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Hypothesis in the *Meno*

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Gabriele Cornelli

University of Brasília, Brazil

on a perfect balance between energy and wisdom in order to make our PJ flourish. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the new members of PJ Editorial Board for accepting the job: Annie Larivée, Laura Candioto, Georgia Mouroutsou, María Angélica Fierro, Renato Matoso Brandão, and Voula Tsouna. Luca Pitteloud, who is also a member of the same Editorial Board, agreed to continue as Assistant Editor of the Journal, now accompanied by Renato Matoso. Laura Candioto generously accepted my invitation to act as Reviews Editor. We are all dramatically committed to speed up the processes of submission, review, and editorial management of papers, and we hope to achieve in the next year a significantly shorter turnaround times for manuscripts. Above all, we are also committed to the plurality of hermeneutical approaches and languages, which has always been the brand of our diversity-attentive Society. I can only hope that Plato Journal would be able to follow the same path for the next years.

While announcing this fresh new issue of the Plato Journal (7/2017), I should also like to take the opportunity to thank International Plato Society's Executive Committee to trust me the Editorship of our beloved IPS journal. During the period of my Presidency (2013-16), IPS made a great effort to improve its journal in order to meet the best international editorial standards. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the editors of 2015 and 2016 PJ issues and to our Publisher, Coimbra University Press, for the hard and competent editorial work they put in up to the present day. When I assumed the editorship last year, I have proposed a plan to closely follow the actual trends in academic publishing, with a special focus on indexing Plato Journal in the main Indexes and scientific collections. I am glad to announce we already managed to be on the most relevant one: Thomson Reuters Web-of-Science. Scopus will be our next target, of course. To meet these goals I have proposed a slight change in the editorial management, broadening and renewing the Editorial Board, which – as you can see in the pages above – is now built on well-established, highly trusted, and relatively young Plato scholars, all members of IPS. The Scientific Committee composed of former IPS Presidents has been renamed as Advisory Committee. With this new editorial setup, I hope that we could count

Elenchus, Recollection, and the Method of Hypothesis in the *Meno*

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ABSTRACT

The *Meno* is often interpreted as an illustration of Plato's decision to replace elenchus with recollection and the method of hypothesis. My paper challenges this view and defends instead two theses: (1) that far from replacing elenchus, the method of hypothesis incorporates and uses elenctic arguments in order to test and build its own steps; and (2) that recollection is not a method of search on a par with elenchus and the method of hypothesis, but is rather primarily 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.

Keywords: Elenchus, Method of Hypothesis, Recollection

The *Meno* is often taken to showcase Plato's decision to replace elenchus with recollection and the method of hypothesis. The purpose of the present paper is to challenge this reading and to advance, instead, a different understanding of the relations among elenchus, recollection, and the method of hypothesis in the *Meno*. In particular, I am going to defend two theses: (1) that far from replacing elenchus, the method of hypothesis incorporates and uses elenctic arguments in order to test and build its own steps; and (2) that recollection is not a method of search on a par with elenchus and the method of hypothesis, but is rather primarily 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.

In recent literature, Landry (2012) and Benson (2003, 2015) come closest to defending a similar view, as they both argue that elenchus is not replaced by the method of hypothesis, but rather supplemented by it. My own view differs in some respects from theirs, and where it is consistent with theirs, it takes their findings a step further. More specifically, Landry argues that the method of hypothesis is to be applied only once elenchus has finished cleansing the mind of inconsistent beliefs, and that the method of hypothesis proceeds alone and unaided by elenchus to seek knowledge. I argue that elenchus is used not only before the method of hypothesis, but is in fact also incorporated within the method of hypothesis. While Landry believes that the method of hypothesis cannot reach knowledge, I, on the contrary, argue that it can, as long as it is employed within the metaphysical horizon revealed by the theory of recollection. Benson's views are more akin to mine, especially since his recent book offers a detailed account of how elenchus can

be interwoven with the method of hypothesis (Benson 2015). While my present interpretation is consistent with Benson's, it takes the investigation further in two respects: 1) I provide an explanation for the failure of the method of hypothesis as applied in the *Meno*; and 2) I explain how elenchus and the method of hypothesis are related to recollection such that, together, the methods and the metaphysical horizon can account for full epistemic success.

The paper proceeds in four parts, elucidating, in turn, elenchus (I), recollection (II), the method of hypothesis (III), and, finally, the possibility of reaching knowledge through intertwining elenchus with the hypothetical method in the metaphysical horizon opened up by recollection (IV).

I. ELENCHUS IN THE *MENO*

The first third of the dialogue consists of Meno's repeated attempts to define virtue and Socrates' rejections of each of these attempted definitions. Socrates rejects Meno's proposals through his typical elenctic arguments: a) Socrates' interlocutor proposes a thesis; b) in his attempt to test this thesis Socrates secures his interlocutor's agreement to further premises; c) Socrates then shows that the initial thesis leads to inconsistencies when combined with some other premises agreed upon.¹ If no inconsistency is revealed in the last step, the initial thesis has passed the first test. Elenchus is most often taken to mean 'refutation', but the word also has the broader meaning of 'test' or 'cross examination.' Not every elenctic argument has to end by revealing inconsistencies, for sometimes the argument is not carried far enough, and other times there simply is no inconsistency to reveal (see also Vlastos 1983, 39-40). The possibility that elenchus might be used

as a test, yet not end by revealing inconsistencies, means that elenchus might be implicitly at work more often than we realize. As I will argue in section III, we use elenchus implicitly as part of the method of hypothesis in testing, deriving consequences, or in putting forth a plausible claim as hypothesis. In cases in which it reveals an inconsistency, elenchus cannot by itself show which one of the premises must be rejected as false. Upon repeated applications, it can, at most, show which premise needs to be rejected as less plausible.²

Meno's first definition of virtue consists of a list of virtues corresponding to a variety of classes of people. It enumerates a plurality that is loose, random, and indefinite:

