμοῦ) and that which pushes and drags, from passions (παθημάτων) and diseases (439c9-d2). Then Socrates names that (thing) of the soul by which it reasons λογιστικὸν and that by which it feels erotic passion, hungers, and thirsts non-rational (ἀλόγιστόν) and ἐπιθυμητικόν (439d5-8). We have seen in (IV) and in (1) that the soul is the subject of choosing. In (5), when the counter-command of reason overcomes the command of appetite, a choice has been made. However, in (5) the soul is not said to be the subject of choosing. What is striking, then, is that this argument begins with two claims about what the soul does. Then it introduces parts of the soul. One might be tempted to think that the soul has been dissolved into its parts. In particular, the functions formerly attributed to the soul might now be attributed to the parts. This result would fit well

with our contemporary categories of thought. We know, roughly, how to talk about reason, emotions, and appetites; we do not know how to talk about the soul. At best, we indulge the Platonic conceit that the soul moves the body; somehow, it has the role of transforming thought into action. But if soul is reduced to its parts, then we can settle comfortably into the categories of contemporary moral psychology. All talk of the soul is, at best, a convenient way of talking about what the parts do. So, if this argument reduces the soul's agency to the agency of its parts, Socrates should talk as though functions formerly done by the soul are now done by the parts.

However, the soul remains a stubborn element in this account. After all, we have just seen that it is the soul that calculates by reason and feels desire by the appetite. And while (5) describes a choice, it does not follow the reductionist program by reassigning the function of choosing, mentioned in (1), from the soul to one of its parts. The obvious candidate for exercising the function of choosing would be the reasoning part (Cf. Penner, 1971, p. 107, p. 114; Cooper, 1999, pp. 124-5.). However, such a conclusion would not fit with (5). Reason does not choose; rather, it countermands what appetite commands. The thirsty person chooses not to drink only when the countermand of reason overcomes the command of appetite. So, the counter-command is not itself the choice.

In this argument, reason has two roles: calculating about the better and the worse (441b3-c2) and countermanding appetite (439c2-d2). The two functions go together. By calculating the consequences of following the urge of appetite with respect to the better and the worse, reason can arrive at the counter-command that forbids drinking. However, reason does not choose; the soul chooses when it follows reason. Reason gives a command that becomes the soul's choice when it overcomes the command of appetite. This role for reason conforms to what we find in Book 8. The only desire explicitly attributed to reason is the desire to know the truth (581b5-7). Reason's desire to know the truth includes, scil., the desire to know the truth about the good. This desire to know the truth about the good explains reason's job in Book 4 as calculating about the better and the worse. Calculating about the better and the worse in a particular situation is a form of pursuing the truth about the good because the desire that moves reason to pursue the truth moves it to calculate about the better and the worse. Finally, the counter-command is the conclusion of the calculation. One can speculate that reason in this case considers the consequences of following the command of appetite and sees that it is worse to follow this command and better not to. Then it arrives at its conclusion, the command not to drink.

In the light of this result, then, we can appreciate the importance of the shift in this argument between (2) and (5). In (2), the opposition in the soul is portrayed as analogous to physical force. Something leads or pulls the soul to drink; something else pulls it back from drinking. At this point in the argument, we seem to have competing motivations; if so, we might expect the stronger motivation would win. However, Socrates deviates from this path, seemingly laid out by (2). In (5) he transforms the opposition from one of competing forces or motivations to one of competing commands. One should not be tempted by the idea that the two ways of portraying the opposition amount to the same thing. Of course, both are analogies for the opposition between reason and appetite; but it makes a difference if we think of the opposition on the analogy of

strength or on the analogy of command. If the appropriate way of portraying the opposition coming from reason is as a command then the opposition coming from appetite has to be portrayed in a similar vein. What is remarkable about (5), then, is not that reason's role is portrayed as issuing a counter-command; it is that appetite's push to drink is transformed into a command to drink. It is remarkable because of the way it presents the concept of choice in the argument. Choice does not imply that one of two motivations moves the soul because it is stronger than the other; it implies a judgment about which should be followed. The transformation of motivations into commands sets the stage for a judgment between courses of action. A command functions in a logical context that is different from the logical context of motivations. The opposition between that which commands and that which forbids is now a dispute about which command to follow, about what ought to be done.

Thus, what should not be lost is that, by introducing a language internal to the soul, Socrates is presenting the competition between reason and appetite in a linguistic form. In (IV), the internal language of the soul is qualified by an analogy—"as though someone were asking." In (5), there is no analogy; what is to be done appears in the form of two imperatives. The soul is talking to itself in a dialectical framework that calls for following one or the other; the incompatibility of the two imperatives is clear. The difference between the two commands is that one results from calculation and the other does not. However, the counter-command of reason comes not just from calculation; reason—unlike appetite—is capable of conceiving of the over-all good of the soul (441c1-2). If so, the opposition between reason and appetite is the opposition between what can conceive of the over-all good and what cannot. Then one command, from appetite, articulates what ought to be done, without taking into account the good of the whole since appetite is incapable of conceiving of such a thing. The command from reason arises from reason's calculation about the better and the worse with respect to the consequences of following the command of appetite. The command of appetite simply commands to drink. However, at this point, we must be careful about the content of the command of appetite. According to the interpretation of appetite as good-independent, the command would be something like the command to drink no matter what the consequences for the good. According to our interpretation, however, it is simply the command to drink, which is oblivious of good or bad consequences. It is the command that follows from the simple urge to drink. Finally, (5) implies the command is just the command to drink.

(4) and (5) imply that when one chooses not to drink what forbids overcomes what commands. (5) suggests a way to understand how choosing not to drink implies that which forbids overcomes that which commands. First, that which commands is addressing a command to something that can follow a command and that which forbids is addressing a counter-command to something that can follow a counter-command. Second, whatever appetite is addressing is also what reason is addressing. Finally, since that which forbids overcomes that which commands, whatever the two are addressing follows the counter-command and not the command. Since (5) says the counter-command and the command occur in the soul, we have good reason for seeing the imperatives as addressed to the soul. After all, it is the soul that will move the body in carrying out the commands. In

(IV), insofar as it wants (ἐθέλει) something to be provided to it, the soul of the one desiring assents within itself to having this thing, as though a question were posed to it. Since in (IV) the soul is being asked a question, it is plausible to see the command of appetite and the counter-command of reason in (5) as addressed to the soul. If the two commands are addressed to the soul, choosing not to drink is the soul choosing to follow the command not to drink over the command to drink. In this way, choosing not to drink implies that that which forbids to drink overcomes that which commands to drink.

Finally, if, in (5), it is the soul that follows the command not to drink, we can understand how the command of reason overcomes the command of appetite. In (IV) the soul wishes for what it wishes for by embracing it or wants what it wants by assenting to having it. Since wish (βούλεσθαι) and want (ἐθέλειν) are tied to the good, the soul wishes for the good by embracing what it wishes for or wants the good by assenting to having what it wants. There is no reason to think in (5) the soul would not follow the pattern of taking a definitive direction by embracing what it wishes for or assenting to having what it wants. However, what the soul faces in (5) is different because it faces alternative possible actions. Then, embracing what it wishes for or assenting to having what it wants must now include choosing between the two. Embracing what it wishes for or assenting to having what it wants then becomes following one of the two commands. So, if the command of appetite does not touch on the over-all good and if the command of reason embodies the calculation about the over-all good, the soul chooses the latter because following the command of reason is the way the soul embraces or assents to having the good it wishes for or wants. The result is that the command of reason overcomes the command of appetite.

The great advantage of this interpretation of the argument for subdividing the soul is that it makes sense of a fundamental claim about the soul made in *Republic* 6:

> (V) Each soul pursues this (the good) and does everything for the sake of this, divining that it is something but also puzzled and unable to grasp adequately what it is… (ὅ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει, ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι, ἀποροῦσα δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ἱκανῶς τί ποτ' ἐστὶν οὐδὲ πίστει χρήσασθαι μονίμῳ οἵᾳ, καὶ περὶ τἆλλα…) (505d11-e2).[5]

According to the interpretation of this argument inspired by the causal account, (V) is false. Since one part of the soul, appetite, is heedless of the good, this part can move the soul to pursue what reason calculates is not good. When appetite moves the soul in this way, the soul is not pursuing the good. However, in our interpretation of the argument, the soul pursues the good. First of all, while appetite can give rise to a motivation for an action that reason calculates is not good, this motivation is not sufficient to move the soul to choose what is not good. Furthermore, in the situation described in (1) – (5)—where it is a question of only two parts, appetite and reason—the soul is in one of three states. In the first, i.e., (1), the desiring soul, in taking a definitive direction, i.e., when it wishes to drink, follows appetite. If we assume the link between βούλεται and the good, since it wishes for nothing except to drink and wishing (βούλεται) aims at the good, the soul wishes to drink as something good to do. In the second, i.e., (2), although it is thirsty, something is

pulling the soul back. The soul, in the grip of two competing motivations, does not take a definitive direction; it neither wishes to drink nor wishes not to drink. Finally, in the third, i.e., (4) – (5), the soul takes a definitive direction; under the guidance of reason, it wishes not to drink as the good thing to do. So, when the soul takes a definitive direction, it either wishes to drink or wishes not to drink. In either case, when it takes a definitive direction, it pursues the good.

III

Finally, those interpretations which hold that the argument for tripartition implies *akrasia* take the story of Leontius to be strong support. So, our account of choice is not complete until we look at the last part of this passage, which actually deals with the third part of the soul, the *thumos* (θῦμός). At this point, Socrates complicates matters by introducing a kind of conflict in the soul not yet seen. While previously there was conflict between reason and appetite, it was easily settled in reason's favor. In the third section of this argument, however, Socrates introduces a more persistent type of conflict. First, in the story of Leontius, there is a running conflict between *thumos* and appetite. Next, Socrates considers a conflict between reason and appetite to show that *thumos* is the ally of reason. Since this passage is thought to raise the topic of *akrasia*, we will have to consider that issue in the context of the account of choice; the latter is not compatible with *akrasia*.

It will be helpful to start with a distinction, made by Penner, between synchronic belief *akrasia* and diachronic belief *akrasia* (Penner, 1990, p.48). In synchronic belief *akrasia*, one does what she believes is not good while at the same time believing it not to be good; in diachronic belief *akrasia*, one does what she believed before the act was not good; but at the point of acting she believes it to be good. In diachronic belief *akrasia*, one's belief is unstable; in the other form of *akrasia* it is ineffective. Only synchronic belief *akrasia* is an instance of doing what one believes is not good, while simultaneously believing it is not good. So, only synchronic belief *akrasia* is incompatible with the concept of choice since, in it, the soul does not follow what reason holds to be good. Diachronic belief *akrasia* is compatible with choice because, in it, the soul does follow, at the moment of choosing, what reason holds to be good.

If the story of Leontius and its aftermath imply synchronous belief *akrasia*, it would undermine the account. However, the story of Leontius and its aftermath cannot be shown to do so. We can begin by noting that Leontius' story is not introduced as an account of appetite overcoming reason; reason is not even mentioned. The story is introduced to illustrate the conflict between appetite and *thumos* in order to show the two to be distinct. At first, it recounts his resisting the desire to look at the executed corpses, even covering his head. Then it says he is overcome (κρατούμενος) by the desire. Then, opening wide his eyes, he rushes toward the corpses, with the imprecation addressed to his eyes, "Behold you, wretches, fill up on the fine sight." (439e-440a). The reading that stays closest to the text would hold that the story is about a conflict between what the desire wants and what is honorable or dignified to *thumos* (Cf. Carone, 2001, pp. 136-140). Even if Leontius' being overcome involves reason, the omission of any mention of reason means that we cannot be sure whether being overcome is a case of synchronous belief *akrasia*

or diachronic. An obvious explanation for this lack of detail is that the story is meant to illustrate conflict between appetite and *thumos* and not *akrasia*.

However, once the story is finished, Socrates introduces reason into the account. Still, his point is to argue that *thumos* is the ally of reason when there is conflict between reason and appetite (*Rep.*440a8-b8). The chief reason for taking this section to illustrate synchronous belief *akrasia* is that Socrates says that whenever appetite forces (βιάζωνταί) someone contrary to his reason, he becomes angry with that in him which is forcing (or has forced him) (βιαζομένῳ) So that in the conflict of the two (δυοῖν στασιαζόντοιν), *thumos* becomes the ally (σύμμαχον)—i.e., fights alongside—reason (440a-b). βιάζω can mean either 'press hard' or 'overcome/overpower.' If it means that appetite presses hard contrary to the judgment of reason, it has not yet overcome.[6] In the present passage, the soul is again talking to itself, within itself. The *thumos* is reviling (λοιδοροῦντά) that which is forcing, i.e., the appetite; while reason is holding on to the idea that what the appetite urges should not be done (αἱροῦντος λόγου μὴ δεῖν ἀντιπράττειν), *thumos* makes common cause with it against the appetite. The angry words addressed to appetite are an attempt to make it give way to reason's command and to stop urging the opposite action. If it is successful, then the soul has chosen not to do the action; refraining is its definitive direction.

The idea that *thumos* opposes appetites' pressing hard has the advantage of making sense of *thumos*' being the ally of reason (σύμμαχον), i.e., of fighting alongside it. *Thumos* reinforces reason's side in the continuing fight with appetite by confronting the urging of appetite with indignation and anger. Socrates recounts a somewhat similar alliance (σύμμαχία) in *Republic* 8, where there is a *stasis* in the soul of the oligarchic youth (*Rep.* 559e5-560a2). While the fight is not about giving into a particular appetite but about the shape of a life, still the alliance (*summachia*) means weighing in on a continuing conflict in order to make it turn out in favor of one's ally. However, in the second reading of *biazô* this meaning is not possible. If *biazô* has the sense, not of forcing, but of overcoming or overpowering, the relevant sentence says that, when appetite overcomes someone contrary to his reason, *thumos* reviles and becomes angry with that in him that has overpowered. We still cannot be sure about what is happening with reason. If reason is undergoing diachronic belief *akrasia*, it has wavered. Then *thumos* is carrying on the fight, in spite of reason's wavering. If reason is undergoing synchronous belief *akrasia*, then what is supposed to be an account of *thumos* as the ally of reason is undermined. If *thumos* rises up in anger only when someone has been overpowered contrary to his reason, it is offering no aid to reason in the fight with appetite since appetite has already won. So, we cannot conclude that the passage containing the story of Leontius is a clear example of Socrates' describing someone doing what he simultaneously believes is not good.

IV

Finally, we can now see that the argument for subdividing the soul does not depend on the causal account. Each part of the soul is capable of giving rise to a motivation to act; but the soul acts by choosing which motivation to follow. The parts are distinct because they can give rise to opposing motivations; they are not distinct because each is an inde-

pendent agent. Thus, the non-rational parts being distinct from the rational part does not depend on these parts being capable of acting akratically—acting contrary to one's better judgment. Now, the causal account of action is attractive because it explains how each part is an independent agent, capable of acting akratically. However, if the parts are not independent agents, the causal account is not needed to understand the argument for subdividing the soul.

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ENDNOTES

1 Some commentators seem to evince hesitancy about the causal theory when they hold that desire itself has a cognitive dimension. Segvic, 2000, p.11; Lorenz, 2006, pp. 24-34.

2 This interpretation has some theoretical affinities with that of Moravcsik, 2001, pp. 41-2.

3 This interpretation has been influential, both for those who follow it and for those who oppose it. For instance, Kamtekar (2017, p. 134-40) argues that all parts of the soul seek good. The difference between the good sought by reason and that sought by appetite is in scope; reason seeks the over-all good whereas appetite seeks the narrower good of pleasure. Thus, arguing that appetite is essentially good directed (although the good is narrowly conceived) is the counter to the idea that appetite is essentially good indifferent.

4 The idea of motivation can be found in the following authors. Penner, 1971, vol.2, 105; Annas, 1981, pp. 133-7; Stalley, 1975, p. 124; Cooper, 1999, p.121 ff.

5 If (3') implies that, in leading with one part and holding back with another part, the soul *does* each of these with the respective part, then, in doing the first, it does not pursue the good, *contra* (V). However, this result overlooks the nuance of the general principle (I), of which (3') is a reiteration. (I) includes 'undergoing' with 'doing.' If we expand (3') to include 'undergoing' (3') would read: (3'') the same thing (the soul) does not do or undergo opposites things (leading and holding back) with the same part at the same time with respect to the same thing (the act of drinking).
If the soul undergoes the leading of appetite—as its being a passion suggests—then (3'') would be compatible with (V).

6 We can read βιαζομένῳ to mean that appetite is pressing hard but not yet succeeding. The Grube/Reeve translation captures the ambiguity in the Greek between the continuous activity of appetite's forcing (and thus not yet succeeding in causing someone to act contrary to calculation) and the finished act of appetite's having forced (and thus its succeeding). (G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve (trans), 1992, p. 116.)

"Socrates' Κατάβασις and the Sophistic Shades: Education and Democracy"

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the unusually elaborate dramatic context in Plato's *Protagoras* and effect of sophistry on democratic Athens. Because Socrates evokes Odysseus' κατάβασις in the *Odyssey* to describe the sophists in Callias' house (314c-316b), I propose that Socrates depicts the sophists as bodiless shades residing in Hades. Like the shades dwelling in Hades with no connection to embodied humans on Earth, the sophists in the *Protagoras* are non-Athenians with no consideration for the democratic body of the Athenian πόλις. I conclude that sophistry can be detrimental to Athenian democracy because it can produce education inequality founded on wealth inequality.