First, if you want the virtue of a man, it is easy to say that a man's virtue is being able to manage the affairs of the city and in so doing to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care that he may not experience anything like that. If you want the virtue of a woman, it is not difficult to say in detail that she must manage her household well, looking after its possessions and being obedient to her husband. And another is the virtue of a child, whether female or male, and another, again, that of an elderly man, whether free or, if you like, slave. And there are many other virtues, so that one is not at a loss in saying about virtue what it is (71e1-72a5).³

Socrates refutes Meno's account by repeating his demand for a unitary account of virtue. Just as, while there is a wide variety of bees there is just one essence that makes them all bees, so too, regarding virtue, even if there are many and diverse virtues, they all have one and the same form (*eidos*), through which they all

are virtues (72c6-d1).⁴ Meno must either withdraw his earlier claim that he really knows what (*ti*) virtue is, or provide a new definition, one that respects Socrates' requirement for unity. He opts for the latter.

Meno's second definition of virtue as the 'ability to rule over people' (73c9) appears to display the unified account that Socrates demanded in his earlier criticism. It collapses, however, under Socrates' double criticism: 1) of being too narrow, on account of its failure to apply to children and slaves, for whom it would be inappropriate to rule over their masters and 2) of being too wide, in that it leaves unspecified what kind of ruling corresponds to virtue, i.e. ruling justly, not unjustly.

For his third attempt Meno adopts the poet's words, 'it seems to me, Socrates, that virtue is, just as the poet says, "to rejoice in fine things and have power" and I too say that this is virtue: to desire (*epithumein*) fine things and to have the power to get them' (77b2-5). The new account is not a bad or false characterization of virtue. Socrates' refutation is intended, I believe, to unmask the distorted worldview that underlies Meno's conception of good things and of the power we need to acquire them.

Socrates begins his examination of Meno's third proposal by showing that its first part, concerning the desire for fine things, is redundant, since no one wants what they consider to be bad. Socrates first clarifies that people who mistakenly desire (*epithumein*) bad things actually desire them *qua* good things. He then eliminates the class of people who knowingly desire bad things, for how could anyone desire what makes them wretched and unhappy? Thus, we conclude that no one wants what they consider bad.⁵ What about the second half of Meno's account? Socrates asks Meno if he would include health and wealth among

the goods to be acquired. Meno replies that he would, but then mentions only wealth, and, instead of health, introduces political honours and offices (78c6-7). Socrates challenges Meno by showing him that sometimes scarcity or lack are more beneficial than abundance and acquisition of wealth and political honors. Once again, Meno's account is refuted.

Meno's first definition multiplied virtue and conceived of it as corresponding to different categories of people, while privileging man's virtue. On that account, a man's virtue was taken to consist of partaking in the affairs of the city, benefiting friends, and harming enemies, while a woman's virtue was reduced to being submissive to her husband and providing good household management. Meno's second definition conceived virtue as ruling over other people, and thus, implicitly, restricted its availability to men. The third definition restricted the availability of virtue even more, since it reserved it for only wealthy and powerful men when it equated virtue with satisfying desires for wealth and political honors. Close attention shows that the sequence of the three definitions is not random, but rather has a common thread connecting them. The connecting thread is the common belief of privileging courage over virtues like temperance, justice, and piety, that is, privileging what was traditionally considered manly over the so-called co-operative virtues.⁶ Meno's three definitions reveal the increased value placed upon manly virtue and the neglect of the quiet virtues. In his replies, Socrates constructed his challenges in a way that emphasized the need for co-operative virtues alongside manly virtue such as justice and temperance (73a6-c5), justice (73d6-10), and justice and piety (78d-e). Thus he spelled out the dialectical demand for a unitary account.

To conclude this section, I don't see elenchus by itself as being able to establish any

proposition as true or to justify knowledge. I believe that elenchus has indirect positive contributions insofar as (a) it shows us that we don't know, (b) it shows us how far we are from knowing and how much we thought we knew, (c) it draws out the cluster of inconsistent beliefs that we have, (d) it assists the process of self-knowledge by revealing how little we know, and also, by making us aware of previously unexamined assumptions embedded in our beliefs, it reveals to us that knowledge differs from mere opinion.

II. RECOLLECTION

Recollection is introduced to counteract Meno's paradox, according to which search and learning are either futile or impossible, and attempts to show that search is worthwhile and learning possible. Recollection is introduced in two steps, first through myth (81a-e), and then through Socrates' conversation with a slave-boy who, although untrained in mathematics, proves able to discover the solution to a mathematical problem (81e3-86c3). In what follows, I am going to sketch the main pillars of the metaphysical and epistemological vision thereby revealed (for my detailed account of recollection in the *Meno* see Ionescu 2007, 39-104).

The myth says that the soul is immortal. At the end of one's life the soul departs from the perishing body and migrates to a new body. Because the soul is immortal and undergoes successive incarnations without ever perishing, we must live as piously as possible for the quality of our present lives affects the quality of our soul's next incarnation(s). Recollection is then described as an experience available to us on account of our souls' prior 'sight' of pure objects:

And so, since the soul is immortal and has been born many times and has seen both the things here, and those in Hades, and all things, there is nothing that it has not learned. Therefore there is nothing surprising in that it's possible for it to recollect both about virtue and other things, things which indeed it knew before (81c5-9).

The things seen by the disembodied soul are 'the things here, and those in Hades, and all things' (81c6-7). For the tradition preceding Plato, Hades is the underworld. On this reading of Hades, souls would recollect the experiences they had while incarnate and those experiences undergone in the period of purgation between lives in the underworld. Taken together, these make up 'all things' (81c6-7). For the Plato of the *Phaedo*, Hades is the realm of pure objects of thought, of intelligible and eternal Forms that remain invisible to our sense organs, and therefore, the realm of the Unseen (*aidê*, *aidous*, cf. *Phaedo* 80d6, 81c11). If our passage in the *Meno* remains inconclusive regarding the nature of the objects thus seen, a fuller account supporting the view that these objects must have the main characteristics of intelligible Forms – eternity, immutability, intelligibility, universality – is supported by Socrates' conversation with the slave (82b-86c).

The conversation with the slave can be divided into six sections: 1) the introduction of the problem (82b9-82e2), 2) the refutation of the slave's first false answer (82e2-83c3), 3) the refutation of the slave's second false answer (82c5-83e10), 4) the digression about the slave's state of *aporia* (84a1-84d2), 5) the slave's acquisition of true opinion regarding the solution to the problem (84d3-85c8), and, 6) the anticipated possibility of turning the slave's present true opinion into knowledge

(85c9-85d8). Accordingly, knowledge can be achieved in four stages: (a) refutation of false opinions, (b) experience of *aporia*, (c) acquisition of true opinion, and (d) transition from true opinion to knowledge. The last stage is only announced as a possibility and not actually illustrated during the conversation with the slave, which ends as soon as the boy has reached true opinion. One of the major questions to tackle is: At which of these stages, if any, does the slave begin to recollect? Does he recollect during the occurring conversation, or is recollection reserved for a further stage, which is announced, but never quite witnessed in this dialogue in stage (d)?⁷ I will argue that recollection is already illustrated in the slave's acquisition of true beliefs in stage (c).

The mathematical problem concerns finding the side of a square that is twice the size of a given square. We notice parallels between the mathematical and the moral question. The mathematical problem asks how to obtain the double-sized square while the moral question asks how to obtain virtue. Solving the mathematical problem requires us to identify the line that accounts for the generation of the square similar to the way in which the essence of virtue accounts for the way virtue is acquired in the moral investigation. The essence of virtue eludes precise formulations, just as the length of the diagonal remains inexpressible in numerical language. Finally, just as the diagonal is incommensurable with the given side of two feet because the two lack a common measuring unit, so too, knowing the essence of virtue is incommensurable with common, habitual, and unreflected beliefs.

The slave boy's perception of the drawn diagrams helps his search, but his search does not rely exclusively on sense-perception.⁸ The slave boy relies on his intellect to understand the geometrical concepts of square, equality

of sides, and triangle. He comprehends at least two applications of the rule for determining rectangular areas based on multiplication of adjacent sides (82c-d, 83e) and is able to perform arithmetical calculations correctly. He also understands the abstract relations of doubling, quadrupling, and dividing a whole in half. Finally, when the slaveboy is asked to point out the line he has been searching for, his pointing comes as a result of reflection suggested by Socrates' questions about the relations of double and half, and the concepts of square and triangle. It is in these instances that we witness the non-empirical realities which the slave boy recollects. The slave boy is using the diagram as a physical aid, but he is thinking along of the ideal geometrical shapes themselves, not of their drawn diagrams.

The reasoning in support of recollection resides in showing that a non-empirical component is a *sine qua non* for knowledge and that the slave is able to understand the solution to a geometrical problem even though he was never formally trained in geometry.⁹ In its simplest form, the argument is that the slave boy could not have recognized the diagonal as the solution to their problem if his soul had not been in possession of latent knowledge. The solution seems to have been stored latently within his soul and, upon Socrates' prompting, the slave boy recollects the answer. Several times during the episode, Socrates points out that he is only asking the slave boy questions and that the boy's answers all stem from his own soul (82b6-7, 82e4-13, 84a3-d1, 85c6-7, 85c9-d4). Moreover, the slave boy is explicitly required to answer only on the basis of what he really believes (83d2).¹⁰ Our understanding of the argument for recollection ultimately comes down to determining the non-empirical nature of the objects of knowledge. Throughout the mythical presentation, the non-empirical

has been depicted as the region of the pre-empirical objects envisioned by the soul prior to its embodiment. Throughout the dialectical exhibition with the slave, the non-empirical was illustrated by the ideal and eternal nature of mathematical objects (square, triangle, diagonal, the relations of half, double, equality, etc.). There is no need to make the stronger claim that mathematical objects are Forms as long as they are understood to be universal, unchanging, and eternal realities.

Recollection offers a positive response to the question regarding the possibility of successful search insofar as it provides the metaphysical framework that accounts for the presence of latent knowledge within our soul. Recollection is not itself a dialectical method nor a strategy for reasoning, and as such it does not show us by itself how exactly we go from opinions to knowledge. Rather, it is a theory that explains that and why a transition from opinion to knowledge is possible. It will be the role of dialectical methods like the method of hypothesis or the method of collection and division to show us just how to advance from opinions to knowledge (also Landry 2012, 149)

The epistemological and metaphysical landscape revealed through recollection is built upon the following principles: knowledge has universal, eternal, and unchanging realities for its objects, the human soul has some kinship with its objects, and objects of knowledge are organized in a systematic interrelatedness that reflects the rational organization of reality:

For since all nature is akin (*tes physeos hapases sungenous ouses*), and the soul has learned all things, nothing prevents it, once it has recollected one thing – what people call “learning” – from discovering

all other things if one is courageous and does not weary of the search (81c9-d4).

The “kinship of all nature” mentioned in this passage refers, I believe, not only to a rational and systematic interrelatedness of all things insofar as they count as objects of knowledge, but also to an affinity between our soul and the objects thus known. For mere kinship between things to be known can only explain the possibility of the soul’s recollecting something else, i.e. ‘all other things’, from something that it has just recollected, but it cannot explain how the initial thing was recollected. To explain this, we need to assume an affinity between the soul and the objects to be recollected, or else we fall into an infinite regress whereby we are unable to explain how the initial ‘seeing’ of one thing might have taken place.¹¹ The common element that is shared among knowable objects and the soul itself is of the intelligible nature (Rousseau 1981, 337-48, esp. 344-45). Indeed, without the presumed affinity between the soul and its objects of contemplation, we would not be able to account for the fact that awareness of knowledge is a constitutive part of what it means to know (Margaret McCabe 2009, 233-256).