Keywords: Plato; sophistry; Homer; literary interpretation; education; politics; democracy

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1. INTRODUCTION: OUTSIDERS

Plato, in the *Protagoras,* presents minor but crucial details in his description of the scene at Callias' house when Socrates and Hippocrates arrive to converse with the great Protagoras (314c-316b). The *Protagoras* is part of a minority of dialogues, including *Phaedo, Republic,* and *Phaedrus*, in which the dramatic context is elaborate and complex. Indeed, in the *Protagoras,* Plato spends nearly two Stephanus pages merely describing the scene. There are references to the *Odyssey*, a specific picture of Protagoras' promenade, and other particular details about the activities occurring inside Callias' house. Why does Plato draw such attention to the drama behind the **λόγος***?* Despite the extensive literature on the λόγοι in the dialogue, the dramatic context of the *Protagoras* is often overlooked. Few see it as integral to the meaning of the dialogue as a whole. For example, W. K. C. Guthrie finds philosophical meaning in the dialogue, "*in spite of* the importance of the dramatic element" (Guthrie, 1956, 9, emphasis mine). Yet some do address the dramatic context; most prominent in this regard are David Corey in *The Sophists in Plato's Dialogues* (2015) and Heda Segvic in *From Protagoras to Aristotle* (2009). Corey argues that Plato's aim is not necessarily to villainize the sophists or treat them as enemies of philosophy (Corey, 2015, 3). He deepens our understanding of the sophists and adds nuance to the ways the sophists are treated in the Platonic dialogues, particularly in the *Protagoras*. In contrast to Corey, Segvic draws the following conclusions from Socrates' characterization of the sophists in this opening scene of the *Protagoras*:

> By presenting them as heroes of the nether world, Socrates seems to be making an ironical comment on the image the three Sophists [Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus] have of themselves. They like to think of themselves, and to come across, as extraordinary. Socrates attempts to deflate, with irony, what he regards as the Sophists' pompousness. Placed in the underworld, the three Sophists appear as shadowy figures, lacking in full-blooded life (Segvic, 2009, 39-40).

While I ultimately do agree with Segvic here, she does not address the consequences that this allusion brings to light and the critique of sophistry as a whole. After all, why would Plato paint such an unusually detailed picture of the dramatic scene with allusions to the underworld? Corey also argues very convincingly that the sophists cannot be considered as a singular entity. For Corey, the Platonic dialogues ought not to be read as an overarching criticism of the sophistic profession but rather as individual appraisals of individual sophists. Plato engages with each sophist in a different way and for a different purpose (Corey, 2015, 202). Corey does an excellent job contextualizing the nature of each individual sophist, but I question Corey's conclusion that Socrates finds the sophists present in the *Protagoras* to be worthy of respect, simply because of the threat to the Athenian democracy that they pose, the case for which I make below.

In this article, I will show exactly why Socrates' description of Callias' house is evocative of Odysseus' descent into Hades in the *Odyssey*. Socrates twice explicitly refers to Book XI of the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus' descent unfolds (315c, d). While each point of parallel individually is not conclusive, taken together, we can begin to see why Plato dramatizes the dialogue in such a long and elaborate way. Additionally, there are certainly

points of disanalogy that must be addressed as well, as these too shed light on the meaning of the dialogue as a whole. I shall argue that because Socrates considers the sophists to be like bodiless shades residing in Hades, he is making a much more scathing and poignant criticism of sophistry than simply belittling the sophistic profession by outdoing Protagoras in λόγος. Rather, like the shades that dwell in Hades who have no concern for or connection with embodied humans on Earth, the sophists in the *Protagoras* are foreigners with no care for or reliance on the body of the Athenian πόλις. As foreigners, the sophists do not share in the benefits of belonging to the πόλις and are not subject to its νόμοι in the same way that natives are. That is, these sophists have no obligation to protect the city's wellbeing and keep it healthy. Any intrinsic motivation for teaching young men to be good citizens and democrats is annulled. I shall argue that this is the political point being made in this dialogue. Protagoras claims to teach πολιτική τέχνη, and yet he is not involved in the Athenian political scene as a voting member of the Assembly. While he was invited by Pericles to write the constitution of Thurii in 444, Protagoras is not a member of the Athenian δῆμος. Instead, he teaches πολιτική τέχνη to the youth who will use that knowledge in the Assembly to govern. Athens, at this period, is a democracy; everyone has an equal say in how the πόλις should be run. Yet those who can afford to study with a sophist will be more persuasive than those who cannot afford it – they have learned the rhetorical art. Their voices will be more consequential in the Assembly. And this is decidedly anti-democratic: a democracy is supposed to give equal weight to every person.

In essence, for Socrates, the sophists are akin to wandering, homeless nomads with only their charming and Orphic-like voices for sale. In contrast to the sophists, I shall argue that Socrates is concerned solely for the good of the πόλις, and he devotes his entire life to the welfare of the city and its youth. Socrates is a loyal Athenian, who – conspicuously – almost never leaves the city walls and never takes payment from his followers. Yet some of the youth present for the conversation in the *Protagoras* become notoriously bad citizens – a fact that would not be lost on Plato's contemporary audience. For example, Alcibiades, Critias, and Charmides all were among the "Thirty Tyrants," and Andron and Critias were part of the "Four Hundred" oligarchs. What role does education play in politics? How can we make sense of this apparent failure of Socrates?

In his descent into Hades to encounter the bodiless shades, Socrates alludes to the danger sophistry has to the wellbeing of Athens. It is not the sophists' foreignness *per se* that is problematic, for Socrates. Rather, it is their attitude toward their students and their civic commitment. Sophistry is undemocratic: the wealthy who can afford a sophistical education learn the political art from the experts. Those who cannot afford the education are left behind.

2. SOCRATES' DESCENT

The *Protagoras* opens with Socrates happening by chance upon an acquaintance along the road who asks Socrates to recount the conversation that he just had with Protagoras (*Prt.* 310a).[1] In Socrates' very first line in the dialogue, he labels his acquaintance as "a praiser of Homer" (*Prt.* 309a). Plato immediately places Homer at center stage in the dialogue. According to Segvic, by making a Homeric reference in his first line in the dialogue, Socrates alerts the reader that

Homer and μῦθοι will play an important role in the events to come (Segvic, 2009, 32). As we shall see, many more references to Homer are forthcoming in the dialogue.

Socrates begins to narrate his morning by reporting that the young Hippocrates roused him from his sleep and begged to be taken to hear the wise Protagoras lecture. Socrates explicitly mentions that Hippocrates burst into Socrates' bedroom "in the course of this past night, when morning had not quite broken" (*Prt.* 310a). Segvic calls to mind the parallel in Book X of the *Odyssey* (Segvic, 2009, 38). After dwelling with Circe for a year, Odysseus and his crew are anxious to depart for Ithaca. "When the sun set and darkness came on" Odysseus begs Circe to fulfill her promise and let him return home (*Od.* 10.499). Circe instructs Odysseus to descend into Hades to learn his fate and the passage home. Odysseus finishes narrating her detailed directions by stating that "dawn rose in gold as she finished speaking" (*Od.* 10.563). Odysseus dreads this unavoidable descent into Hades: "This broke my spirit. I sat on the bed / And wept. I had no will to live, nor did I care / If I ever saw the sunlight again" (*Od.* 10.519-521). While Segvic brings to light this comparison, much more interpretive work must be done to uncover the meaning behind this allusion. Odysseus knows how small the chances of survival are for him and his men, who have been loyal to him for the entire journey. Nevertheless, at daybreak Odysseus departs for Hades. In parallel, Socrates reluctantly agrees to introduce Hippocrates to Protagoras, Hippocrates' would-be teacher, since he has a reputation for bewitching all those who hear him speak. Just like Odysseus and Circe, Socrates and Hippocrates discuss during the night the proper approach to take toward Hades/Protagoras. Socrates is unsure if he and Hippocrates will make it out of Callias' house untouched by Protagoras' charm; nevertheless, they make the downward journey to Callias' house just after daybreak. Additionally, as I will show later, Socrates is not sure the Athenian democracy can survive the influx of political/moral education by the sophists. By traveling at daybreak, a customary time to begin a journey in antiquity, Plato implies that this visit to the house of Callias will be more arduous than a quick meeting among friends. Rather, Socrates will be undertaking a journey that will lead him through the underworld.

For further evidence that Plato is alluding to Odysseus' descent, historical context must be considered as well. We learn in Xenophon's *Symposium* that Callias resides in the Piraeus (Xenophon, *Smp*, I.2).[2] As in Socrates' descent to the Piraeus in the *Republic*, he again travels down to the Athenian port to encounter the sophists who seem to be in the underworld. In *Being and Logos* (1996), John Sallis makes clear that by visiting the Piraeus, the Athenian harbor, Socrates is in essence descending into Hades.[3] To meet the sophists in Callias' house, Socrates must travel down to the land beyond the river – "beyond the river Lethe or another of those rivers that must be crossed in order to reach Hades" (Sallis, 1996, 316). When Socrates and Hippocrates arrive at the gate of Callias' house, they encounter the first instance of dehumanization – the doorman is a eunuch (*Prt.* 314c). Plato subtly emphasizes that down in the Piraeus, things are already not entirely as they should be. This slight detail alerts the reader to pay attention to other occurrences of deprivation at Callias' house. Much like Socrates' allegory of the cave illustrated in the *Republic,* Callias' house is a cave of sorts, and Socrates will need to navigate for himself the upward way out of the cave of sophistical λόγος.

3. INSIDE THE GATES: INTRODUCING THE SHADES

3A. PROTAGORAS

Upon entering the house, Socrates paints an elaborate picture of Protagoras and those immediately surrounding him. "Once inside, we came upon Protagoras walking about [περιπατοῦντα] in the portico. And *walking right along with him* [συμπεριεπάτουν] were, on the one side, Callias son of Hipponicus, his maternal half-brother Paralus son of Pericles, and Charmides son of Glaucon; on the other side were the other son of Pericles, named Xanthippus, Philippides son of Philomelus, and Antimoerus the Mendaean" (*Prt.* 314e-315a, emphasis mine). The first sight that Socrates and Hippocrates witness is a parade with Protagoras in the middle flanked by powerful men on either side. They are all walking *together*, not behind Protagoras, presumably in a clumsy line, all vying for the closest spot to the great teacher in order to ingratiate themselves. In comparing this scene with the first sight that Odysseus beholds in his κατάβασις, we discover that the imagery is similar.

> The souls of the dead gathered, the ghosts
> Of brides and youths and worn-out men
> And soft young girls with hearts new to sorrow,
> And many men wounded with bronze spears,
> Killed in battle, bearing blood-stained arms.
> They drifted up to the pit from all sides with an eerie cry (*Od.* 11.35-41).

The souls have gathered around the pool of blood from the sheep that Odysseus has sacrificed. The first sights of both Socrates and Odysseus upon entering the Piraeus and Hades respectively is of disorderly groups of souls. Both illustrations paint the same picture – everyone trying to get the closest spot to the hero to hear what he has to say.

In stark contrast to these first seven men, Socrates next describes the unnamed followers who are walking behind Protagoras in a beautiful order: "I was especially delighted at seeing this chorus because they were taking noble precautions never to be in Protagoras' way by getting in front of him. Instead, when he himself and those with him turned around, the listeners nicely managed to split apart on both sides while maintaining their order, and going around in a circle, they always went most beautifully to their places in the back" (*Prt.* 315b). Here Socrates compares Protagoras' listeners to a well-ordered Greek chorus that is beautiful to behold. The listeners form a single-file line that curves around and behind Protagoras when he switches direction in the portico. In order for the listeners to bear witness to the conversation without disrupting it, they need to act with precision. This orderliness pleases Socrates.

Similar imagery can be found in Odysseus' encounter with the shades in Hades. Odysseus wishes to question each of the spirits individually, but they all flock around the pool of blood at once. So that they would not all bombard Odysseus, he shields the blood with his sword so no one can drink. "They came up in procession then, and one by one / They declared their birth, and I questioned them all" (*Od.* 11.234-235). It is this chorus-like orderliness that pleases Socrates, not Protagoras' λόγος, which Socrates does not narrate. This is curious, since Socrates is undoubtedly a lover of λόγοι. Yet Socrates does not tell his acquaintance what Protagoras was saying; he

takes particular care to relate the scene surrounding the λόγος and not the λόγος itself.

3B. HIPPIAS

Socrates next relates to the interlocutor his encounters with Hippias and Prodicus. Now the references to Book XI of the *Odyssey* are outright: "'After him, I noticed,' as Homer said, Hippias the Elean, sitting [καθήμενον] in an elevated chair [θρόνῳ] in the portico opposite" (*Prt*. 315b-c). Hippias is sitting in a seat of authority looking down upon Eryximachus, Phaedrus, and Andron. These three men are sitting around Hippias, and "they appeared to be closely questioning Hippias concerning certain points in astronomy pertaining to nature and the things aloft, and he, seated in his chair, was rendering his judgement to each of them and going through their questions in detail" (*Prt*. 315c). Sitting in this great chair, Hippias' feet are presumably not touching the ground. This dramatic characterization alludes to the fact that Hippias is not concerned with earthly matters that are significant to the here and now. That is to say, Hippias is discussing matters pertaining to the heavens rather than something human, e.g., politics, ἀρετή, or τέχναι. In essence, Hippias is acting similarly to the Socrates portrayed by Aristophanes in *Clouds*: Hippias is acting hubristically.

It is puzzling, however, that Socrates equates Hippias with Heracles – a Greek hero. Most commentators, if they address the matter at all, admit the difficulty of finding a point of comparison between Hippias and Heracles.[4] Hippias is an expert in many branches of knowledge, and one could argue that Socrates considered Hippias' "encyclopedic" knowledge to be comparable to the myriad of Heracles' heroic feats. I argue that this interpretation is inadequate because it does not reflect the scene in the present dialogue – here Hippias is only discussing one topic, namely, astronomy.

If we look closely at the passage that Socrates refers to in the *Odyssey*, we can shed some light on this comparison. In the underworld, Odysseus does not actually encounter the *shade* of Heracles – he encounters his *phantom*:

> And then mighty Heracles loomed up before me—
> His phantom [εἴδωλον] that is, for Heracles himself
> Feasts with the gods and has as his wife
> Beautiful Hebe, daughter of great Zeus
> And gold-sandaled Hera (*Od*. 11.630-634).

Both the shades and Heracles' phantom are not fully human: they are disembodied, and they are not alive. But Heracles would in fact be best able to discuss the heavens, since he dwells on Mount Olympus. This is exactly the position, hubristic for Hippias yet appropriate for Heracles, that Hippias takes up in the *Protagoras*. Yet, while Heracles does not belong in Hades, he is still just as much a stranger to the earth as the shades. Furthermore, Hippias' knowledge, while broad, has little depth (cf. *Hippias Major* – he only has the *appearance* [φαίνεσθαι] of wisdom, not wisdom itself – Hippias is unable to offer Socrates an adequate definition of beauty). Yet Plato still associates Hippias with a bodiless soul that has no business engaging in earthly affairs. Hippias is a foreigner, just like Protagoras, with no business telling young Athenian men how to run their city.

As we see later in the dialogue, not only is Hippias unfit to tell Athenian youths how to act, but he should keep silent about the activities of his friends and colleagues as well.

When Socrates threatens to leave the conversation because Protagoras will not engage in proper dialectic, Hippias, among others, tries to persuade Socrates to stay and continue the conversation. Hippias proposes that an arbitrator referee the discussion between Socrates and Protagoras to moderate the length of the speeches (*Prt.* 338b). Hippias, the Heraclean figure from Mount Olympus, undoubtedly implies that he should fill the role of arbitrator himself, but Socrates immediately rejects Hippias' proposal for a mediator. For, if inferior to the interlocutors, the mediator could not appropriately judge the superior. Electing an arbitrator who is equal to the interlocutors would fail as well: "one who is similar to us will also do similar things so that his election will have been superfluous" (*Prt.* 338b). Lastly, electing an arbitrator who is superior to the interlocutors would be categorically impossible since Protagoras is the wisest (*Prt.* 338c). Thus, not only does Hippias' suggestion prove to be of no use to the conversation, but it is also potentially insulting to Protagoras.

In the *Odyssey*, Heracles is mentioned two other times as well as in Book 11: at 8.244 and 21.24. All three instances involve archery. In Book VIII, Odysseus, in challenging the Phaeacians to athletic contests, boasts that he can outshoot anyone present, but he does not claim to be better than the past heroes – Heracles and Eurytus – who challenged the gods themselves. In Book XI, Heracles' phantom appears in a fighting stance: "He looked like midnight itself. He held his bow / With an arrow on the string, and he glared around him / As if he were always about to shoot" (*Od.* 11.637-639). Finally, in Book XXI, we learn that the bow that Odysseus uses to kill the suitors is the same bow that Iphitus, son of Eurytus, exchanged for Odysseus' sword and spear as a token of friendship. A short while after this exchange, Iphitus is killed by Heracles while being entertained as a guest in Heracles' home (*Od.* 21.9-35). These three references to archery and combat, if placed within the framework of the *Protagoras*, set a foreboding mood against which Socrates, the guest, should be on his guard. Heracles disregarded the wrath of the gods in killing his guest, and Socrates would do well to distrust his hosts and avoid a similar fate to Iphitus.[5]

What can we as readers of the dialogue learn from these references? Sophists, like Heracles' phantom in Hades, are always ready to shoot down their opponents in λόγος. All three of the sophists featured in the *Protagoras,* not just Hippias, seem to bear some resemblance to Heracles, or at least to combativeness and fighting. Corey reveals that this illusion to Heracles may refer to Prodicus as well, since Prodicus authored a fable about Heracles' conflict between virtue and vice (Corey, 2015, 74-78). Additionally, Protagoras is said to have authored a text entitled *Καταβαλλόντων* (*Knockdown* [*Λόγοι*]). We need only look in the *Protagoras* to the first discussion concerning the unity of the virtues for evidence of this combativeness as present in the dialogue. Here Socrates gives the following characterization of Protagoras: "by this time Protagoras was in my opinion feeling riled up for a fight and contentious, and he stood prepared, as for battle, to answer me" (*Prt.* 333e). Protagoras is under the impression that he and Socrates, rather than engaging as equals in dialectic, should be prepared to speak only with the aim to "win" the get-together. This implies that rather than searching for the truth, sophists simply wish to win λόγοι, get paid, and get out of town. Protagoras visits Athens primarily to gather paying followers, not truly to teach the Athenian youths about the political art. If it were not for the tuition,

why would Protagoras bother? Why would any sophist? If they have no qualms about making the weaker λόγοι the stronger, they clearly do not care about the political outcomes of what they teach their students. Socrates will eventually emerge from the get-together without becoming bewitched by Protagoras, but Plato does not assure us that Hippocrates shared a similar fate. Hopefully the final word in the dialogue, the plural ἀπῆμεν [we left], includes Hippocrates and possibly others, but we cannot be certain. Socrates meets his acquaintance immediately after departing from Callias' house, and no mention is made at the beginning of the dialogue of anyone still walking along with Socrates.

3C. PRODICUS

Finally, Socrates and Hippocrates observe Prodicus teaching his followers. Unlike Protagoras who is walking and Hippias who is sitting close to the heavens, Prodicus is reclining and is wrapped up in blankets. Socrates again references Book XI of the *Odyssey* in describing Prodicus' drama. "'And I espied Tantalus too' – for Prodicus the Cean was visiting as well" (*Prt.* 315c). The passage referred to in the *Odyssey* does not have any details about Tantalus save the representation of him stretching for food and drink that is out of reach. Odysseus does not speak with Tantalus at all (*Od.* 11.611-621). Corey argues that Plato is alluding to the fact that Prodicus claims to know concretely about divine matters – like Tantalus, who tasted the divine foods – and delivers it to humans (Corey, 2015, 81-82). Prodicus seems to believe himself to be akin to the divine, and perhaps the *Protagoras* serves as a lesson in hubris for Prodicus. Segvic offers the following explanation of Prodicus' portrayal as Tantalus: Prodicus practices a linguistic form of sophistry concerning the precision of language to avoid equivocations. But, like Tantalus' predicament, any wisdom to be gained from his linguistic analysis eludes him (Segvic, 2009, 40). I agree with both Corey and Segvic, but I believe more work needs to be done to understand fully the meaning of the allusion for the dialogue as a whole and also for Socrates' overarching critique of sophistry. Prodicus is not portrayed very favorably in Socrates' exegesis of Simonides' poem, and Socrates foreshadows his failure by equating him with Tantalus. When Protagoras claims that Simonides' poem is guilty of contradiction, Socrates admits that "I was made dizzy and woozy by what he'd said and by the uproar of the others. Then—so that I'd have time to consider what the poet meant, to tell you the truth—I turned to Prodicus and called to him" (*Prt.* 339e). Protagoras has rendered Socrates temporarily speechless, and in order to gather his thoughts and think of a response, Socrates pulls Prodicus – Simonides' fellow citizen – into the conversation. Socrates uses Prodicus solely as a distraction, not to further the conversation or to help him understand Simonides' poem.

Socrates even manages to trick Prodicus, the philologist, into agreeing that "difficult" [καλεπόν] and "bad" [κακόν] are equivalent in meaning (*Prt.* 341c). The conclusions that result from this equation are ridiculous and laughable: Simonides then must have thought that it is bad to be noble. Socrates has killed two birds with one stone: he bought himself the time he needed to gather his thoughts, and he publicly ridiculed Prodicus. Corey makes the argument that Prodicus himself must have been aware that this definition is incorrect as well (Corey, 2015, 91). As such, Corey claims that we might perhaps be too quick to

dismiss the parallels between Prodicus and Socrates: both appreciate the need "to detect and negate merely apparent contradictions" (Corey, 2015, 89). Corey invites us to think of Prodicus' method as a precursor to Socrates' method of collection and division. While Prodicus' methodology might be appropriate, he still fails to ascertain the distinction between difficulty and badness. According to Marina McCoy, Socrates' primary aim here is to ridicule Prodicus' sophistical method of philology "which affixes fixed, precise meanings to words without attention to their context" (McCoy, 1999, 353). Prodicus has failed to make the correct distinctions in the exegesis of Simonides' poem, and his contribution only detracted from the conversation and muddled the meaning of the poem even more. Despite his effort, the truth is always just out of Prodicus' reach.

Yet McCoy does not proceed far enough in her interpretation, I argue. She does not consider the rest of Socrates' initial narration of Prodicus when describing the scene in Callias' house. Socrates does not simply mention this line from the *Odyssey* and move away from Prodicus. He mentions as well other specific details which illuminate more clearly that Prodicus' shade-like disembodiment is not fitting for an educator of the young men of Athens. Socrates remarks that Prodicus "was in a certain room [οἰκήματι] that Hipponicus [Callias' father] had used previously for storage [ταμιείῳ] but that now, on account of the number of the lodgers, Callias had emptied out and made into lodgings for the foreigners" (*Prt.* 315d). Prodicus has been stuffed into an old closet which has been converted into a makeshift bedroom. Additionally, we cannot be sure that the room was reserved for Prodicus alone. There could be many other foreigners lodging in the storeroom with him. Indeed, Corey points out that those listening to Prodicus in this storeroom include prominent and attractive men, such as Pausanias and Agathon (Corey, 2015, 71). For those who think as highly of themselves as the sophists, it is a wonder that Prodicus can tolerate these conditions.

This dramatic description symbolically portrays Prodicus as not being fully human – these cramped and degrading conditions would have no bearing on a mere shade without bodily concerns for relaxation or privacy. Furthermore, we learn that Prodicus is "wrapped up in some sheepskins and very many bedclothes" (*Prt.* 315d). Corey argues that this dramatic presentation of Prodicus implies that Prodicus is lazy and living in vice: "to use soft blankets to improve one's sleep, to sleep late into the day, to surround oneself with attractive boys and inflame one's desire for food and drink by consuming these in inappropriate ways and at inappropriate times" (Corey, 2015, 77). Corey argues that Prodicus is acting contrary to his own advice given in his fable about Heracles. I agree with Corey here, but I would like to push the interpretation even further: Plato is describing Prodicus as unfit to offer any political and moral advice to the Athenian youth. He is not properly able to judge the virtuous from the vicious in his own life. While he may be able to speak about Heracles' virtuousness, he is unable to follow the advice in his own life. Prodicus' body is physically covered, and his head was likely covered as well, since Socrates is unable to hear what Prodicus was discussing because of his muffled voice and the noise around him (*Prt.* 315e-316a). Just as Odysseus never hears what Tantalus has to say, Socrates also does not get the opportunity to listen to Prodicus teach.

The dramatic characterization of Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus provides clear evi-

dence that Socrates likens his visit to Callias' house to a descent into Hades to encounter the shades of the underworld. In the *Odyssey*, all the shades that Odysseus encounters in Book XI ask him about their families and loved ones on Earth – they have no connection with earthly events.[6] One could make the argument that the shades are absolutely concerned with human and earthly matters, as they all desire to question Odysseus about the status of affairs on earth. In this sense, they act in the opposite way from the foreign sophists who do not care at all for the welfare of their students and the communities in which the youths are members. But I argue that this is exactly how the sophists act – they are concerned about the welfare of their students but they are without civic commitment. They have no stake in the Athenian democracy.

Furthermore, one could also make the argument that Protagoras and the sophists are very much concerned with care of the body, and Socrates is not likening them to shades because Protagoras is able to give examples of things that are advantageous to the body. In response to a prompt from Socrates to determine whether or not one can call anything advantageous to human beings, Protagoras answers in the following way: "For my part I know many things that are disadvantageous to human beings – food and drink and drugs [φάρμακα] and ten thousand others – but some that are advantageous" (*Prt.* 334a). His next sentence, however, has nothing to do with care of human beings: "Some things are neither the one [advantageous] nor the other [disadvantageous] for human beings, but are for horses; some are only for cattle, others for dogs. And some things are for none of these but for trees" (*Prt.* 334a). From the evidence we see in the dialogue, Protagoras knows just as much about care of the human body as he does about the care for cattle, dogs, and trees. If Socrates were to press Protagoras to discuss in detail specific examples of health, he would need to appeal to expert physicians, as he does at 334c regarding the proper uses of olive oil. Thus, Protagoras cannot articulate in λόγος anything more about the human body than what he learned from an expert, not from experience.

4. PROBLEMS WITH PROTAGORAS' SOPHISTICAL METHOD

There is one other curious comparison that we cannot ignore: Protagoras and Achilles. It is important to note that Protagoras' claims about being the greatest sophist contrast starkly with the noble and honored Achilles' emphatic statement when Odysseus encounters him in Hades and tries to console him concerning his predicament: "Don't try to sell me on death, Odysseus. / I'd rather be a hired hand back up on earth, / Slaving away for some poor dirt farmer, / Than lord it over all these withered dead" (*Od.* 11.510-513). Achilles is the epitome of the Bronze Age hero worthy of emulation, but Protagoras acts in the completely opposite manner – he is boastful that he lords over the sophists. While others are ashamed of the title of sophist, according to Protagoras, he actively embraces it. This character foil between Protagoras and Achilles becomes apparent later in the dialogue, immediately before the discussion of courage that ultimately leads to Protagoras' defeat in λόγος. Socrates praises Protagoras and lauds his superiority as a sophist: "I […] gladly converse with you more that with anyone else, believing you to be best at investigating (in addition to other things) what it is reasonable

for a decent man to investigate, and virtue in particular. For who else other than you?" (*Prt.* 348d-e). Socrates' words echo Odysseus' praise of Achilles that prompts the above quoted response from Achilles:

> But no man, Achilles,
> Has ever been as blessed as you, or ever will be.
> While you were alive the army honored you
> Like a god, and now that you are here
> You rule the dead with might. You should not
> Lament your death at all, Achilles (*Od.* 11.503-508).

The statements of Socrates and Odysseus are similar – both praise the leader (of the sophists and the shades, respectively) for being the finest.

There is, however, one crucial difference: Socrates is being ironic. As is made manifest in the conversation that follows about the unity of the virtues, if Protagoras truly possessed wisdom, then he would have discussed virtue, specifically courage, much more nobly. Protagoras argues that the virtues are unified like parts of a face, but that courage is separate from the virtues because one can be courageous and also impious, immoderate, etc. Courage underlies all the other virtues (*Prt.* 349d). But Socrates points out that if this is the case, then courage is separate from knowledge, and that makes virtue unteachable. If virtue is not teachable, then Protagoras has nothing to teach and his entire profession is negated.

This statement about courage as the basis of virtue is very much akin to something Achilles would say. Achilles is essentially the embodiment of courage itself, and while Protagoras seems to be courageous by declaring openly that he is a sophist, his defeat in λόγος is decidedly uncourageous. When Socrates finally leads Protagoras into a contradiction in his positions, Protagoras refuses to answer Socrates and simply nods, and finally he tells Socrates to finish the dialectic by himself (*Prt.* 360d-e). The great Protagoras has been rendered speechless, and he does not swallow his loss nobly. In contrast to Achilles, who dies honorably in battle, Protagoras slinks away in silence and accuses Socrates of being a lover of victory, rather than a lover of wisdom (*Prt.* 360e).

If the sophists are like disembodied shades with no connection to the earth, and are proud of their position, the question then arises: what is Socrates implying about sophistry in general, specifically the practice of foreign wise-men whisking away the Athenian youth to teach them what is best for their democracy? What is the risk in sending the youth to these foreigners to learn? I argue that Plato is drawing an analogy between the living body and the πόλις. The shades in Hades lack human bodies, and the sophists lack a communal belonging to the πόλις in which their students live. Charles Griswold argues that Protagoras' disinterest in the wellbeing of his students as individuals implies that he does not care to cultivate them as autonomous thinkers with the critical abilities to lead responsible and prosperous lives (Griswold, 1999, 293). I argue that the problem cuts deeper. Of course, Protagoras claims to have the ability to teach young men to be successful citizens, but he has no motive for caring about the outcome of his teaching. Protagoras is a foreigner – he does not live under Athenian rule. Teaching young men how to manage a household or to be a democrat requires a personal and engaged teacher. Protagoras, in contrast, is a public figure, but since he is a foreigner, he is not accountable to his students. The sophists teach

everyone the same lessons, but πολιτικὴ τέχνη should not be a "one size fits all" curriculum. This is potentially dangerous for the πόλις, and for this reason, Socrates is wary of bringing Hippocrates to Callias' house.

Yet Socrates seems to be the only one that does not fall for Protagoras' charm. The irresistible nature of Protagoras is likened to Orpheus – Socrates describes Protagoras' audience at the onset of the dialogue in the following way: "of those who followed along behind them [Protagoras and the six other named men in the portico] listening to what was being said, the majority appeared to be foreigners. These Protagoras brings from each of the cities he passes through, bewitching them with his voice like Orpheus, and they in their bewitched state follow his voice. There were also some natives in the chorus" (*Prt.* 315a-b). Protagoras bewitches all who hear him, foreign and native alike. His hearers follow doggedly in his footsteps and, in a sense, renounce their fatherland to join this wandering sophist.

We might see evidence of Protagoras' irresistible charm in what was possibly an extremely awkward moment. Hippocrates, at least, had the good sense to seek Socrates' guidance and receive a proper introduction from his teacher to this traveling expert. In contrast, two of Socrates' loyal students, Alcibiades and Critias, entered Callias' house after Socrates (*Prt.* 316a). Callias' house was probably the *last* place they expected to see their teacher! The awkwardness might have been addressed: "so once we were inside, we again passed time on a few small matters and, with them disposed of, we went over to Protagoras" (*Prt.* 316a). Perhaps Socrates rebuked Alcibiades and Critias for trying to sneak into Protagoras' company without his guidance. This might possibly explain Alcibiades' excessive defense of Socrates at 336c-d. Critias, not to be outdone, derides Alcibiades for just wanting to win (the approval of Socrates, that is). While this is merely speculation, we can conclude from the conversation that Socrates and Hippocrates have before making the journey to Callias' house that Socrates is very wary of young Athenians visiting the sophists with no guidance or accompaniment. The question then must be asked – why does Socrates agree to take Hippocrates to see Protagoras at all? Protagoras has already been in town for two days, and Socrates presumably did not intend to visit him himself. Yet Socrates is always willing to learn, and it would be presumptuous and hubristic to assume that one will not learn anything from someone else before even meeting him or her. If Socrates were unwilling from the start to engage with Protagoras, he would be betraying his entire devotion to philosophy. Furthermore, Socrates changes his opinion during the dialogue as well. He opens the conversation by claiming that virtue is not teachable, but by the end of the conversation, he determines that it is indeed teachable. Socrates is not too proud to admit a mistake.

5. THE EFFECT OF DISENGAGED SOPHISTICAL TEACHING UPON ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

When Hippocrates first expresses his desire to hear Protagoras, Socrates reproaches Hippocrates for wishing to study with Protagoras without knowing who the foreigner is or what he teaches. Socrates illustrates to Hippocrates the absurdity of his desires by comparing a sophist to a physician: if it were care of the body that Hippocrates were in search of, he

would have consulted both his friends and expert physicians before deciding on a treatment, "but as for that which you believe to be worth more than the body, namely the soul, on whose usefulness and worthlessness depends whether all your own affairs fare well or badly – about this you've communicated with neither father nor brother nor any one of us who are your comrades as to whether or not you should turn your soul over to this newly arrived foreigner" (*Prt.* 313a-b). Hippocrates simply takes for granted that Protagoras is the best teacher in Greece, and he has no desire to question the hearsay: "[you] are ready to spend both your own money and that of your friends, as though you already knew well that it is absolutely necessary to get together with Protagoras, whom you neither know, as you say, nor have ever conversed with" (*Prt.* 313b). Without ever encountering a sophist, Hippocrates has already fallen under the spell of sophistry. Hippocrates would be a madman to trust his body with any physician without question, and, as Socrates points out, it is even less rational to trust an unknown foreigner with the care of one's soul. Untrustworthy teaching, particularly from someone whose only motivation for teaching is monetary, cannot easily be corrected.

Socrates, as we see from other dialogues, is no xenophobe. He does not distrust the sophists for being foreigners intrinsically; rather, he is suspicious because they also take payment for their teachings. The sophists must advertise themselves, and even in antiquity, advertisements were known not to be trusted. Socrates offers the following advice to Hippocrates:

> See to it, comrade, that the sophist, in praising what he has for sale, doesn't deceive us as do those who sell the nourishment of the body, the wholesaler and retailer. For they themselves too, I suppose, don't know what among the wares they peddle is useful or worthless to the body—they praise everything they have for sale […] So too those who hawk learning from city to city, selling and retailing it to anyone who desires it at any given moment: they praise all the things they sell (*Prt.* 313c-d).

Here we are given the most cogent criticism of the sophists in the dialogue. Just as the shades in Hades have no involvement with bodily matters, so too the foreign sophists have no desire to care for the πόλις. In fact, they are decidedly anti-democratic, since they make their living catering to the wealthy so that they might influence the political sphere.