Underlying the story of the soul’s prenatal access to truth, its punishments and rewards in Hades, is an articulation of reality in terms of three ontological levels. They are the eternal immutable realities, the immortal soul, and the particular things around us, understood as embodied souls. The soul is akin to the intelligible objects insofar as it shares with them its eternity and incorporeal nature, and it is akin to the particular things around us insofar as it shares their changing nature. It is because the soul shares features with both the particular sensible things and the eternal realities that it can come to know. Through sense organs the soul perceives sensible things; through thinking

it understands reality in terms of universal and unchanging laws.

Recollection must be understood in its double-aspect. On the one hand, it is a theory that provides the metaphysical landscape within which the possibility of acquiring knowledge is accounted for; on the other hand, it is itself an *activity* with stages of realization. The slave begins to recollect as he discovers the diagonal of the initial square to be the side of the double sized square and can continue to recollect by reflecting on the reasons that make that opinion true. Still, recollection as a process that takes place in time and has degrees of realization should not to be confused with a dialectical method. Properly speaking, recollection is the cognitive process of understanding that takes place while we are using one dialectical method or another and is facilitated by the use of that method. As a process, recollection describes the cognitive achievement registered while using the systematic steps of a method.

It is commonly said that the slave cannot recollect during elenchus (Irwin 1995, 132, Benson 1990, 128-58, Nehamas 1985, 17-19). One of the common assumptions underlying this view is that recollection represents Plato's novel epistemic theory that is meant to replace Socratic elenchus. Defenders of this position argue that, since true beliefs are typical occurrences in early, elenctic dialogues, and since Plato's new proposal is supposed to 'go beyond' Socrates' elenctic practice, the theory of recollection is meant strictly to explain something that elenchus cannot, namely the transition from true beliefs to knowledge. I believe, however, that recollection is not meant to replace elenchus, but rather to provide the metaphysical and epistemological landscape that accounts for both the limitations and accomplishments of elenchus and/or some other dialectical method. Thus, when elenchus is used within the metaphysical framework opened

up by recollection, we understand its role as a method of 'purification'. When the elenchus is used outside of such framework and perhaps within strictly empirical presuppositions, elenchus is a mere logical test for consistency among the beliefs we entertain.

It is perfectly possible to start recollecting even while having your views rejected through elenchus, as long as you begin to understand *why* those beliefs are rejected as false. In other words, we start to recollect just as we start to grasp what was wrong with the beliefs we used to entertain. To recollect means to grasp the universal and unchanging truth. To the extent that we understand the reasons why our views are being rejected as false, not simply as inconsistent with other beliefs we entertain, we are already engaged in recollection. What matters is the level of abstraction and depth of understanding associated with the views rejected.¹² It would thus be possible, in principle, for the slave to begin recollecting already while Socrates is rejecting his first false answers. As long as the slave understands not only *that* his rejected beliefs are inconsistent with the other beliefs he holds, but also *why* those beliefs are false. Note for instance, Socrates identifies all search with recollection (81d4-5) and also draws Meno's attention to the boy recollecting 'in sequence' while he is refuting the slave boy's false answers (82e12-13). However, given that the slave in this episode is aware only of the inconsistency and misses the reason *why* his first answers are false, it is possible that he begins to recollect only once he recognizes the diagonal as the side of the double-sized square.¹³

The positive part of Socrates' conversation with the slave culminating in identifying the diagonal has been seen by scholars as parallel to the more constructive conversation with Meno after 86d. Some scholars have even suggested that the positive step taken with the slave

already illustrates the use of the hypothetical method (Landry 2012, 160). There is certainly a parallel in that the conversation starts to be more constructive, although I am not completely convinced that we can distinctly identify the method of hypothesis at work already in the conversation with the slave (see also Benson 2003, 153).

III. THE METHOD OF HYPOTHESIS

The method of hypothesis is introduced to help us advance from opinions to knowledge. If elenchus helps us to get rid of some views that are inconsistent with the core beliefs we entertain, and the doctrine of recollection offers the metaphysical background justifying, in principle, the possibility of knowledge, then the method of hypothesis suggests a concrete dialectical procedure for positively testing and strengthening our opinions and thereby gradually converting our opinions to knowledge.¹⁴ My reading of the hypothetical method challenges the traditional interpretations on three accounts. Firstly, I argue that the method of hypothesis is not a diversion or a concession that Socrates makes to Meno, but rather an approach that allows Socrates to investigate the nature of virtue while also winning Meno's participation in the search. Secondly, unlike most commentators who believe that the method's application ends at 89c, I argue that the method is applied to the end of the dialogue.¹⁵ Thirdly, I argue that elenchus is implicitly incorporated into the hypothetical method and helps it all along.¹⁶

Socrates has just proposed that they take up again the risky and challenging search for the essence of virtue (86c5-7). But Meno wants to return to his initial concern regarding the ways in which virtue can be acquired: whether

by teaching, by nature, or in some other way (86c8-d1). Faithful to his maxim that knowing the essence (*ti*) of something is prior to knowing the derivative qualities of it, i.e. the sort of thing (*poion*) it is (71a5-b8), Socrates now says that, if he were to rule not only over himself but also over Meno, then they would proceed by investigating the essence of virtue prior to its derivative attributes (86d2-6). However, since Meno is not even trying to rule over himself, and yet he is exerting his rule over his interlocutor, Socrates pretends to comply with his wish in exchange for an apparently insignificant concession. The concession that Socrates is asking for, namely that they investigate the acquisition of virtue starting *from a hypothesis*, is only ironically introduced as if it were a minor point, whereas it is in fact the device that will reestablish Socrates' control over the search to follow.¹⁷ Introducing the method of hypothesis under the appearance of yielding to Meno's rule is Socrates' strategy to win his participation again in a joint dialectical search.