While the sophists may claim to possess the ability to teach πολιτικὴ τέχνη, they merely profess what the students and their fathers want to hear (cf. Aristophanes' *Clouds*). When Socrates first presents Hippocrates to Protagoras, the latter boasts, "on the very day that he gets together with [me], Hippocrates here will go away in a better state and improve every day thereafter" (*Prt.* 318d). The sooner Protagoras' students begin to show improvement, the sooner they will be willing to continue taking lessons. Immediate gratification is perhaps the greatest selling-point of a sophistic education – it keeps the students from growing discouraged, and it guarantees that Protagoras will receive the tuition. By claiming that he can improve his students on just the first day of instruction (318a), Protagoras is able to receive his own gratification for professing sophistry, namely, the fee, immediately so he can travel to the next city as soon as possible. Any negative effects from the sophistry upon the student are not realized until much later, when the student tries to apply his learning in the Assembly or

his household, and by then, the sophists have long since fled the scene and cannot be held accountable. For this reason, sophists have no qualms in making the weaker λόγος the stronger because they do not remain within the city to feel the effects of their teaching upon the πόλις or οἰκός. It is not the sophists' foreignness that is at issue. Rather, it is the fact that they lack accountability due to a lack of belonging to the community.

Protagoras needs to walk a fine line here: virtue is teachable – he does have something to offer his students – and yet democracy is still a valid form of government – everyone deserves to be respected when it comes to governance. We see Protagoras navigating this difficulty in his Great Speech. Protagoras relays a myth which proclaims that *everyone* has been blessed by Zeus with justice and shame (*Prt.* 322c), so everyone has the potential to be a great speechmaker and politician. Protagoras himself will only help his students to cultivate and perfect their natural skill. Thus, he is able to travel around to different cities teaching similar things, rather than studying each city's laws and practices to offer the best and most relevant education possible. For Griswold, Protagoras' worldliness results in a detachment from local community and morality, and he is instead driven solely by the acquisition of baser goods – affluence, reputation, and longevity (Griswold, 1999, 299). Protagoras, unlike Socrates, is not moved by a duty to the city. Rather, he is motivated solely by wealth and fame. Socrates, in contrast, notoriously almost never leaves the πόλις. His interest in philosophy is bound to the πόλις. Griswold's point is well taken, but he does not address the root of the issue. For Socrates, I argue, not belonging to a πόλις is like not having a body. One is cut off and isolated. This is why he makes so many analogies to the shades in Hades in the *Protagoras* – they lack a physical body, and the sophists lack a political body – they wander around Greece, never remaining in one place for long. It is in this sense that they are disembodied – they lack *belonging*.

According to Griswold, since Protagoras is not rooted in a particular community, he would be incapable of delivering a persuasive and beautiful speech like Pericles' funeral oration – a speech championing democracy. Protagoras has a third-person perspective that clashes with the mentality of those who uphold the professed ideals of virtue in the community (Griswold, 1999, 299-300). Unlike Pericles, who possesses the ability to speak to the heart of the Athenian people, Protagoras, and sophists in general, must rely on bewitching his followers, rather than actually teaching something worthwhile to the wellbeing of the city. An example can be found right in the *Protagoras*: Hippias, in trying to coax Socrates to sit back down when he threatens to leave, displays his complete disregard for the Athenian νόμοι: "For like is by nature akin to like, but law [νόμος], *being a tyrant over human beings* [τύραννος ὢν τῶν ἀνθρώπων], compels many things through force, contrary to nature" (*Prt.* 337d, emphasis mine). For the Athenians, laws are certainly not perfect, and they are by no means tyrannical. Only to a foreigner, who does not understand the νόμοι, would they appear tyrannical. Fittingly, in his next breath, Hippias, the Heraclean figure down from Mount Olympus, proposes that he act as a judge to rule over the speeches.

The problem cuts deeper than simply a disrespect for the law. Protagoras is subjected to a perspective that is at a distance from concerns and ideals that matter the most to the community. Instead, Protagoras instructs his students to concentrate on becoming "'δυνατώτατος' (most able, powerful) in both

deed and word in civic matters" (Griswold, 1999, 300). Protagoras teaches his students to adopt the same attitude that he has, namely, an individualistic and selfish approach to politics. Protagoras and the rest of the sophists gathered at Callias' house are there to mingle with the natives and advertise themselves and their teachings in order to gain followers. The conversation that ensues when Socrates arrives, however, proves that Protagoras is unfit to give lessons concerning the nature of the virtues and knowledge because he does not understand the virtues himself. Initially, he claimed that virtue is indeed teachable, but by the end of the dialogue, Socrates has caught him in a contradiction, and he has to conclude that virtue is not teachable. He is forced to admit that his profession (teaching virtue) is futile.

6. CONCLUSION: BELONGING

What, then, are we to make of this criticism of the sophists? Why liken them to disembodied shades in Hades? And why is it not enough for Socrates just to win the λόγος and shame Protagoras through λόγος? To answer these questions, it is necessary to look to an example of someone who teaches in the completely opposite way from Protagoras and instead cares for the good of Athens as a whole, rather than his individual affluence. In particular, we must turn to a moment in which Socrates is forced to defend himself and his teaching to those who have already been persuaded by sophistry – a form which takes many shapes. Near the end of his defense in the *Apology*, Socrates speaks the following words:

> I neglected the things which most men value, such as wealth, and family interests, and military commands, and public oratory, and all the civic appointments, and social clubs, and political factions, that there are in Athens; for I thought that I was really too honest a man to preserve my life if I engaged in these affairs. So I did not go where I should have done no good either to you or to myself. I went, instead, to each one of you privately to do him, as I say, the greatest of benefits, and tried to persuade him not to think of his affairs until he had thought of himself and tried to make himself as good and wise as possible, nor to think of the affairs of Athens until he had thought of Athens herself; and to care for other things in the same matter (*Ap., 36b-c).*

Socrates dies for the sake of his city. He forgoes an easy, prosperous, and wealthy life to wander barefoot through the ἀγορά and annoy his fellow countrymen to such an extent that they kill him for it. Thus, Socrates cares more for the good of Athens than his own life.

For this reason, Plato likens the sophists to disembodied shades – they do not belong to democratic Athens. Instead, they actively work to undermine that democracy. They teach, for a fee, how to speak persuasively. The result is that wealthy Athenians will be more eloquent in the Assembly, so their positions will become law. Because of sophistry, Athenian democracy benefits the wealthy.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ENDNOTES

1 We know that this is a chance meeting along the road because the companion asks Socrates if he has the time to relate the conversation to him: "why then not relate to us the get-together, if nothing prevents your doing so?" (*Prt.* 310a). The meeting has not been planned ahead of time.

2 As pointed out by Segvic (2009, 39). Segvic makes this connection, but she fails to interpret the meaning behind this connection.

3 According to Sallis, "the name 'Piraeus,' which, according to certain ancient writers, was related to the belief that the Piraeus was once an island separated from Athens by a kind of river; thus, the name is said to have been derived from '*peraia*,' which (derived, in turn, from '*peras*') means literally 'beyond-land.'" (Sallis, 1996, 314-315).

4 Coby (1987); Griswold (1999); Segvic (2009) all propose the following view.

5 Odysseus also slaughters the guests in his home, but in Book XXI, he is more of a guest than the suitors. He is also guided by the gods, in contrast to Heracles, who has disobeyed them (*Od.* 21.26-27).

6 For example, when Odysseus meets Achilles' shade, he asks Odysseus if Neoptolemus and Pelus are alive and well. Achilles reacts with great pride upon learning of his son's accomplishments (*Od.* 11.514-566).

BOOK REVIEWS

Mason Marshall, (2020) *Reading Plato's Dialogues to Enhance Learning and Inquiry: Exploring Socrates' Use of Protreptic for Student Engagement*. New York: Routledge

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Mason Marshall, *Reading Plato's Dialogues to Enhance Learning and Inquiry: Exploring Socrates' Use of Protreptic for Student Engagement*. New York, 2020: Routledge.

This intriguing book on Socrates' use of protreptic aims to improve the students' learning ability and critical thinking by making them engage with Plato's dialogues in a very innovative way. The author Mason Marshall summarizes his methodology as a combination of a top-down and a bottom-up approach. By engaging in mental experiments about what are the best strategies that Socrates might use for leading the interlocutors to self-knowledge (top-down approach) and by studying them as embedded in the specific dialogical context and the interlocutors' character traits (bottom-up approach), the students can enhance their learning skills and nurture their motivation to knowledge.

The book comprises five chapters. In the first chapter, "A Top-Down Approach: Refining Protreptic Through Platonic Thought Experiments," Marshall presents its Top-Down Approach by focusing on thought experiments as tools to evaluate a argumentative strategy. He also explains why Plato's dialogues are excellent sources for developing a theory of protreptics as a pedagogical tool.

The second chapter, "A Bottom-Up Approach: Reimagining Protreptic by Examining Socrates," complements the first one with a detailed analysis of Socrates's strategies as embedded in Plato's dialogues. Marshall accurately analyzes Socrates' use of protreptics in a selection of lines from the *Euthyphro*, the *Charmides*, the *Laches*, the *Ion*, the *Philebus*, and the *Phaedrus*.

Chapters 3 and 4 assess this combined method. In chapter 3, Marshall asks if the two approaches are legitimate; in chapter 4, if they are valuable enough. By replying to

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some objections, Marshall claims that there are many interpretations of Plato's writing and we cannot discern which one is true. He is not saying that his method is the best or closest to Plato's intentions. Instead, by referring to the hermeneutical circle, he says it is as legitimate as the others because all of them rest on some assumptions. At the same time, he stresses that his method has the benefit of being very useful in the classroom. He also adds to this, in chapter 4, that his method is more valuable to the contemporary debate than conventional Plato scholarship.

The last chapter, "The Two Approaches in Action", provides some examples of the employment of the method, in particular by focusing on the dialogical interactions with some key interlocutors, such as Thrasymachus, Meno, Crito, and Euthyphro. Again, the goal of the method is not to identify Socrates' strategies but to make the students think about what would have been a better strategy with a specific interlocutor. By placing some faults in Socrates' strategies, Marshall pushes the students to find "a better strategy than Socrates'" (p. 202).

Although the book provides evidence of the author's deep competence in Plato's scholarship, its main interlocutors are the teachers who can use Plato's dialogues as pedagogical tools. This does not mean that the book is not interesting for Plato's scholars. On the contrary, it offers a perspective for appreciating the contemporary relevance of Plato's theory of education as embedded in its writings. This resonates with some critical studies that have been dedicated to the literary aspects of Plato's dialogues in the last years, including works on the dramatical and rhetorical features of his writing. To name a few, I recall the essential works of Debra Nails (*The people of Plato*, Hackett 2002), Christopher Rowe (*Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, CUP 2007), and Livio Rossetti (*Le dialogue socratique*, Les Belles Lettres 2011).

One of the original characters of Marshall's book is to focus on a specific feature of Plato's dialogues, the one of the protreptic, for stressing its pedagogical role, not only in the past but also today. Marshall is crystalline about his assumptions on Socrates' use of protreptics. He does not take them as a way to win the interlocutors, but he wants to improve them by leading them to self-examination (p.2). The pedagogical aim is, therefore, intrinsic to Plato's method and by offering Plato's protreptics to his students, Marshall is following this core pedagogical feature of Plato's dialogues.

In recent years, James Henderson Collins has published a book on Plato's protreptics (*Exhortations to Philosophy*, OUP 2015). This scholarly research plays a significant role in Marshall's book, but only as a ground work. Marshall is not interested in identifying the different protreptic strategies employed by Plato in the dialogues. His primary interest is to make the students capable of assessing Socrates' strategy and imagining what would have been the best strategy to use with a specific interlocutor when they find out that it is ineffective. In particular, Marshall's top-down approach aims at thinking with Plato and rewriting the argumentative plots.

I find this pedagogical aim laudable, especially if connected to democratic and civic engagement, as stressed by Marshall. However, I resist Marshall's assumption that scholars cannot identify Socrates' strategies in Plato's dialogues because they are trapped in a hermeneutical circle (chapter 3). Although there are assumptions in every textual interpretation, I think that there are interpretations that are more supported by textual evidence than others. A Plato's scholar should ground

her interpretation in the text and bring textual evidence as proofs in her arguments. Of course, there is debate between the unitarists and the contextualists, for example, but this does not mean that we are destined to the relativism of interpretations. Also, dismissing the role of conventional Plato's scholarship is quite problematic. Not only should Marshall rely on it to develop his method (as proved by the numerous footnotes with references to the secondary literature at the end of each chapter), but also because Plato's theory can play a role in contemporary debates. So, I'm afraid I have to disagree with Marshall when he claims that "if one hopes to solve problems in contemporary philosophy, taking on problems in Plato studies may be more distracting than anything else." (p. 151). The relevance of Plato's thinking to contemporary thought is evident in many research fields, from ethics to epistemology. Virtue Epistemology is a vital example of this, as I will mention in the final paragraph.

But before coming to this, I need to stress another issue about one of Marshall's assumptions about Plato's protreptics, namely that Socrates is not interested in changing other people's views. Although I am sympathetic with the Socratic studies that focus more on Socrates' method of inquiry than in his doctrinal positions (see, for example, the new edited volume, *New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic: A Philosophy of Inquiry*, by Jens Kristian Larsen et al., Routledge 2022), I posit that disjoining protreptics from a transformation of the interlocutors' beliefs contrasts with Socrates' intellectualism. The core idea is that certain beliefs must be challenged because they lead to a vicious style of life. Socratic dialogue is a way to challenge them and transform the interlocutors' behaviors by changing their beliefs. However, I agree with Marshall that self-examination cannot be just a matter of changing the content of the beliefs. It has to do with a change of intellectual character. In this regard, Marshall focuses on conscientiousness as taking care to focus on the strength of the evidence; judiciousness as being at pains to evaluate evidence correctly; responsiveness to evidence; thoroughness as seeking out all the relevant evidence to the issue. I found this list of character traits extremely relevant to the Virtue Epistemology program that is precisely working to identify the intellectual abilities and character traits that can warrant knowledge. Although this research program is mostly carried on in contemporary analytic and applied epistemology, Plato and Aristotle have always been considered the grandfathers of the approach. Notably, Linda Zagzebski in her *Virtues of the Mind* (CUP 1996) provides many references to Plato's epistemology and Sophie Grace Chappell's *Knowing What to Do* (OUP 2014) builds her Platonic Ethics on Plato's conceptualization of virtues.

Therefore, Marshall's book, instead of being taken as antagonist to conventional Plato scholarship, could be considered a handy source for stressing the contemporary relevance of Plato's scholarship in its various schools and approaches. The approach provided by Marshall is advantageous for approaching Plato's dialogues in a very active and engaging manner. It can be an interesting source not only for scholars in ancient philosophy but also for those virtue epistemologists who are working in applied epistemology (for instance, Jason Baehr's *Deep in Thought: A Practical Guide to Teaching for Intellectual Virtues*, HUP 2021 and his edited collection *Intellectual Virtues and Education*, Routledge 2016).

F. Benoni; A. Stavru (eds.) (2021). *Platone e il governo delle passioni. Studi per Linda Napolitano*. Perugia, Aguaplano

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Questo volume è una ricca collezione di saggi sull'emotività e, in particolare, sulla sua gestione nell'opera platonica, come pure sulla ricezione di questo tema in autori successivi a Platone. Tale prospettiva specifica sull'argomento consente alla curatela di offrire un quadro complementare rispetto a un'altra recente raccolta sulle emozioni in Platone, *Emotions in Plato*, a cura di L. Candiotto e O. Renaut (Leiden-Boston, Brill 2020): quest'ultima conteneva analisi su variati aspetti della riflessione platonica sulle emozioni, quali ad esempio la sua dimensione epistemica o la sua rilevanza etico-politica. Invece, i contributi che compongono il volume a cura di F. Benoni e A. Stavru si concentrano sulle diverse strategie di controllo delle emozioni descritte nei dialoghi platonici e su alcune letture di questo tema da parte di autori vissuti dall'epoca ellenistica fino al XX secolo.

I ventidue saggi di cui la raccolta consta prendono più o meno tutti spunto da una linea di ricerca tracciata da Linda Napolitano, a cui il volume è dedicato, e risultano ordinati secondo un criterio tematico.

Dopo un'introduzione sull'"attualità della ricerca sulle passioni in Platone" (F. Benoni) e sul "governo" della propria emotività messo in atto da Socrate, personaggio principale dei λόγοι Σωκρατικοί (A. Stavru), seguono un altro saggio su Socrate (L. Rossetti) e due sul rapporto fra passioni e ragione nel pensiero platonico (M. D. Boeri, S. Gastaldi). I successivi nove scritti vertono sulla gestione di emozioni specifiche, quali la vergogna (F. Fermeglia, F. de Luise), l'aspetto emotivo del coraggio e delle virtù a esso affini (A. Stavru, F. Trabattoni, M. Migliori), in un certo senso il piacere (L. Palumbo), l'amore (A. Fermani, S. Pone) e la paura (S. Pone, S. Lavecchia). Viene quindi preso in esame il controllo delle emozioni nella prospettiva politica, assunta

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da Platone in particolare nella *Repubblica* (F. Benoni), nel *Politico* (S. Chame) e nelle *Leggi* (G. Cusinato, B. Centrone). Quest'ultimo insieme di saggi contiene anche una riflessione sull'invidia, un'emozione dalla forte valenza sociale secondo Platone (G. Angonese). Chiudono la raccolta cinque studi che discutono del confronto con Platone, su un aspetto della tematica in questione, da parte di filosofi successivi, come gli Stoici (A. Magris), Mario Vittorino (R. Schiavolin), Ermia alessandrino (R. L. Cardullo), Nietzsche (C. Chiurco) e Giuseppe Rensi (E. Spinelli).

Più nello specifico, il saggio introduttivo di F. Benoni presenta alcuni dei punti di vista dai quali può essere affrontata la tematica delle emozioni, e in particolare del loro "governo", nell'opera platonica, sottolineando anche i problemi lessicali e concettuali inerenti a un'operazione di questo tipo. A. Stavru, nella seconda metà dell'introduzione, considera invece come le diverse testimonianze dirette su Socrate convergano "nel rappresentare un personaggio in preda a forti emozioni" (p. 17), ma al contempo abile nel disciplinarle con le proprie virtù.

Il contributo di L. Rossetti, caratterizzato dallo stile preciso e avvincente tipico dell'autore, approfondisce questo tema concentrandosi sulla nuova concezione di responsabilità che emerge dalle testimonianze su Socrate, la quale implica una profonda rimodulazione della gestione della vergogna. Con M. D. Boeri si passa a sostenere che per il Platone del *Fedone*, della *Repubblica* e delle *Leggi* l'emotività è una dimensione essenziale della natura umana, che dev'essere integrata con la ragione. Questa idea evoca la nozione di σωφροσύνη, che in dialoghi come il *Gorgia*, la *Repubblica* e le *Leggi* è associata "al controllo dei desideri e dei piaceri" (p. 93) e assume così, in maniere diverse nei diversi dialoghi, "una funzione censoria rispetto agli impulsi irrazionali dell'*epithymetikòn*" (p. 101); è di questo argomento che si occupa lo scritto dettagliato e puntuale di S. Gastaldi.

La sezione centrale della raccolta si apre – naturalmente, vista la centralità di questa emozione fin dai dialoghi socratici – con lo studio, esaustivo e ben ordinato, di F. Fermeglia sui vari "tipi" di αἰσχύνη, da intendersi con il senso di "rispetto" oltre che di "vergogna", descritti in numerosi dialoghi platonici e sul fondamentale ruolo dialogico e cognitivo che essa vi svolge. Sempre di vergogna si occupa F. de Luise, la quale osserva acutamente che, nel *Simposio*, il personaggio di Socrate si smarca dai propri interlocutori, fra le altre cose, attribuendo a questa emozione la capacità di cooperare alla formazione dell'essere umano come soggetto morale autonomo.

Passando alla seconda categoria di emozioni, il primo saggio dedicato alla questione dell'aspetto emotivo del coraggio, e delle virtù a esso affini, nella prospettiva platonica è quello di A. Stavru: egli rileva che l'autocontrollo discusso nel *Protagora* è una virtù non puramente conoscitiva, ma essenzialmente dotata di una ἰσχύς (e in quanto tale simile al coraggio) che le "permette di esercitare un saldo dominio sulle passioni" (p. 172); lo studioso trova un convincente supporto della propria interpretazione nel celebre riferimento di Antistene, testimoniato da Diogene Laerzio, alla "forza socratica" caratteristica dell'uomo virtuoso, che non sembra esaurirsi solo sul piano intellettuale. D'altra parte, F. Trabattoni, con la limpidezza e il rigore che gli sono propri, sottolinea il carattere "esclusivamente intellettuale" del coraggio, per come è discusso nel *Lachete* e nel *Protagora*: in altri termini, esso è una virtù integralmente determinata dalla conoscenza dell'essere umano, anziché da "disposizioni psicologiche come la perseveran-

za o la forza d'animo" (p. 206). Al contrario, un esame approfondito della concezione del coraggio che emerge da diversi dialoghi platonici conduce M. Migliori a ritenere che non sempre questa virtù sia descritta in termini puramente intellettualistici.

L'emozione del piacere gioca un qualche ruolo nel contributo di L. Palumbo, incentrato sull'analogia fra τέχναι e forme di adulazione elaborata da Socrate nel *Gorgia*; un importante discrimine fra le due consiste infatti nella loro finalità: quella delle τέχναι è la cura dell'anima o del corpo, quella dell'adulazione il loro compiacimento. Tuttavia, la funzione del piacere in questa analogia non è particolarmente messa in risalto dall'autrice, che si concentra piuttosto sull'obiettivo dell'analogia in questione e ne trae spunto per una riflessione sul potere euristico che Platone attribuisce alle immagini. Perciò, per quanto suggestivo, il suo saggio non sembra molto in linea con la tematica generale del volume.

Concernono il desiderio amoroso i due saggi successivi: A. Fermani si focalizza sulla valorizzazione di questa emozione nel *Fedro*, e in particolare sul suo speciale rapporto con il senso della vista. Anche in questo caso, il rapporto fra il tema del contributo e la questione del "governo delle emozioni" in Platone è alquanto labile: l'autrice è infatti più attenta al legame fra l'amore e il senso della vista piuttosto che sulla maniera in cui, secondo il Socrate del *Fedro*, l'emozione erotica dev'essere gestita per poter cooperare alla reminiscenza delle forme. S. Pone, sempre restando sul *Fedro*, analizza invece il legame fra amore e paura tematizzato in questo dialogo, in cui il φόβος risulta "un utile alleato in vista della realizzazione" (p. 287) dell'amore ivi descritto da Socrate. S. Lavecchia, per così dire, raccoglie il testimone del saggio che lo precede studiando la figura del tiranno, tratteggiata in particolare nella *Repubblica*, e il costante stato di paura che lo caratterizza, rendendolo il contraltare del filosofo; il tiranno ne risulta così qualificato efficacemente come un anti-modello dal quale gli esseri umani devono prendere le distanze nella gestione della propria emotività.

Alla prospettiva politica sul tema del controllo delle emozioni è dedicato il gruppo successivo di contributi, a partire da quello di F. Benoni: oggetto di questo saggio sono le diverse modalità con cui i guardiani della *Repubblica*, una volta concluso il proprio percorso educativo, sono messi alla prova, al fine di verificare e corroborare la riuscita della loro formazione e la loro capacità di non cedere alle passioni. S. Chame analizza invece la funzione di armonizzazione fra le componenti razionali e quelle affettive dell'anima umana che, nel *Politico*, Platone affida alla tecnica politica. Vertono infine sulle *Leggi* i due contributi di G. Cusinato e B. Centrone: il primo si sofferma sull'intuizione, assai fortunata e ben argomentata, che, nell'ultima opera platonica, "l'origine di ogni errore (*hamartìa*) è riconducibile" non tanto a un difetto conoscitivo, come accadeva per lo più nei dialoghi precedenti, quanto piuttosto a una "forma eccessiva e violenta di *philautìa*" (p. 374), dunque da correggere. D'altra parte, B. Centrone indaga i parametri ai quali i realizzatori delle *performance* orchestiche e corali descritte nelle *Leggi* devono adeguarsi per poter produrre opere d'arte belle e, con ciò, funzionali all'educazione, anche emotiva, dei cittadini. Tuttavia, il *focus* di questo contributo, come dichiarato fin dal titolo, sono i "criteri di definizione del bello nel II libro delle *Leggi*", piuttosto che l'utilità educativa delle opere d'arte descritte in questo dialogo; anche la riflessione di B. Centrone ha pertanto un rapporto incerto con la tematica generale della raccolta.

Il gruppo di saggi appena presentato comprende anche, per così dire, un 'intermezzo', scritto da G. Angonese, sulle diverse accezioni di φθόνος nel *corpus* platonico, dall'*Apologia* alle *Leggi*: emozione eminentemente politica, come l'autrice a ragione sottolinea, l'invidia è immancabilmente caratterizzata dal filosofo ateniese come un grave pericolo per la stabilità della vita associata. Sulla collocazione evidentemente discutibile di questo contributo ci esprimeremo in seguito.

I cinque saggi conclusivi, ordinati cronologicamente, mettono in dialogo vari aspetti della proposta platonica di gestione delle emozioni con il pensiero di uno o più filosofi successivi: A. Magris considera le diverse prospettive di alcuni Stoici, in particolare Zenone, Crisippo e Posidonio, sul tema in questione, riconoscendo una prossimità alla posizione platonica da parte di Posidonio, in contrapposizione rispetto agli Stoici precedenti. L'esegesi dell'autore avrebbe senz'altro tratto beneficio da un confronto con i numerosi contributi critici apparsi negli ultimi vent'anni, a partire da quelli di T. Tieleman e C. Gill[1]: costoro, con numerosi argomenti assai persuasivi, hanno infatti messo in discussione il paradigma interpretativo abbracciato da A. Magris, condiviso da molti studiosi fino alla seconda metà del secolo scorso.

Passando ai saggi successivi, il recupero, da parte di Mario Vittorino, della psicologia e dell'antropologia platonica, in una chiave prettamente cristiana, costituisce l'oggetto del saggio di R. Schiavolin. Sul cosiddetto intermezzo delle cicale del *Fedro* e sulla sua esegesi a opera di Ermia di Alessandria si concentra invece R. L. Cardullo, che individua in questo luogo platonico una rappresentazione, con finalità psicagogica, dello stile di vita del filosofo. Il commentatore alessandrino riconosce in questo mito piuttosto un'immagine di valore teleologico, in linea con l'esegesi neoplatonica del *Fedro*. Con un salto cronologico importante – che sarebbe stato indubbiamente interessante 'coprire', ad esempio con studi sulla ricezione di Platone nel Medioevo arabo o nel Rinascimento fiorentino –, si passa a Nietzsche: C. Chiurco, nel suo contributo, mette a confronto la concezione platonica del tiranno con quella nietzschiana, per certi versi diametralmente opposta, in particolare sul fronte del controllo dell'emotività. Chiude la raccolta lo scritto di E. Spinelli dedicato alla "peculiare rilettura" (p. 504) della *Settima lettera* platonica da parte di Giuseppe Rensi. Secondo lo studioso, l'interpretazione rensiana di questo documento si intreccia non solo con il suo pensiero filosofico, ma anche, intuizione assai persuasiva, con la sua esperienza politica e biografica sotto il Fascismo: quest'ultima avrebbe condotto l'intellettuale italiano a condividere con il filosofo ateniese "una forte, radicale forma di pessimismo […] ancorata alla delusione, alla disperazione, al disgusto" (p. 513) per le vicende politiche nelle quali si trovò coinvolto.

Platone e il governo delle emozioni è evidentemente una raccolta ricca e variegata che contiene riflessioni approfondite e per lo più pienamente convincenti su numerosissimi aspetti della maniera in cui il tema della gestione delle emozioni è affrontato nelle diverse opere che compongono il *corpus* platonico. Contribuisce notevolmente al valore del volume il suo raccogliere, in un ordine quasi sempre ben ragionato, saggi che offrono molteplici punti di vista su una stessa questione, ad esempio sulla gestione socratica delle emozioni o sul trattamento di emozioni specifiche da parte degli interlocutori dei dialoghi. Ci teniamo in particolare a segnalare il confronto fra A. Stavru, F. Trabattoni e M. Migliori sulla questione delle componenti affettive del coraggio: i tre autori, come si è

detto, affrontano il tema in tre prospettive diverse ma in maniera parimenti persuasiva; così facendo, essi rendono conto dell'irriducibile complessità di alcuni concetti fondamentali presenti nell'opera platonica e della conseguente pluralità di interpretazioni a cui il pensiero di Platone a questo proposito si presta.

Tuttavia, a parere di chi scrive, questo volume non è esente da qualche debolezza, sia sul piano strutturale sia, *vario modo*, in relazione al contenuto argomentativo e alla bibliografia di alcuni dei suoi capitoli, questione che abbiamo già toccato nella nostra breve presentazione dei singoli saggi. Concentrandoci dunque adesso sul primo punto appena menzionato, crediamo che il volume, tanto più in ragione della sua lunghezza (oltre 500 pagine), avrebbe senza dubbio beneficiato di un'organizzazione più accurata dei contributi che lo compongono e di una presentazione iniziale di questa organizzazione. In mancanza di ciò, i meriti della raccolta nel suo complesso non risultano sufficientemente valorizzati, e a una lettura continua il libro non sembra procedere in maniera perfettamente lineare: pensiamo, ad esempio, alla collocazione del saggio di Angonese, che appartiene senza dubbio al gruppo degli articoli sulle emozioni specifiche piuttosto che a quello sulla dimensione politica del governo delle emozioni, o alla posizione del contributo di Palumbo, da associare forse piuttosto ai saggi sul rapporto fra passioni e ragione.

Queste osservazioni critiche non inficiano però il nostro giudizio sulla raccolta, che resta complessivamente positivo.

ENDNOTES

1 Pensiamo in particolare a Tieleman T. (2003). Chrysippus' On Affections. Reconstruction and Interpretation. Leiden-Boston, Brill e a Gill C. (2006). The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

J. K. Larsen, V. V. Haraldsen, and J. Vlasits (eds.) (2022). *New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic: A Philosophy of Inquiry*, New York - London, Routledge

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1.

There is no doubt that dialectic is one of the central subjects of Platonic thought, and yet those who attempt to explain it find this task to be quite difficult. A common approach in the scholarship is to simply point to a variety of procedures that differ from dialogue to dialogue depending on the context, the time of writing, and the object of inquiry. However, this type of answer does not satisfy those seeking a synoptic view of Platonic dialectic, even when one accepts that the dialogical format gives rise to a variety of renderings of one (in a sense) way of investigating reality.

At first glance, *New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic: A Philosophy of Inquiry* appears to be a collection of essays with no greater connection than being dedicated to elucidating the nature of Platonic dialectic. The lack of classifications in the index confirms this: the essays are simply arranged by alphabetical order of the authors (16). There seems to be no claim of exhaustivity, either from a textual perspective (by reviewing all passages on dialectic in the Platonic dialogues) or an aspectual perspective (by pre-establishing the salient questions in the most recent research), and this differentiates this collection from a typical collection of essays on Platonic topics. It is a mistake to think, however, that the absence of these unifying criteria makes *New Perspectives...* a collection of essays with little interconnection. What holds them together is, in fact, a criterion more unifying than exhaustivity: these essays –albeit with nuances, and not to the same degree– share a common diagnosis of the narrowness of the dominant interpretation of the Platonic "method", and they attempt to challenge this interpretation in different ways. Likewise, even though most of these essays focus on a specific dialogue

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(*Euthydemus*, *Meno*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*), overall they are propelled by a unitarian view of Platonic dialectic.

2.

Before going into the details of the essays, it is necessary to consider the controversial backdrop that inspires this collection. As is clearly explained in the introduction (4-5), and also, as we will see, some of the essays, a developmental interpretation of Platonic dialectic has become a dominant and rarely challenged position in the scholarship. This interpretation is undoubtedly linked to the modern fixation on a chronology of the Platonic dialogues. The application of the stylometric method to the comparative analysis of the Platonic dialogues has contributed to the exegesis of the Platonic work and has made it possible to explain apparent contradictions between different doctrines defended in the dialogues.[1] However, despite its benefits, this chronological fixation has had negative consequences for a comprehensive understanding of Platonic thought. This is especially evident in the case of understanding dialectic. The accepted distinction between three periods of production of the dialogues –early, middle and late– brought with it the methodical distinction between three forms of "dialectic": *elenchus*, hypothesis, and collection and division. The narrow fixation on this methodical distinction (whose precursor is the work of Julius Stenzel and Richard Robinson in the first half of the 20th century[2]) has introduced into the scholarship a counterproductive dogmatism that eschews a unitarian understanding of the Platonic method and overlooks the interaction of these "methods" in dialogues from different periods of the philosopher's work.

To this controversial backdrop, I would like to add two difficulties that are typical of Plato's thought and that hinder a unitarian understanding of his method. In the first place, the difficulty identifying a comprehensive view of the Platonic dialectic is not only due to its methodical diversity, but also the apparent indeterminacy of its object. Although there seems to be a consensus that the transcendent Forms are the object of the dialectic in the middle dialogues –in particular, in books VI and VII of the *Republic*–, it is not clear if this "method" is also applicable to the "universals" and it stops there, or if it even extends to the sensible realm. This problem clearly replicates the methodical differentiation introduced by the developmental reading: it seems, thus, that the three "dialectics" are not only distinguished by their form, but also by their object. The apparent indistinction of the object of the dialectic can lead, in my opinion, to two errors: (i) interpreting Platonic dialectic as a "modern method", that is, as a set of procedures that can ensure the result of the investigation in a sense *in spite of* the investigator; (ii) confusing dialectic with Aristotelian logic, that is, conceiving it as a materially indeterminate discipline. In second place, Platonic scholarship tends to forget the complex relationship between theory and praxis in Platonic thought when it examines the nature of the dialectic. The later distinction between dialectic, ethics, and physics (in the Stoics, but also in Plotinus' Neoplatonism) is not easy to draw in the Platonic dialogues. Indeed, the dialectical investigation in the famous allegories of the *Republic* begins with a vital experience of liberation from a deep state of self-deception and culminates with the knowledge of the Idea of the Good, knowledge that undoubtedly has consequences for the determination of personal and political

praxis. On the other hand, what we find in most of the Platonic dialogues is not so much a reflection on dialectic (which we undoubtedly also find in some key passages), but rather its exercise or putting into practice. In this sense, the originating moment of dialectic –the *dialegesthai* or Socratic conversation– can be more or less accentuated. Thus, it is not clear whether Platonic dialectic is always dependent on Socrates' vital praxis or rather emancipates itself from this origin as Platonic thought gains in density and dogmatism.

3.

Overall, the essays presented here maintain a critical distance with respect to the developmental distinction between three methods clearly delimited by the period of production of the Platonic work. However, this distance does not prevent the authors from recurring to, to varying degrees, the chronological division of the dialogues or the distinction of three periods of Plato's literary production. Nor does it prevent them from recognizing, in many cases, the methodological predominance of *elenchus*, hypothesis, and collection and division in certain dialogues or periods of production. Rather, this critical distance implies an awareness of the narrowness both of the strictly chronological perspective and of the sharp distinction between methods clearly circumscribed to a given dialogue or period of production, and the freedom to present approaches, connections and analysis that go beyond this narrow framework.

The freedom from the developmental interpretation of dialectic is manifested in three types of research, which can be used to classify the essays in this collection: (i) unitarian or comprehensive readings of the nature of the dialectic (Gonzalez, Mesch and Politis); (ii) complementary and transversal readings of the methods of *elenchus*, hypothesis, and collection and division (Ausland, Ionescu) and; (iii) an expansion of the understanding of the dialectic beyond the three aforementioned traditional methods (Politis, Haralsen, J. K. Larsen, P. Larsen, Rowett and Vlad; to a lesser extent also the articles by Austin, Sabrier and Vlasits).