Although it has the appearance of a concession to Meno, hypothetical reasoning in fact enables Socrates to remain faithful to his maxim that knowledge of the essence is prior to knowledge of the derivative qualities.¹⁸ By reducing Meno's question, whether virtue is teachable, to the preliminary problem of whether virtue is some sort of knowledge, Socrates basically brings Meno closer to the question concerning the nature of virtue (Benson 2003, 109-110; Benson 2015, 95-102). Furthermore, it would be implausible for Socrates to be so easily diverted from what he conceives to be the main task at hand, especially after he introduced recollection as a theory that guarantees the possibility of epistemic success. Besides, throughout the dialogue, Socrates never retracts the maxim that knowledge of the essence precedes knowledge of a thing's derivative qualities (71b-c). In

fact, at the end of the dialogue, he restates the maxim for the specific case of virtue under consideration (100b). Finally, the use of *alla* ('at any rate', 'but') when Socrates addresses Meno with the words, 'If you won't grant me anything else, at any rate (*alla*) relax your mastery of me to a small extent and allow the question whether virtue comes by teaching or in some other way to be examined from a hypothesis' (86e1-3), is indicative of a break from Meno's demand (Denniston 1959, 11-13, Bedu-Addo 1984, 2, Bluck 1961, 321-22).

Hypothetical reasoning is borrowed from geometry and is therefore appropriately illustrated with a geometrical problem. The geometrical problem is whether a given area is inscribable as a triangle in a given circle, while the moral problem is whether virtue is teachable. The hypothetical method recommends reducing a more difficult problem to a simpler one that needs to be answered first and that sets limiting conditions for the other. Thus, in the mathematical case, the question as to whether the area is inscribable as a triangle in the given circle, is reduced to determining whether the area is such that, when one places it alongside its given line, it falls short by a figure similar to the one that was placed alongside. In the moral case, the problem as to whether virtue is teachable is reduced to the problem of whether virtue is some sort of knowledge, since virtue being some sort of knowledge is identified as a limiting condition for it being teachable.

There is a long-standing debate over whether the initial hypothesis is 'virtue is some sort of knowledge' or the biconditional 'if virtue is some sort of knowledge, it is teachable, if not, it is not teachable' (87b6-c9). I agree with Bedu-Addo and Benson in regarding this debate as a red herring insofar as Plato allows more than one hypothesis. Rather than deciding which of the two claims is the initial hypothesis, it is

more important to recognize the key elements of the hypothetical procedure: i) that the hypothesis is proposed tentatively and provisionally, ii) that it establishes limiting conditions and then iii) considers whether the limiting conditions announced have been met (Bedu-Addo 1984, 6, Benson 2003, 107, 112-113).

Let us take a look at the steps of the hypothetical method's application to our quest for the essence of virtue. In a synoptic overview, the final part of the dialogue (86d-99e), developed entirely within the framework of hypothetical reasoning, proceeds according to the following stages:

Stage 1: Socrates proposes the biconditional hypothesis 'If virtue is like knowledge or some sort of knowledge, it is teachable, if not, not' as a plausible assumption that licenses the reduction of Meno's question of whether virtue is teachable to the problem of whether virtue is some sort of knowledge (87b5-c10).

Stage 2: The problem of whether virtue is some sort of knowledge is solved, though only provisionally, by appeal to another hypothesis, 'virtue is good' from which 'virtue is wisdom or some sort of knowledge is derived' (87c11-89a5).

In this stage, we gain more support for the view that 'virtue is knowledge' by deriving it from an antecedent assumption, 'virtue is good'; while in the following stages we are trying to secure the same view, by testing how its equivalent claim, 'virtue is teachable', sits in relation to what seem to be some of its necessary consequences, i.e. that it is not simply inherited by nature (Stage 3) and that there are teachers and learners of it (Stage 4).¹⁹

Stage 3: Socrates draws a corollary that human beings do not possess virtue by nature from the conclusion that virtue is some sort of knowledge and therefore teachable. He then confirms this by appeal to a counter-factual situation (89a5-c2). As we shall see, this stage

marks the transition from Socrates' understanding of virtue, knowledge, and teaching assumed in the previous two stages, to Meno's and Anytus' understanding of these concepts assumed in the following stages. I argue that it is ultimately this shift in meaning that is responsible for the fact that the method of hypothesis ends without a successful attainment of knowledge about virtue in the *Meno*.

Stage 4: The view that virtue is teachable is examined by testing whether one of its (problematically) presumed necessary consequences is true, namely the existence of teachers and learners of it (89d1-96d). Existence of teachers and students is regarded as a necessary consequence of virtue being teachable. Since neither adequate teachers nor learners of virtue can be found, virtue is not teachable.

Stage 5: The result obtained in Stage 4 prompts Socrates to revise one of the assumptions that seemed to be employed in the derivation of 'virtue is wisdom' from 'virtue is good' in Stage 2. This move leads to the problematic conclusion that virtue accrues to humans by divine dispensation (99e).²⁰

As I argue in what follows, the arguments developed in the first two stages (87b5-89a5) proceed on the basis of Socrates' understanding of knowledge, virtue, and teaching, while the arguments developed throughout the following three stages of the method, depend almost entirely on Meno's and Anytus' (mis)conceptions about these notions.²¹ This shift explains why the results obtained in the investigation carried under Meno's and Anytus' assumptions about knowledge, teaching, and virtue, do not represent a real threat to the results obtained in Socrates' argument at 87d-89a. Thus, Socrates' view that virtue is wisdom, and therefore teachable, resurfaces unharmed in the concluding passage, where Socrates envisions the possibility of a genuine

teacher of virtue on account of his wisdom (*pepnumai*) at 100a1-5.

Let's then take a look at each of the stages of the hypothetical method's application and spot applications of elenchus along the way.