(i) The comprehensive readings deserve special attention, not only because they undertake the hermeneutical challenge of approaching the varied universe of Platonic dialogues from a synoptic perspective, but also for the exceptional quality of these essays, which in a sense constitute the fundamental pillars of this collection.

Francisco J. Gonzalez's essay "Dialectic in Plato's *Parmenides*: The Schooling of Young Socrates" approaches the *Parmenides* dialogue with the question: "what exactly does Socrates learn about "dialectic" in Plato's *Parmenides*?" (70). Gonzalez wants to avoid asking this question from a developmental perspective and instead examines the literary aspects of the dialogue itself, in particular, the fact that here we are presented with a young and inexperienced Socrates, whom the elderly Parmenides intends to teach a lesson. Once we take this as the starting point, it is not possible to simply accept that the exercise Parmenides deploys in the second part is mere "gymnastics". This perspective is confirmed by Parmenides' own understanding of his method as a "path to the truth" (*Prm*.136c4–5). Gonzalez thus links the question of Socrates' learning with the central question of the exegesis of the dialogue: to what extent do the dialectical proceedings of the second part *lead to the truth*? (71). To answer this second question, Gonzalez looks at the third (supposed) hypothesis, the only

one, as the author rightly points out, that is numbered (*to triton,* 155e4). As is well known, in the second part of the dialogue we find eight hypotheses that consider "whether the one is or is not", and these consider both the consequences for oneself and the consequences for other things. The so-called *false third hypothesis* is usually understood as an "anomaly" in the hypothesis scheme, as it seems to function more as an explanatory appendix to the first two hypotheses. Gonzalez recognizes in this anomaly an interpretative key to understanding the complete series of hypotheses (74). Learning dialectic for the young Socrates consists both in the acquisition of the "completeness" that "wandering" (*planomai*) from one hypothesis to another provides, and in the grasp of the truth in the "instant" that is reached in the "switching" or in the "between" of the hypotheses examined. In this sense, the third thing that is "between" the first two hypotheses –and that can be "iterated" for the next three remaining pairs of hypotheses– points precisely to the dialectician's need to overcome the strict dichotomy between apparently contradictory hypotheses and to accept the "ambiguity" of any object of investigation (76). This thesis can only be fully understood if it is exemplified. And that is what Gonzalez does: he proposes a reading of different dialogues from this perspective (76-81). Gonzalez thus seeks to show that Socrates has correctly learned from Parmenides the lesson of wandering between different hypotheses, pursuing exhaustiveness as an ideal that is unattainable through human effort and partially reaching that which transcends the hypotheses themselves and which is obtained in the wandering inherent to shared examination (86).

Walter Mesch's essay "Between Variety and Unity: How to Deal with Plato's Dialectic" does not focus on a particular dialogue, but tries to provide a unitarian notion of dialectic throughout the different Platonic dialogues. To do this, the author openly goes against the developmental reading (169). While it is possible to recognize thematic and methodological differences between the dialogues, "it is extremely important not to overestimate and misinterpret these differences" (170). Mesch counters this developmental perspective by understanding the varied treatment of dialectic in the different dialogues as the application "in a highly context-sensitive way" of the same method that runs throughout the Platonic work (170). In this sense, the author questions the strict distinction between methods according to periods of literary production (even when a method may have a predominant place in certain dialogues), the categorical difference between dialogues that reconstruct the thought of a historical Socrates and dialogues that are properly Platonic, and relatedly, the opposition between aporetic and dogmatic dialogues (though *elenchus* itself can serve a destructive or constructive purpose). Faced with these distinctions, it is key, on the other hand, to take into account that the critical attitude towards the Sophists –both explicitly and indirectly through the dialectical practice itself– and the connection between dialectical investigation and the good life are constants throughout the Platonic work. In the central part of his essay, Mesch, taking on this hermeneutical perspective, focuses on the determination of the object of dialectic (175). Here the author maintains two fundamental theses: (i) that, although the dialectic may have other objects, the transcendent Forms are its primary object and (ii) that, in the consideration of each one of these dialectical objects, the hypothetical method operates jointly with the methods of *elenchus* and of collection

and division (175-176). The conception of the transcendent Forms as the primary, but not exclusive, objects of the dialectic (i) allows him to explain the unity and variety of the Platonic method throughout the dialogues. To prove his point, the author analyzes the central passages of the middle and late dialogues that thematize the dialectic itself as a theoretical object (181-184). While I will not delve into the details of this analysis here, the author's fundamental idea is, on the one hand, to argue that the transcendent Forms constitute the focal point and the ontological foundation of the dialectic, and, on the other hand, to include as part of the dialectical investigation the attention to other objects (perceptible participating things, universals reached by induction, knowing souls) that contribute to the knowledge of the Forms (179). One can recognize the articulation of the dialectical methods (ii) by considering that each one of these has as its objective the definition of a Form, and each one of these contributes in a complementary way to this task. The emphasis on one method or another does not prevent (as will be seen in more detail in the essays that focus above all on methodical interaction) the methods from revealing a unitary conception of the dialectic that spans the different dialogues (185). In this way, Mesch is able to propose an interpretation that combines a systematic reading with the context-sensitive nature of the Platonic dialogues.

Lastly, I will discuss Vasilis Politis' essay: "Dialectic and the Ability to Orientate Ourselves: *Republic* V–VII". Here, the author analyzes the treatment of the dialectic in the central books of the *Republic*. This treatment, perhaps the most important of the Platonic dialogues, plays a fundamental role for understanding the articulation of the dialectic within the Platonic pedagogical and political project. The author's central thesis distinguishes, on the one hand, two characterizations of the dialectic –as knowledge of Forms and as a search for this knowledge–, and, on the other hand, how these originate from an ability in us, namely, the "power of the dialectic" (193-194). To demonstrate this thesis, Politis analyzes different passages related to dialectic. In particular, the description of dialectic in the Allegory of the Line (511b) and the later description from the last stage of the philosopher's curriculum (532b-d) present dialectical ability (*hē tou dialegesthai dunamis*) as the ability to know Forms, while in the Allegory of the Cave (515b-c and 518c-d) Socrates speaks of an "ability of the soul" (*dunamin en tē[i] psuchē[i]*, 518c4-5) or art of reorientation (*technē tēs periagōgēs*, 518d3–4) that is enabling the soul for the "dialectic" described in the other passages (198). Politis insists that this "ability" is one and the same, operating both in the preparatory or enabling phase and in the properly knowing phase of the "dialectical journey" (532b4) (201-202). The credibility of this thesis, however, is grounded on the supposition that this preparatory phase (that is, the mere search for knowledge before having truly grasped the essences or Forms of reality) is motivated by a "radical aporia". In other words, the ability that allows the soul to recognize the illusory character of our familiar relationship with the world cannot come from this same familiarity with the things of the world. And this is precisely what Socrates does with his interlocutors by leading them to aporia through his *ti estin*-questions (205-206). In this way, Politis helps to explain the continuity both between aporetic investigation and the positive knowledge of reality, as well as between the early or Socratic dialogues and Plato's mature work.

(ii) A second type of essay in the collection is that which seeks to prove, in a more detailed way, the transversality of the methods of *elenchus*, hypothesis, and collection and division throughout the Platonic dialogues, as well as the complementary nature of these methods. Within this effort, it is worth mentioning, first of all, the introduction written by the editors of the collection, which gives examples of *elenchus* (v.g. *Soph.* 231b2–8), the hypothetical method (*Prot.* 361b7–c, *Soph.* 237b–249d, *Prm.* 135e-136d) and collection and division (*Eutiph.* 12c10–d10, *Gorg.* 463e5–464b1, *Rep.* 453e1–454a8) in dialogues in which, from a developmental reading, these methods should not be present (6-10). Based on this transversality, the authors try to prove that (i) the differences in method do not depend so much on the period as they do the topic to be investigated, that (ii) none of these methods is identified as dialectic, but each one of them is a resource that only a true dialectician can use well, and that (iii) none of these resources on their own fully expends the resources that the dialectician must deploy to achieve his or her goal. Hayden W. Ausland ("Socrates' Dialectical Use of Hypothesis") defends, in particular, the use of the method of hypothesis (and, in part, that of collection and division) in the early or Socratic dialogues, extending the use of this resource even to the historical Socrates (if we consider the testimonies of Xenophon and Aristophanes in addition to the Platonic testimony) (26). Without entering into a debate concerning the hypothetical method's apparent dependency on the Forms (which is confirmed in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, but is questionable if we consider the *Meno*), the author tries to show that the different references to "supposing or hypothesizing" in Socratic conversations do not correspond, as Robinson argued, to a proto-scientific use of the hypothetical resource, but to a use of the hypothetical resource that is methodically conscious of the verification by its consequences of postulates with some level of common agreement (33; 36). Cristina Ionescu ("Elenchus and the Method of Division in the *Sophist*") contributes, for her part, to the complementary analysis of the methods, concentrating on the function of *elenchus* in the *Sophist*. Faced with interpretations that see here the hegemony of the collection and division method (like Stenzel) or an opposition between the Socratic method of *elenchus* presented in the sixth definition of the sophist (230b-e) and the division method of the Eleatic Stranger (like Ambuel), the author defends the presence and complementarity of both methods in the dialogue (116-117). To show this, Ionescu tries to prove in two stages that the *elenchus* method is not only present in the sixth definition of the first part of the *Sophist*, but that we can recognize it in practice, first, in the critique of dualist, monist, materialist and formalist doctrines (239c-249d) and, second, in the implicit testing of which greatest kinds can commune with one another (249d-259d) (121-122). In this way, Ionescu questions the idea that the *elenchus* method cannot be constructive nor be applied to Forms, and likewise that the division method cannot be applied at a pedestrian level, as Socrates, especially in the earlier dialogues, applies it when he tests his interlocutors (126-128). In the *Sophist* these methods support and enhance each other for the grasp of the greatest kinds.

(iii) Finally, it is worth considering the essays (most of the collection) that focus on broadening the understanding of dialectic. Jens Kristian Larsen and Peter D. Larsen highlight, for their part, the methodological function of "examples" in Platonic thought.

Although the use of analogy or examples is found throughout the entire Platonic corpus, it is only in the *Statesman* that we find an explicit thematization of this method. J. K. Larsen ("Using Examples in Philosophical Inquiry: Plato's *Statesman* 277d1–278e2 and 285c4–286b2") analyzes in detail two central passages of this dialogue in order to show that the use of examples (*paradeigmata*) is a fundamental part of the dialectical art (134). In a very convincing way, the author explains that examples are not only used for a pedagogical purpose –to illustrate, as in the learning of letters, what is most complex and unknown based on what is simplest and closest–, but that this resource also requires the exercising of two fundamental dialectical skills: recognition of similarities and recognition of differences between a known paradigm and the object of investigation (141). The dialectical ability is, in this sense, not so much a specific ability of philosophers as a universal ability that is stimulated even in the analogical illustration that can be found in the simplest pedagogy (144). In this way, the analogical resources used by the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* not only resemble the practice of the Socratic dialogues of giving everyday examples, but also show the flexible nature of this procedure, through which the examples do not deplete the point of reference, but rather show one aspect or another of it (146-147). For his part, P. D. Larsen ("Examples in the *Meno*") also examines the Platonic recourse to examples, this time considering passage 73e3-76e4 of the *Meno*. In this case Socrates presents two definitions of shape and one of color as a way of illustrating to Meno how to define virtue. Faced with the most common interpretations (which either consider the first definition of shape to be false or do not take into account that it responds to a *ti estin*-question), Larsen aims to explain the change in definition (from "that which, alone among existing things, always follows color" to "limit of a solid") by a change of the *definiendum* (from visible shape to invisible shape) (156). This operation cannot be considered an eristic practice, the author thinks, since the objective of this excursus is not to arrive at a clear definition of figure and color, but rather to illustrate that the dialectical search for definitions must proceed from familiar and everyday things to later move towards more difficult and obscure concepts (159).

Catherine Rowett and Marilena Vlad examine, for their part, elements of the dialogues that tend to be considered anti-dialectical or, if not anti-dialectical, as nothing more than accessories to the dialectical exercise. On the one hand, Rowett ("Another Platonic Method: Four Genealogical Myths about Human Nature and Their Philosophical Contribution in Plato") proposes to show that the "genealogical myths" used by Plato (in particular, the myth of *Protagoras*, the origin of cities in *Laws* III, the myth of the *Statesman* and the myth of Aristophanes in the *Symposium*) fulfill a fundamental dialectical function as heuristic tools that may even constitute a form of proof (213). Genealogy myths make it possible to explore the relationship between nature and culture and, in particular, in the case of Plato –unlike the modern thinkers who also often use myths about the origin of civilization– they recognize the limitation of political activity and the incompleteness of the human condition (230). Vlad ("Dialectic as Philosophical Divination in Plato's *Phaedrus*"), for her part, maintains, based on the *Phaedrus*, that dialectic consists of a "philosophical divination", which means, ultimately, that it does not consist of a "purely rational human enterprise" (256). To defend this, the author turns to both the divine origin

of the dialectic (as madness: "*manikē*" and divination: *mantikē*), as well as the divine character of its object (the transcendent Forms) and the task of the dialectician as that of an "interpreter of a divinely inspired message" (257). Turning the focus to the "inspired" character of dialectic not only complements the properly scientific task of the philosopher, but also reveals the limits of this task.

Platonic dialectic tends to be interpreted, particularly in the middle and late dialogues, as a technical or scientific capacity exercised exclusively by philosophers. Vivil Valvik Haraldsen ("Dialectic as a Paradigm in the *Republic*: On the Role of Reason in the Just Life") challenges this interpretation, arguing that in the *Republic* the "just person" is not one who satisfies the scientific curriculum of books VI and VII, but one who exercises his or her rational part (*logistikon*) (92) without necessarily leading the characteristic life of a philosopher. With this, the author not only questions the interpretations that view Platonic ethics as elitist (only philosopher kings satisfy the initial question of the *Republic* regarding the just person), but also those that establish a two-level understanding of virtue, according to whether the habituation of character is or is not accompanied by a dialectical foundation (94). Haralsen proposes, instead, that we distinguish between two senses in which this same dialectical or philosophical ability can be exercised (in this her proposal bears similarities to Politis' thesis) (100, 109). In a first sense, the dialectical or philosophical ability consists of an attitude and a choice of a way of life oriented towards the search for truth. This "existential" sense of philosophy is distinguished from the stricter and more intellectually demanding sense in which a philosopher is one who practices dialectical science (111). The "just person" is, then, universally speaking, the one who leads his or her life "philosophically", a condition that could be satisfied by both philosophers and non-philosophers.

Lastly, I turn to the essays by Emily A. Austin, Pauline Sabrier, and Justin Vlasits. Although it is more difficult to classify these essays in the collection's overall endeavor to expand and critique the developmental reading of Platonic dialectic, it is possible to find in them a unitarian vision of method in Plato. Austin ("The Dialectician and the Statesman in Plato's *Euthydemus*") defends, first, the possibility of resolving the aporia of the second protreptic of the *Euthydemus* (289b-292e) if attention is paid to the introduction of the idea of the Beautiful in the third eristic part of this dialogue (52). The aporia, in particular, consists in showing that it is impossible for a ruler to be capable of producing a genuine benefit for his or her subjects. However, the author suggests, if the proper object of the ruler's knowledge (that is, the Beautiful) is determined and it is accepted that the wise person and the statesman can be the same person, the aporia can be resolved (62). The eristic section of the dialogue provides elements to justify these two theses and, therefore, all the pieces to reconstruct the doctrine of the philosopher kings of the *Republic* would be found in the *Euthydemus*. Sabrier's essay ("Plato's Method of Enquiry in the *Sophist*: The Relation Between the Question 'What is Being?' and the Question 'What is There?'") tries to clarify, for its part, what kind of question the fundamental question of the investigation about being in the *Sophist* is (242c-259d). The author challenges the influential reading that recognizes here the primacy of the question 'what is there' over the question 'what is being' (233). To show this, Sabrier first analyzes the Eleatic

Stranger's critique of the dualists (242c6). Here, one can recognize that their error lies precisely in thinking about the question 'what is there' (hot and cold) without methodically and ontologically assuming the question of 'what is being' (236). The indistinction (or simply identification) of both questions is overcome when we reach the end of the critical discussion (249d3-4): Theaetetus and the Stranger agree here that, although all things are either in motion or at rest, being is "something third" other than motion or rest (237-238). According to the author, the famous and controversial passage 253b9-e2 can be interpreted, in the light of these passages, not as the coining of a new method, but as a description of the investigation process as a whole. In short, in both the priority of the question about being (*ti estin*-question) and in the aforementioned procedure of dialogical clarification, Sabrier recognizes not so much a methodological innovation of the *Sophist* as a continuity with the dialectical procedure that we find in other dialogues (243). Finally, Vlasits ("Plato on the Varieties of Knowledge") defends the unity of the treatment of dialectic in the *Philebus* against the interpretations that consider the investigation method called a "gift of the gods" (16c-17c) to be different from the dialectic that appears as the "purest kind of knowledge" in the division of knowledge that we find towards the end of the dialogue (55c-59c) (264). The author's main strategy is to distinguish in the division between production as a constitutive task of an art and the education or teaching of that art (275). This distinction would make it possible to recognize both the exhaustive nature of this division, which is one of the conditions of the "divine method", as well as the presence of this double nature (productive and educational) in the divine method itself (277). In order to justify, ultimately, the breadth of the divine method versus the strict character of the pure dialectic that we find in the division of knowledge, Vlasits proposes distinguishing two functions of dialectic: first, as a universal methodology that is the paradigm of all knowledge and, second, as a science that deals exclusively with unchanging entities (278).

4.

As I have attempted to show, *New Perspectives on Platonic Dialectic: A Philosophy of Inquiry* presents in its different essays a broad and open conception of Platonic dialectic, according to which the different methods of *elenchus*, hypothesis, and collection and division complement each other, and where the experience of a practical, universal and daily search for truth is in continuity with a strictly philosophical investigation. The Platonic dialectic reveals itself, thus, in effect, as a "philosophy of inquiry", which is founded on the human orientation towards understanding the essence of things and which is free from a strict methodical fixation. An essay collection of these characteristics seems to me a valuable contribution to Platonic scholarship and an important challenge to the hegemony of the developmental reading in debates on Platonic methodology.

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ENDNOTES

1 Cf. Lutoslawski (1897), Ritter (1923), Brandwood (1976). More recently, cf. Kahn (2002).

2 These works do not, however, have the same focus: while Stenzel's work defined the method of collection and hypothesis as a method characteristic of the late dialogues, Robinson's book looks at the methodical delimiting of the early and middle dialogues by the corresponding use of the methods of refutation and hypothesis. Cf. Stenzel (1917) and Robinson (1953).

Julia Pfefferkorn, Antonino Spinelli (eds.) (2021). *Platonic Mimesis Revisited*, International Plato Studies 40, Academia, Baden Baden

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As overtly stated in the title, this volume aims to revisit one of the central, and consequently most debated, concepts in Plato's philosophy, i.e., mimesis. The term is usually translated with "representation", "imitation" or "reproduction". The impossibility to settle on one single translation is by itself revealing: two concomitant aspects of mimesis are, on the one hand, its performative/productive side and, on the other, its icastic/representational side. The matter is made more difficult by the fact that the term "mimesis" is very often accompanied by a vast array of other terms belonging to the domain of representation, deceit, resemblance and so on. This is acknowledged by Plato himself in the *Sophist* (234b1-4), when he claims that (the nature of) what is mimetic (τὸ μιμητικόν) is the most diversified or multifarious thing (ποικιλώτατον).[1]

True to this Platonic statement, *Platonic Mimesis Revisited* (*PMR*) consists of an introduction and sixteen essays, which attempt to explore the luxurious pattern of the embroidery of Platonic mimesis. In a certain sense, *PMR* reproduces the *poikilia* of the notion of mimesis in Plato, and this is done both methodologically and content-wise. This is clearly stated in the introduction by the editors when, after a brief analysis of some pre-Platonic literary sources, they spell out the main objective of the volume: "to overcome the strong traditional focus on aesthetic questions in the study of Platonic mimesis and instead to take into consideration, in a context-sensitive way, the entire range of application of the semantics of mimesis in Plato" (Pfefferkorn and Spinelli 2021: 19).

According to this purpose, the first chapter by Halliwell, titled *The Shifting Problems of Mimesis in Plato* (Halliwell 2021: 27-46), programmatically asserts that Plato's use of "mimesis" and its cognates ultimately does

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not amount to any fixed doctrinal stance, and that even the downgrading of mimesis, which very often is considered to be unmistakably Platonic, needs to be rediscussed. For instance, there is evidence for a positive employment of the term when it comes to conceptualising philosophy and philosophers. The other fifteen chapters address a wealth of Platonic texts ranging from the Socratic dialogues to the *Laws*. The contributors focus on ethical, poetological, musical, metaphysical, epistemological, semantical matters and it is not possible to provide a detailed *résumée* of each chapter. In what follows, I will try to sort the chapters into macro-categories and in doing so I will present some exegetical proposals I find more representative. However, it is worth making explicit that each category is strictly intertwined with the others and that ultimately the boundaries between them tend to blur.

Mimesis and good life. The chapter by Erler (*Performanz und Analyse. Mimesis als Nachmachen – ein Element traditioneller Paideia in Platons früheren Dialogen und seine Analyse in den Nomoi*: 47-62) makes the case for viewing Socrates as providing an example of good life. This is the well-known *topos* of the *imitatio Socratis*. The main claim of the chapter is that in his dialogues Plato is representing the peculiar way in which Socrates acts as an exemplar of a good life. In Erler's view, Plato is suggesting that Socrates must not be imitated extrinsically as a man who is poking at other people with his provocative questions. Rather, one should follow him in the dynamic process of self-discovery and exercise of *logos*. One convincing claim of this chapter is that the *Phaedo* represents both the way Socrates acts when facing death, but also the effect that watching him do so has on the audience. In other words, Plato would be giving a literary representation of how understanding Socrates' inner processes affects other people's emotional reactions. To this category, the chapter by Männlein-Robert (*Mit Blick auf das Göttliche oder Mimesis für Philosophen in Politeia und Nomoi*: 167-192) should be added. She focuses on the *topos* of the *homoiosis theo*, explicitly mentioned in the *Theaetetus*, and claims that it underlies the positive employment of mimesis one can find in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Her main argument is that this mimesis is more than an artistic performance and comes to be a way of life, devoted to employing the intellect in the processes of assimilating oneself to the divine. Spinelli's chapter (Mimoumenoi tas tou theou periphoras. *Die Mimesis des Kosmos als menschliche Aufgabe in* Timaios: 291-312) sets out to show that in the *Timaeus* there is an imitation human beings carry out with regard to the visible cosmos in addition to the imitation of the intelligible model by the generated universe. Astronomy, harmony and gymnastics are different activities that aim at the same objective: giving order to one's life. An interesting point made by Spinelli is that especially in the case of astronomy and harmony the effect on one's intellect is both unconscious and conscious. This means that seeing the orderly motions of the heavens by itself positively affects our mind, but reflecting on the movements of the cosmos and its regularities also allows us to recognise such an order. This drives human beings, and especially whoever is philosophically minded, to imitate it.

Mimesis and performance. The question of the performative nature of mimesis is addressed from a variety of perspectives. In his chapter (Imitatio Socratis *from the Theatre of Dionysus to Plato's Academy*: 63-80), drawing

on archaeological, literary and dramaturgical sources, Capra claims that Socrates represents the patron of philosophy in the same way as Dionysus is the patron of theatre, thereby suggesting that Plato, through his dialogues, is offering a radical cultural transition from theatre to philosophy. Vlasits addresses a vexed question concerning the relation between book III and book X of the *Republic* (*Plato on Poetic and Musical Representation*: 147-166). His exegetical proposal moves from a less covered sector of mimetical activities, i.e. music. Vlasits' view is that mimesis is to be understood as "representation by resemblance" (Vlasits 2021: 150-153). Accordingly, he claims that mimesis in general, and music in particular, do not represent qualities in abstraction, but rather are embodied and sensible instantiations of them (Vlasits 2021: 159). For instance, if a courageous character is forged by war, certain musical pieces along with dances can imitate war by resembling it and therefore elicit the same qualities as war in those who take part in such dances. Palumbo's chapter (Mimêsis teorizzata e mimêsis *realizzata nel* Sofista *platonico*: 193-210) connects the notion of mimesis to the literary and theatrical nature of Plato's dialogues. In focusing on the *Sophist*, Palumbo quite subtly claims that the dialogue explains the nature of mimesis (she has in mind the notorious passage at 235ff.) but also represents it by means of its characters. For instance, the Eleatic Stranger stands for the nature of difference; therefore, not only do we find a description of the nature of difference, but we also see how difference works as it is represented by the way the Stranger acts in the dialogue. Finally, performance is at the core of Pfefferkorn's chapter (*Plato's Dancing City: Why is Mimetic Choral Dance so Prominent in the* Laws?: 335-358). Her main claim is that in the *Laws* the key political virtue is self-control or moderation (*sophrosyne*) and this is essentially connected to dancing. This happens in two ways. Firstly, dance is an essential educational instrument to elicit moderation by giving order to one's motion and gestures. Secondly, and quite suggestively, Pfefferkorn maintains that dance is also what best symbolises moderation itself.

Mimesis, reality and knowledge. As is well-known, mimesis is deployed by Plato to capture the relation between sensible things and intelligible beings. According to Candiotto (*Mimesis and Recollection*: 103-122), "rather than casting the immanence of Forms in the sensible things, metaphysical μίμησις is a theory that stresses their relationship while simultaneously highlighting their distance". Candiotto's main claim is twofold. Firstly, metaphysical mimesis triggers the *anamnesis* as described in the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*. In perceiving things, which are imitations of Forms, one's soul is pushed towards recollecting what one saw before her birth. Secondly, the defective nature of things qua imitations of Forms, despite being enough to let one recollect being, also triggers one's tension toward having a full grasp of Forms. Candiotto interprets such a tension in terms of erotic desire, which thereby proves to be an essential connection between embodied souls and intelligible beings. Fronterotta's chapter (*Generation as μίμησις and κόσμος as μίμημα: Cosmological Model, Productive Function and the Arrangement of the χώρα in Plato's* Timaeus: 275-290) addresses the metaphysical-cosmological employment of mimesis in Plato's *Timaeus*. Moving from a sharp distinction between a paradigmatic cause (intelligible forms) and a productive cause (the demiurge), which however imply one another, he claims that these two causes

require that there be a product, which is an imitation of the intelligible model. This generated product, i.e., the sensible cosmos, is essentially the ordering of a pre-existing material (on whose status Fronterotta briefly discusses some alternative interpretations). His main claim is that the *kosmos* is a *mimema*, i.e., the imitation of the intelligible model, insofar as its motion follows a numerically regular order and it is arranged according to geometrical figures. This represents the maximum degree of stability, as opposed to the stability on the intelligible model, allowed by the chaotic material in which and out of which physical bodies are made.

Mimesis, being and language. As far as language is concerned, Plato employs the semantics of mimesis not just with respect to poetry and theatre. Pavani offers in her chapter (*The Essential Imitation of Names: On Cratylean Mimesis*: 81-102) a careful reading of the idea that words imitate their object through the sounds they consist of. The upshot of Plato's *Gedankengang* is the famous argument of the two Cratyluses: if an image reproduces perfectly what it is an image of, then we would have two identical things, which implies that one is no more the image of the other. Pavani correctly argues that this is the way mimesis is used to show a crucial fact in Plato's philosophy, namely that "names *qua* imitations cannot but be ontologically different from the things they name. Mimesis accounts for this necessary distinction" (p. 99).[2] The chapter by Strobel (*Bild und falsche Meinung in Platons* Sophistes: 249-274) deals with the *Sophist* and specifically with the connection between falsehood and images. In his very interesting essay, Strobel considers a variety of accounts of how and why falsehood is the condition for the existence of all sorts of images and to what extent different sorts of images end up being mistaken for what they are images of. He goes on to argue that the specific sort of images called *phantasmata* serve the purpose of producing false beliefs and that this is functional to the sophist's attempt at being mistaken for the wise. In the chapter by Abbate (*Der Sophist als* mimêtês tôn ontôn *(*Soph. *235a1f.) Ontologische Implicationen*: 211-224), the author sets out to give an interpretation of the phrase μιμητὴς ὢν τῶν ὄντων, attached to the sophist by the Stranger in the *Sophist*. This is utilised to address a much broader question: given that language is the specific instrument of both the sophist and the philosopher, how are they to be distinguished? Abbate's reading is that the sophist produces appearances, which aim to be taken as real, but ultimately are a distortion of reality. In other words, they *only* exist in (the relation of) being different from what is real or true. On the other hand, the philosopher is presented as the one who grasps the relations subsisting between genera or forms or between them and perceptible things. Abbate's convincing conclusion, as I take it, is that the sophist uses language to obscure the difference between language and reality. By contrast, the philosopher is the one who uses language to chart the relations between extralinguistic entities relying on the fundamental assumption that reality and language have a common structure.[3]

To conclude, I wish to state that *PMR* accomplishes at least three goals, which prove to be helpful to all the scholars who work on the Platonic notion of mimesis. Firstly, it offers an up-to-date framework where to find open questions, both old and new, concerning mimesis in Plato along with, in most chapters, a sufficiently extended survey of the critical

literature. Secondly, in the case of some essays, it offers a manageable synthesis of very broad questions setting the basis for further development. Thirdly, in the case of some other essays, it offers innovative readings of well-known passages or interpretations of questions concerning Platonic mimesis that have mostly been neglected.

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F. Aronadio, *I fondamenti della riflessione di Platone sul linguaggio:Il* Cratilo, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Roma 2011.

ENDNOTES

1 This passage is mentioned and theoretically utilised in the volume by Halliwell in his chapter (p. 30).

2 Pavani's chapter is a solid and interesting piece of scholarship on the Cratylus. It should only be pointed out that some of the questions she addresses such as the role of *delosis* and the relation between names and essences have received an extensive treatment in Aronadio (2002) and above all Aronadio (2011), which however are not discussed in her essay.

3 To use Abbate's own words, we can conclude "dass Platon eine logisch-strukturelle Auffassung der Wirklichkeit und der Sprache ausarbeitet, durch die ihre wechselseitige logisch-ontologische Entsprechung garantiert ist" (p. 222).

Marren, Marina (2002). *Plato and Aristophanes. Comedy, Politics, and the Pursuit of a Just Life*. Northwestern University Press.

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Disclosure: Prof. Marren is a friend of mine and we share a common approach to interpreting Plato. I hope that our personal and intellectual friendship will be an advantage instead of a handicap for this review, insofar as my criticisms come from a place of understanding.

I begin with two ways of confronting Kallipolis in Plato's Republic. One is to say that it is totalitarian and therefore bad. Another is to agree that it is totalitarian or, to use Marren's preferred word, tyrannical, but to show, in addition, that Socrates (or Plato) did not seriously mean to realize it, or even really think that it was good. Marren's book is an instance of such an ironic reading. Naturally, the question arises as to why Socrates (or Plato) wrote ironically, and here commentators diverge. Marren's answer is that the tyrannical ways of Kallipolis are designed to stimulate the readers to more deeply examine themselves and their own potentially tyrannical inclinations. The tyrannical soul might be several removes away from the philosophical one, but their opposition does not exclude a hidden kinship. That Kallipolis is both tyrannical and not seriously meant is suggested to us, according to Marren, by Plato's careful reworking of the "literary devices in the plays of Aristophanes" in the Republic (26). Hence the title of Marren's book.

One can already guess at Marren's Straussian-inspired hermeneutic, according to which a dialogue's arguments can only be understood in light of its drama (or "action," to use Strauss's and Seth Benardete's preferred term). The latter often subverts or performatively contradicts the content of the conversation and forms a crucial part of Plato's message. Chapter One offers three illustrations of this interpretive commitment: the naked exercise requirement in R. V (18-20), Glaucon's excitement about pleasure while Socrates explains the

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Idea of the Good (21-22), and the way the need to have good food makes citizens themselves food-like in the luxurious city (24). On Marren's reading, one must recognize that these three passages, in terms of action, are jokes, and as jokes they inflect what is being said. In the first passage, for example, we are alerted to the infeasibility of naked exercise, while in the second, the character of the Good as "beyond being" probably reflects Glaucon's "too lively an interest in coming out on top" (22).

The main argument begins in Chapter Two. Marren's first choice is an obvious one, the Assembly Women. She helpfully notes that Blepyrus's objections to Praxagora's plan help us see more clearly the problematic character of Socrates's abolition of the family, something that Glaucon fails to notice (34-35). But she also boldly relates two other passages outside of R. V to the play. First, she argues that when Plato makes Socrates speak of needing "adequate light" (φῶς...ἱκανόν, 427d2) to discover justice and injustice in their best city, Plato is alluding to the opening of the comedy, where Praxagora also wields a lantern that promises to shine a light in the darkness. Socrates' remark can only be understood for the joke that it is once one sees that it appropriates the opening of the play. In fact, the definition of justice is no more illuminative than Praxagora's lantern in the play. Praxagora's lantern both lights the way to the just, new order and exposes the women's vices; similarly, what Socrates discovers is not justice alone, but something also mixed with injustice (32-33; cf. R. 371e12). The injustice is namely the soul's pursuit of equality gone awry. The Assembly Women is key because it reveals the kinship between communism and democracy, as the latter is described in R. VIII. Despite differences between the best city and democracy, "both are concerned with equality" (36; cf. Ar. Ec. 945)—in many cases, to excess. In Marren's reading, Kallipolis is not the anti-democratic regime it appears to be. If one reads the Republic alongside the Assembly Women, one realizes that Kallipolis is democratic to a fault insofar as it also pursues equality to excess. The significance of the Assembly Women, on this reading, is not restricted to the female drama in R. V, but governs the arc of a crucial part of the dialogue stretching from IV till VIII. Marren thus argues that Socrates's communism is just as fanatic and thus as wrongheaded as the pursuit of equality in the regime in the Assembly Women.

Chapter Three draws parallels between the Knights and Socrates' ship of state. They are based on the following analogy: the sausage-seller is to Demos in the Knights as true pilot is to the ship-owner in the Republic (47-48). The parallels are mostly sound, but given the popularity of the ship of state imagery in antiquity, perhaps unsurprising. There is a perceptive interpretation of the term ὑπερφυᾶ (monstrous, extraordinary) in Knights 141, used to describe the sausage-seller's art (52-53). Meanwhile, the interpretation of Republic 488c and 493b as counterparts to the oracle-mongering scene in the Knights is less convincing (51). The lesson Marren draws from this comparison is that both Aristophanes and Plato agree that "in a democracy the people must be held accountable for the conditions that allow corrupt individuals to rise to positions of political power" (46). But in the Republic one can actually argue that it is solely due to the philosophers' unwillingness to rule that power falls into the hands of the unworthy.[1] The question of who is more responsible for bad politics (the philosophers unwilling to rule, or the people choosing bad rulers over them) is clearly a theme in the ship of state

analogy, and relates to the question of whether it is the sophists or the people who corrupt philosophically talented youths (492a-493c, cf. 58-61 on the sausage-seller's aptitude for oratory and his possible decency). Marren concludes by suggesting that, because the people are responsible, they perhaps "must learn to think and to be philosophical," even as she admits that this is contrary to what Socrates claims (61).