Stage 1: The hypothesis is established in stages. First, Socrates obtains Meno's agreement to the negative conditional 'If virtue is of a sort other than knowledge, then it is not teachable' (87b6-c4), and then to the positive conditional 'If virtue is some sort of knowledge, virtue is teachable' (87c5-6). Thus, the argument to the hypothesis has the following structure:

- (1) A human being is taught nothing other than knowledge (87c2-4).
- (2) If virtue is of a sort other than knowledge, it is not teachable (87b7-c4) (from 1).
- (3) If virtue is some sort of knowledge, virtue would be teachable (87c5-6) (independent assumption).
- (4) Therefore, if virtue is some sort of knowledge, it is teachable, if it is other than knowledge, not (87c8-9) (from 2 and 3).

Once the hypothesis has been reached, Socrates proceeds to investigate the problem to which Meno's question has been reduced, namely whether virtue is some sort of knowledge.

Stage 2: Socrates investigates whether virtue is some sort of knowledge by appealing to a new hypothesis. The new hypothesis functions as a more basic condition for the possibility of virtue being knowledge, in that sense a 'higher' antecedent assumption: 'virtue is good' (87d2-3), and derives "virtue is some kind of knowledge" from "virtue is good" by means of the following reasoning:

- (1) Virtue is (something) good (87d2-3).

- (2) Virtue is that by which we are good (87d8-e1).
- (3) All good things are beneficial (87e2).
- (4) Therefore, if we are good, we are beneficial (87e1-2) (from 3).
- (5) Virtue is beneficial (87e3) (from 1 and 3).
- (6) Virtue is something in the soul (88b).
- (7) Wisdom or some sort of knowledge alone is invariably beneficial and good (established through a separate argument, 87e5-89a5).
- (8) Therefore, virtue is wisdom, either the whole or part of it (89a3-4) (from 5, 6, and 7).

The seventh premise is established through an independent argument (87e5-89a5). The argument first establishes that wisdom is necessary for our right use of the benefits from the goods of the body, like health, strength, beauty, and wealth. Then, it establishes that wisdom is the necessary accompaniment of valuable things connected to the soul, and is the only thing invariably good.

Stage 3: Once we have derived, if only provisionally, ‘virtue is wisdom or some sort of knowledge’ from its antecedent assumption that ‘virtue is good’, Socrates proceeds to test the consequences of that derivation by means of elenchus. How do the necessary consequences of virtue being knowledge, and thus teachable, match up with the facts?

As a corollary of the reasoning carried so far, Socrates derives the view that human beings do not possess virtue by nature, which he confirms by appealing to a counter-factual situation. If virtue were possessed by nature, then there would presumably be people looking to see which children were born good, and everyone else would recognize them as such and guard them from corruption in the

polis (89a5-b8). But it is striking that the argument by appeal to the counter-factual situation is not at all convincing because it rests on several problematic assumptions: a) that nature and teaching are mutually exclusive ways of acquiring virtue, b) that there are experts able to discern good people, and c) that the masses would readily agree with the experts’ judgments. Nothing in the dialogue encourages us to believe that Socrates himself endorses any of these assumptions.

The claim that nature and teaching are assumed to be mutually exclusive candidates for the accrual of virtue transpires throughout the present argument, namely if people were good by nature, life in the polis could do nothing but corrupt them, and if people were to possess virtue by nature, then good people would be easily discernable while still very young. On Socrates’ understanding of ‘nature’ and its intelligible kinship with the soul, which emerged from the recollection story, nature and learning (recollection) complement one another (81c5-9). On Meno’s understanding of ‘nature’ as the sum of features inherited biologically from our parents, and ‘learning’ understood as memorization of readily given answers, ‘nature’ and ‘learning’ exclude one another as sources for the accrual of virtue. This claim seems to be suggested by Meno throughout his initial formulation of the opening question (70a1-4). The argument also assumes that the masses are immediately and non-problematically persuaded to give due recognition to the experts’ judgment regarding the young’s moral natures. But if this were the case, the masses should be credited with high moral character, and, if so, it would be unreasonable to assume that they are somehow corrupting the young. Finally, the argument recognizes that there are different kinds of people living in the polis: some are experts who are able to recognize the

good natures of the newly born, while others only obey the experts' judgment. However, for Socrates at least, the moral experts who can discern good characters should themselves be good people, and thus we wonder how they could have managed to keep their own good natures uncorrupted in the city.

Since we have no reason to believe that Socrates endorses any of these problematic assumptions on which the claim about the irrelevance of nature in the accrual of virtue is based, I believe that we are witnessing here a silent transition from Socrates' understanding of 'knowledge as recollection' to Meno's and Anytus' understanding of 'knowledge as persuasive opinions acquired through sophistic instruction', which will be at work throughout the remaining part of the text. Evidence for this view comes immediately in following stage, where the existence and success of teachers of virtue come to the forefront.

Stage 4: In the next stage, whether virtue is teachable is tested by investigating whether one of its assumed necessary consequences, namely the existence of teachers and students, harmonizes with the facts (89d-96d). The argument takes the following form:

- (1) There are no effective teachers of virtue (89e4-96b9).
- (2) If there are no teachers (of virtue), there are no learners (of virtue) (96c1-2).
- (3) A subject of which there are neither teachers nor learners is not teachable (96c3-5).
- (4) Therefore, virtue is not teachable (96c10-d1) (from 1, 2, and 3).

The first premise is established through an independent and lengthy conversation during which specific classes of potential teachers of virtue are first proposed and then rejected. The

argument's approach is framed by the question: Who are the appropriate teachers to whom Meno should go in order to acquire *the kind of virtue that he wants* (91a-b5)? This formulation clearly suggests that the reasoning now rests on a conception of virtue that suits Meno and Anytus, not Socrates. In support of this, notice also that when Socrates describes to Anytus the kind of virtue for which they are now searching for teachers, Socrates' description restates in a condensed manner the essentials of Meno's first attempted definition of virtue (71e1-72a5). In Socrates' words:

For, Anytus, he has for a long time been telling me that he desires the wisdom (*sophia*) and virtue by means of which human beings manage their households and cities well, and look after their parents, and are knowledgeable of how to receive fellow-citizens and foreigners and how to send them away in a manner that's worthy of a good man (91a2-b1).

Differences between the two formulations are minor and merely superficial. Meno's definition assigned specific virtues to particular classes while the new formulation takes a rather undifferentiated approach. Meno assigned household management to women and city-management to men, while they are now both attributed to people generally. Meno framed the talk about human interactions in terms of benefiting friends and harming enemies, but now the others are referred to as fellow-citizens and strangers, a change that suits Anytus' political perspective. Looking after one's parents is a new aspect, an addition that suits Anytus' conventional praise for tradition. None of these changes affects substantially the content of virtue, and the fact that neither Meno nor Anytus find anything objectionable to the conception

here stated suggests that they both endorse it. Evidence to the same effect comes also from Socrates' formulations. His formulations emphasize that it is *this* understanding of virtue, namely Meno and Anytus' understanding, that is assumed in what follows: "So, with regard to *this* virtue (*tauten ten areten...*), consider whom would it be right for us to send him to" (91b1-2). Socrates' formulation also uses '*paradounai*' (93b4-5) to indicate the kind of 'transfer' of information presupposed by the teaching here envisioned, a characteristic of the sophists' or craftsmen's instruction, not of recollection (87b6-c1).

The argument relies on a close analogy between virtue and the crafts (*technai*, 90b5-91a1). If Meno wanted to become a doctor he would be sent for lessons to professional doctors, if cobbler to cobblers, if flute-player to flute players, and so with all the other crafts (90c-d9). In any craft, experts are those who recommend themselves as teachers and charge a fee in exchange for the lessons they teach (90d-e). Therefore, Meno needs to be sent to people who recommend themselves as teachers of virtue and charge a fee in return for their teaching (91b2-6). The most plausible candidates for this role - the sophists (91c-92c, 95a-c8) and the Athenian gentlemen (*hoi kaloi kagathoi*, 92d-94e) - will be considered and rejected through elenctic reasoning, thus leading to the conclusion that there are no teachers of virtue.

When Socrates recommends the sophists as teachers of virtue, Anytus rejects this proposal by claiming that the sophists harm those who associate with them (91c1-5). Socrates brings a counterargument and a counterexample: but look at Protagoras! How could Protagoras have escaped public criticism and maintained his good reputation for more than forty years, had he really been harming rather than benefiting

his followers? Socrates himself does not believe that the sophists are successful teachers of virtue, but he challenges Anytus because he wants to reveal Anytus' unreflective reliance on common opinions. Anytus has to either revise his rejection of the sophists, or find a way to discredit Socrates' evidence on behalf of Protagoras' success.

When Anytus proposes the *kaloi kagathoi* as teachers of virtue, Socrates uses elenchus to challenge this view:

- 1) The *kaloi kagathoi* are teachers of virtue.
- 2) If any of the *kaloi kagathoi* were teachers of virtue, Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides would have been.
- 3) If Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides had been teachers of virtue, they would have taught their sons to be good.
- 4) The sons of Themistocles, Aristides, Pericles, and Thucydides were not good.²²

Anytus has to either give up his candidates, or show that Socrates' conclusion about the Athenian gentlemen does not follow.

Socrates need not endorse the view that for a subject to be teachable there always need to exist teachers prepared to teach it, and that in the absence of such teachers the subject is not teachable. In fact, in the *Republic* VII, Socrates invokes the case of solid geometry as an example of a discipline for which no teachers are to be found (*Rep.* 528b-c).

Stage 5: The conclusion that virtue is not teachable prompts Socrates to ask whether they need to revise one of the assumptions that seemed to be employed in the derivation of 'virtue is wisdom' from 'virtue is good' in Stage 2. This shows that the arguments that

follow are developed within the hypothetical framework set forth by the initial biconditional hypothesis that virtue is some sort of knowledge if and only if it is teachable. Since the preceding stage concluded that the latter term of this equivalence ‘virtue is teachable’ is false, it now appears necessary that the former ‘virtue some sort of knowledge’ must also be false, if the hypothesis holds true.

The ending of the dialogue appears confusing at first sight. Does Socrates endorse the view that virtue comes by divine dispensation? Is he truly recanting the view that virtue is wisdom or some sort of knowledge? Or is he recanting his view that it can be taught, after he went through the pains of explaining teaching as recollection? I doubt that he does so. I believe that we are invited to recognize that the last portion of the conversation proceeds under the assumptions of virtue, knowledge, and teaching that Meno and Anytus endorse, while Socrates doesn’t. Stage 4 only showed that it is plausible that virtue, on Meno’s and Anytus’ understanding of it, is not teachable. Correspondingly then, we are not asked to accept the falsity of virtue’s association with knowledge on Socrates’ understanding of virtue and knowledge, but only on Meno and Anytus’ understanding of those.

Scholars have typically adopted one of two routes in trying to make sense of the dialogue’s ending. Some of them argue that Plato has finally come to give up the initial Socratic intellectualistic ideal that identified virtue with knowledge and adopted a more realistic stance, according to which true opinion is sufficient for virtue (Bluck 1961,19-30). Others argue that the reasoning in Stage 3 is flawed and Plato does not endorse its result (Devereux 1978, 122-3, Bedu-Addo 1984: 10-14, Gonzalez 1998,180). I agree with the latter camp, all the more so since in the final lines, Socrates envisions the

possibility of a genuinely virtuous teacher of virtue on account of wisdom (100a1-7). We thereby witness in the concluding scenario a revival of Socrates’ understanding of virtue, knowledge, and teaching. I believe that Plato’s strategy of arguing to a hypothesis first, then challenging it is meant to reveal essential aspects of this dialectical method. First, it emphasizes that accepting the provisional status of hypotheses is central. Furthermore, it suggests, I believe, that Socrates envisions the possibility of taking the hypothetical method a step further. The claim that is rejected in Stage 3 is that knowledge alone is good. One can replace that view with a refined and revised claim that takes into account the ground for the newly revealed distinction between opinions and knowledge. True opinions are good and beneficial while they last, but the trouble is that they don’t last for long. Knowledge, however, is stable and invariably good and beneficial. If we are ready to qualify the claim about knowledge and show that knowledge alone is *stable and invariably* good and since virtue itself is also stable and invariably good, then we can make sense of the possibility of this virtuous teacher envisioned in the last line, for he would be a teacher on account of his knowledge, not of mere opinions. The claim of invariability and universality, however, cannot be firmly grounded empirically and requires anchoring in universally stable and unchanging a priori principles.