If Marren wishes to argue that, rather than problematically ceding control to philosophers the demos—which she suggests is educable—is capable of distinguishing between good and bad rulers, then Socrates' exhortation to Adeimantus to "not despise the many so much" (R. 499d10-e1) is, I believe, very relevant to Marren's project. On the one hand, it reveals that Adeimantus's excessive seriousness (evinced in his inability to laugh) and his contempt for the people are two sides of the same coin. The proper evaluation of the many requires a comic stance that Adeimantus lacks. On the other hand, the context of that remark seems to qualify Socrates' earlier denial of the potential of the many to be enlightened. Some consideration of that remark, in short, would have strengthened the book's overall thesis.

It is unfortunate that Marren does not clarify her use of the terms 'tyranny' and 'tyrannical,' which is crucial for her argument that there is a kinship between the tyrannical and philosophical rule. If tyranny means "lawless rule," then the rule of philosopher-kings is tyrannical. But tyranny, as Socrates speaks of it in the Republic, seems to be ignorant or disorderly rule, when what by nature ought to be ruled rules what by nature ought to rule. In this sense, the knowledgeable and absolute rule of philosophers is not tyranny.

Chapter Four continues the exploration of Kallipolis as tyranny. Parallels are documented between it and Cloudcuckooland in the Birds (77-79). Some brilliant observations showcase Marren's sharp eye for critical moments. For example, she argues that the honors and prizes of Kallipolis belie its ostensible claim to virtue, and appeal to Glaucon's erotic nature instead (73-74, 77). Also, her comment on how Peisetairos's eventual bird-eating echoes the myth of Tereus (75) is eye-opening and rich (even though on the same page she misses the opportunity to cite Birds 1167 in connection with R. 382a, as both passages speak of "true falsehoods"). These pieces of evidence allow Marren to claim that the Kallipolis' tyrannical aspects are established according to the temperament of Glaucon and Adeimantus, who are typical in their eagerness for a political order that, among other things, avoids the messiness of everyday political life. Like the Birds, the Republic appropriates the trope of the idyllic as the desirable but impossible dream (81). One longs for it at one's own peril, because if we strive for "a life unburdened by the demands of politics," "we expose ourselves to the worst kind of political manipulation" (80). One is naturally reminded of the philosopher's reluctance to engage in politics (R. 347c3-d2; Lg. 803b3-5).

According to Marren, part of the reason why philosopher-kings are tyrannical is that the Good "cannot be known in any discursive manner that would enable one to understand its content and its meaning, and then explain it to someone else" (79). But this is to argue on the basis of R. 509b9-10 (and also 505a5-6, 533a3) without considering 534b3-d1 (and the implication of ὑπογραφήν, "sketch," at 504d6). 534b3-d1 suggests that, unlike real tyrants, who actively avoid being questioned and examined, the guardians of Kallipolis welcome questioning precisely because they can use dialectic to defend against objec-

tions to their account of the Good. While that passage doesn't refute her claim about the tyrannical nature of Kallipolis, it does weaken it somewhat.

The final chapter argues that the critical distance comedy presupposes is indispensable for self-knowledge. But, she asks, should we make fun of the philosophic life if we want to be philosophers? Absolutely. Step one of her argument: tyrants weaponize seriousness, and mockery must be employed to destablize the values that tyrants wish to establish beyond questioning (94). Step two: the mythical degeneration of regimes in R. VIII-IX does not fit with historical reality. Not only democracy, but all other regimes, can transform into tyranny quite quickly (91-93). Final step: since Kallipolis is as close to tyranny as democracy is (and given the arguments in previous chapters, perhaps even closer than other regimes are), and since Socrates himself associated with people who became tyrants or problematic political figures, the mockery of tyranny should be applied to those close to tyrants, i.e. to philosophers. I wish Marren had compared the modern diagnoses of tyrannies with Socrates'. At one point, "passionate idealism and nationalism" are identified as what modern tyrannies appeal to garner support (87); Socrates, by contrast, suggests that the tyrants appeal to freedom understood as lawless hedonism (R. 562b12-563b9; 571c3-d4, 572d8-e4). But are "passionate idealism and nationalism" and "lawless hedonism" identical in the final analysis, or are there important differences?

With the main text running at just under 100 pages, Marren's multi-layered discussion leaves me wanting more. A longer book would have assuaged the worries voiced here. Nevertheless, her book generally succeeds in its stated goal and is a good place to begin exploring Plato's relation to Aristophanes. It is obviously motivated by contemporary political concerns. Indeed, since it is a work that argues that we neglect politics at our own peril, and that we, as a people, are as responsible as those in power for our political future, it is only proper that she approaches the Republic from the angle of comedy. After all, comedy, all at once, diagnoses, deflates, and fights tyranny, and brings our self-knowledge to bear upon our confrontation with it.

ENDNOTES

1 Compare Strauss's comment in The City and Man, University of Chicago Press, 1964, p. 124.

Franco Trabattoni, *Eros antico. Un percorso filosofico e letterario*, Carocci, Roma 2021

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Questo libro colto e avvincente costruisce una rete di corrispondenze nuove e rimandi inattesi tra filosofia, poesia e letteratura: Franco Trabattoni, storico della filosofia antica e Platonista di fama internazionale, offre considerazioni affascinanti sull'eros del mondo antico. Pur non essendo un libro sull'amore platonico, esso ruota attorno a quelle cose d'amore di cui Socrate si dice esperto (cfr. Pl. *Smp*. 177d; 193e; 198d; 199b) e che acquisiscono una certa – e talvolta inaspettata – importanza anche in pensatori come Cavalcanti, Dante, Petrarca, Leopardi, Manzoni, Gozzano. L'espediente biografico che apre il volume – la curiosità nata sui banchi di scuola rispetto all'immagine umanissima e struggente dell'anima che durante un bacio fugge via dalle labbra e che i manoscritti dell'*Antologia Palatina* riportano come un epigramma attribuito a Platone (*Introduzione*, pp. 11-9) – ricompare, quasi in *Ringkomposition* (*Conclusioni*, pp. 145-9, in part. pp. 146-7), alla fine, con l'immagine 'platonicissima' dell'iperuranio, ossia il luogo dove l'eros alato fa risalire l'anima degli amanti.

La struttura dei capitoli, assieme alla scelta e alla successione dei testi da esaminare, segue uno schema che mostra la profondità e l'influenza del pensiero platonico attorno all'amore. Su diversi aspetti di questo tema Franco Trabattoni si è già espresso in numerosi e importanti contributi, ma in questo volume offre ancora una lettura originale. I nove capitoli seguono un percorso che parte dall'*Iliade* (Capitolo 1: *Elena e Paride*, pp. 21-9; Capitolo 2: *L'eros di Paride: un modello alternativo di virtù?*, pp. 31-49), procede con incursioni nel mondo dei tragici del V secolo (Capitolo 3: *Amore umano e amore divino: la violenza della bellezza*, pp. 51-60), nella Sofistica con Gorgia (Capitolo 4: *Amore, volontà, intelletto*, pp. 61-7), per tornare all'*Iliade* (Capitolo 5:

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Amore e guerra, pp. 69-75), toccare Aristippo e Antistene prima di affrontare un 'primo' tipo di amore descritto da Platone, quello del mito dell'androgino (Capitolo 6: *Amore malattia, amore medicina*, pp. 77-99). E, proprio a questo punto, quando il lettore si sarebbe aspettato di giungere all'amore platonico, l'A. interrompe il viaggio nel mondo classico per soffermarsi sull'amore in Epicuro e Lucrezio (Capitolo 7: *L'amore in Lucrezio*, pp. 101-10). Il motivo di questa interruzione narrativa è probabilmente da rinvenirsi nella convinzione che il pensiero platonico – in particolare il discorso di Diotima nel *Simposio* (Capitolo 8: *L'amore secondo Diotima*, pp. 111-29) e il secondo discorso di Socrate nel *Fedro* (Capitolo 9: *Il modello e la sua copia: l'amore nel* Fedro, pp. 131-44) – esauriscano in qualche modo il tema erotico e quindi possano essere letti come risposta persino a chi dopo Platone si è espresso sulla natura di eros.

I primi cinque capitoli sono, di fatto, dedicati a due figure controverse, Paride Alessandro ed Elena, dotate entrambe del dono straordinario della bellezza. Attraverso un'analisi mai banale delle fonti antiche, l'A. riesce ad affermare efficacemente che l'impulso amoroso nasce da cause fisiche ed è una forza disarmante che investe l'anima. Inedita e interessante è la scelta di accostare questi due esempi di bellezza, benché non manchino alcuni riferimenti al (più atteso e forse scontato) "bell'Alcibiade", che tra l'altro è colui che, nel *Simposio* e con l'immagine dei sileni scolpiti, descrive Socrate esattamente come l'opposto di Paride (cfr. *Smp.* 216d2-217a3). Alla bellezza narcotizzante di Paride, dono degli dèi, non corrispondono qualità interiori dello stesso valore: Paride è una sorta di androgino (cfr. *Smp.* 189e3-6), una figura di corpo forte ma di indole effeminata, che – nell'interessante ipotesi di Trabattoni – «potrebbe rappresentare l'inquietante cavallo di Troia che produce una crepa rovinosa nelle incrollabili certezze maschili degli eroi omerici e dei loro valori» (p. 43). Per completare il quadro psicologico di Paride, l'A. discute come nell'ambito della cultura greca sia ampiamente riconosciuto il ruolo della vergogna come stimolo per la virtù. Paride, che fugge il combattimento, non condivide le priorità dell'eroe omerico, e – si potrebbe aggiungere, seguendo la linea dell'A. in merito ai rimandi ai testi platonici – non realizza neppure la virtù erotica di cui parla Fedro nel *Simposio*: gli innamorati (sia l'amante sia l'amato) per influsso di eros che li ispira, anche se cattivi, acquistano un'indole simile a quella dei migliori. Su di essi agisce la vergogna di essere scoperti dall'amante o dall'amato mentre compiono un'azione brutta, e l'ambizione di essere visti compiere azioni belle dall'amante o dall'amato (cfr. *Smp.* 178e2-4).

Un altro aspetto che Trabattoni mette bene in evidenza è la relazione causa-effetto tra un elemento fisico/esterno e un elemento psichico/interno. Sia Paride che Elena sono soggetti a questa relazione ma vengono trattati diversamente dalle fonti. Mentre Paride resta per lo più un vile, c'è chi nella letteratura e nella filosofia ha provato a riabilitare l'immagine di Elena, su cui Paride avrebbe esercitato violenza. La violenza è, infatti, solo una delle motivazioni con cui Gorgia di Leontini – il cui *Encomio* è analizzato dall'A.– difende Elena. La pericolosa violenza di eros, che non si può domare, è temuta da Aristippo. Questi ritiene che si possa cedere all'eros solo quando esso non acquisisce il dominio sulla persona intera e non rende l'anima imbelle e passiva al servizio del suo potere. L'eros di Aristippo – come nota l'A. – non è però eros, perché è depotenziato della sua natura autentica, che è perdita di controllo. Antistene, d'altro canto,

ritiene che eros sia un piacere non eliminabile, ma che deve essere fermato almeno un istante prima di mettere in forse il controllo della ragione.

L'A. non manca di cogliere la vicinanza di queste tesi al discorso di Lisia nel *Fedro*: Lisia, concentrato sui danni che eros procura, dice che è meglio concedersi a chi non ama; chi ama, in effetti, è geloso, invadente, possessivo (cfr. *Phdr.* 232e3-234b1). Ci sono però anche dei benefici che eros dona, curando i mali dell'anima e donando la massima felicità per il genere umano; ed è a questo punto del volume che l'A. tratta il mito dell'androgino contenuto nel *Simposio*. Il mito dell'androgino è il triste racconto, fatto da Aristofane, su degli esseri sferici, la cui arroganza e forza smisurate determinano la decisione da parte degli dèi di tagliarli a metà. Il taglio della natura originaria comporta la nascita del desiderio dell'altra metà che, pertanto, è metà di sé: tuttavia, prima dell'introduzione della sessualità, quello che è possibile realizzare, in luogo della fusione, è la semplice giustapposizione dei corpi. Tale giustapposizione non può che condurre alla morte. Infatti, una vita senza desiderio non è una vita umana, poiché la condizione umana è caratterizzata dalla tensione verso qualcosa che deve essere ripreso e recuperato: «un essere umano senza mancanze e senza desideri è un essere senza vita» (p. 98).

Come nota, a questo punto, l'A., l'eros lucreziano si sviluppa proprio lungo una traccia che ha carattere fisico e materiale, richiamando tra l'altro alcuni accenti pessimistici del mito di Aristofane. In effetti, il possesso dell'oggetto d'amore non si può realizzare: la carne non si unisce alla carne, a differenza del desiderio di cibo e bevande che è soddisfatto, perché questi alimenti possono materialmente entrare nel nostro corpo. Dunque, il mito di Aristofane induce (erroneamente) a pensare che ciò che ci è proprio sia il corpo: cerchiamo la metà del nostro corpo, che riteniamo necessaria in quanto unico possibile riempimento di una nostra mancanza. Ma, se il desiderio è desiderio di ciò che ci è proprio, è desiderio non di un corpo bensì di ciò che è casa: se noi siamo piante celesti (cfr. *Ti.* 90a6-7) l'unico viaggio che dobbiamo compiere mossi da eros è quello di ritorno. Ed è appunto questo l'argomento degli ultimi due capitoli del libro, in cui l'A. si interroga su che cosa desiderano veramente gli uomini e sul ruolo che gioca il bello nei loro desideri.

Nel *Simposio* il discorso tra Diotima e Socrate suggerisce l'assimilazione tra bello e buono (cfr. *Smp.* 204d1-205a4): eros è desiderio del buono, cioè del bene e soprattutto di averlo per sempre. Dunque, il desiderio di felicità è desiderio di immortalità, e la strada che porta all'immortalità prevede un connubio tra desiderio fisico e soddisfazione 'spirituale', che è uno dei tratti distintivi dell'educazione socratica. L'esempio concreto del fallimento educativo socratico è Alcibiade, che pur riuscendo a scorgere la bellezza interiore di Socrate (notoriamente brutto esteriormente), pretende di ottenere questa bellezza morale giacendo con lui, e, quando deve parlare di eros, parla di una persona, mostrandosi di fatto incapace di innalzarsi dalla sfera individuale e particolare.

Trabattoni però evidenzia come il *Simposio* non sia l'ultima parola di Platone sull'eros, perché il filosofo offre in questo dialogo un percorso mutilato del suo compimento ultraterreno, ossia privo di ogni riferimento all'immortalità dell'anima. Quindi, l'A. non si limita a dire che è possibile conciliare la *scala amoris* e la palinodia del *Fedro*, bensì suggerisce di leggere il mito della biga alata (cfr. *Phdr.* 246a7-247c2) come la parte mancante del discorso di Diotima. Questa parte del discorso di Socrate rappresenta il culmine

metafisico del percorso amoroso (e della visione dell'idea del bello di cui aveva parlato Diotima nel *Simposio*), dove finalmente il desiderio dell'uomo si appaga. Se si ammette che il desiderio di immortalità non è destinato a rimanere eternamente insoddisfatto, l'unica soluzione possibile – scrive Trabattoni – è ipotizzare un prolungamento della vita umana dopo la morte. Il conseguimento del vero bene – e dunque della vera felicità – è determinato dalla capacità che ogni singola anima ha di ricordare ciò che ha visto nel prato delle idee divine scorgendo quaggiù qualche simulacro di esse. Le idee sono difficilmente percepibili attraverso immagini sensibili, ma è pur vero che una di esse, la bellezza, è visibile anche nella dimensione terrena (cfr. *Phdr.* 250c9-e1). La bellezza di quaggiù, riflesso del mondo superiore, colpisce il cuore degli amanti che non sempre ne colgono l'origine: essa è tuttavia responsabile tanto dell'eros che conduce a obiettivi bassi e insoddisfacenti quanto dell'elevazione dell'uomo verso la bellezza ideale.

Trabattoni si sofferma così sulle massicce dosi di platonismo che Platone inietta nel secondo discorso di Socrate: riesce, in tal modo, a dimostrare che, quando l'amore viene inteso nel modo corretto, non solo conduce l'amante alla filosofia, ma alimenta il desiderio di educare l'amato. Il mito della biga alata con l'auriga che ha difficoltà a domare il cavallo più selvaggio suggerisce che, se il filosofo saprà far prevalere gli elementi eletti dell'anima, gli amanti potranno condurre insieme una vita armoniosa e felice. Ed è a questo punto del volume che ritorna ancora un suggestivo quanto fondamentale riferimento al discorso di Alcibiade nel *Simposio*: l'A. argomenta in maniera convincente che è come se Platone riscrivesse nel *Fedro*, e in versione riveduta e corretta quasi per offrire una seconda possibilità, la storia d'amore tra Socrate e Alcibiade. In effetti, nel *Fedro* anche gli amanti impuri saranno felici: appare infatti plausibile, attraverso i testi discussi dall'A., che, se gli amanti non metteranno le ali subito, potranno comunque metterle dopo; e se il loro volo non sarà immediato, non mancherà tuttavia di realizzarsi. Questo volo porterà però non nell'Ade omerico, ma all'iperuranio, oltre il cielo, perché l'anima che desidera il bene e di possederlo per sempre si desta, diventa leggera e, passando attraverso la bellezza del corpo della persona amata, muove libera verso l'alto.

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