Socrates can then maintain his view that virtue is wisdom (some sort of knowledge) if he construes his argument in the following way:

- (1) Virtue is good (87d2-3).
- (2) All that is good is beneficial (87e2).
- (3) Correct action is guided either by true opinion or by knowledge (96d5-98c, 97b9-10).

- (4) Virtue is stable.
- (5) The virtuous person must always have direct personal experience of virtue.
- (6) True opinion is not stable (97c-98a).
- (7) True opinion does not necessarily presuppose direct experience of its object (97b).
- (8) Knowledge is stable (97c-98a).
- (9) Knowledge always presupposes one's direct experience of its object (97b).
- (10) Therefore, virtue is some sort of knowledge.

While Socrates never argues explicitly for premises (4) and (5), nevertheless, the entire conversation developed throughout the *Meno*, and the fact that the dialogue ends with Socrates' optimistic scenario envisioning the possibility of a genuine teacher of virtue on account of knowledge (wisdom), invite us to think that he endorses them. The idea that virtue is stable results implicitly from the argument at 87b-89a5 coupled with the argument at 97c11-98a8. In the earlier context, Socrates argued that wisdom alone is *invariably* good and that it is a necessary condition of virtue (88a6-89a5). The later context (97c11-98a8) argues for the stability of knowledge. Since wisdom is conceived as some sort of knowledge, and since its presence in the soul is necessary for virtue, virtue itself is likely conceived as stable. The idea that the virtuous person must have some direct personal experience of virtue was also implicitly suggested in what went on before. When he introduced the theory of recollection, Socrates mentioned virtue as one of the objects that can be recollected (81c8). And the episode with the slave showed that to recollect means to recover truths through one's own reasoning, and that personal reflection and direct grasp of its objects are necessary conditions of knowledge. As long as the hypothesis that virtue is

some sort of knowledge remains, possession of virtue presupposes one's direct intellectual experience of it.

IV. THE POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INTERTWINING ELENCHUS WITH THE METHOD OF HYPOTHESIS IN THE METAPHYSICAL HORIZON OF RECOLLECTION

Let us now bring together our findings and look at the way in which elenchus, the hypothetical method, and recollection are interrelated. As applied throughout the first third of the dialogue (71d-79e), as well as through the first part of the conversation with the slave (82b-84c), elenchus leads to acknowledgement of inconsistencies among one's beliefs and culminates in a state of perplexity. Although elenchus, by itself, is unable to offer a standing foundation for our beliefs and turn them into knowledge, it nonetheless aids the process of tethering opinions down to a certain extent. The main positive functions of elenctic arguments emerging from the earlier analysis can be summarized as follows: (i) constant re-examination of our opinions strengthens their grounds and gradually makes them quasi-permanent; (ii) Socrates' use of elenchus encourages us to continue the search and guards us against skepticism; (iii) elenchus draws out the real meaning of other people's beliefs and thus gives us a better understanding of their views. While opinions accepted completely uncritically on the basis of external authority or lucky guesses are liable to frequent and quick changes, opinions accepted upon elenctic examination are much more stable (*Gorgias* 482a7-b1, 508e-509a, *Crito* 46b-e, 54d).

Far from dropping his elenctic practice once he introduces the hypothetical method, Socrates actually makes use of the former in applying the latter. First, when deriving ‘virtue is wisdom’ from “virtue is good” (87c-89a), then, in refuting the belief that ‘virtue is teachable’ (90a-96d), and finally in reconsidering the scope of the class of good things, adding true opinion along with knowledge (97a-99e).

Though related in many ways, hypothetical method and elenctic arguments also differ from each other: (a) hypothetical reasoning explicitly acknowledges the provisional nature of the opinions put forth, while elenchus does it only indirectly; (b) the main goal of elenchus is to secure coherence among one’s beliefs, while that of the hypothetical method is to also ensure the systematic interrelatedness of a coherent set of beliefs *and* to gradually lead to the most basic antecedent assumptions of these beliefs; (c) elenchus always starts from a belief endorsed by its proponent, whereas the hypothetical method often begins from statements not (yet) assented to (see also Landry 2012, 153-154; Benson 2003). As we have seen, however, none of these differences obstructs the collaboration of the two methods.

The method of hypothesis was introduced with the aim of leading us to knowledge. In the episode that we witness in the *Meno* the final successful result is not achieved. Can the method of hypothesis achieve full success by leading to knowledge? Landry believes it cannot:

[By means of the method of hypothesis] we can only come to have true opinions about the qualities of an object of search. This because, so long as we tether from an hypothesis (as opposed to tether to an object), we might, in our deductions or construction, assume a questionable premise which will then require that we

question our conclusion and so too our hypothesis. As Socrates shows Meno with respect to the nature of excellence, so Plato shows us with respect to the nature of philosophical knowledge: our true opinions, in so far as they are tethered from an hypothesis via the mathematician’s method, though they might be a guide for acting as if we know the object itself, so that we can construct or deduce its qualities, cannot provide a tether to the object itself, and so cannot provide a means for knowing the object itself. (Landry 2012, 155)

Thus, Landry continues, while the hypothetical knowledge is beneficial in that it can yield mathematical knowledge (which aims only to tether *from an hypothesis*), it is limited in that it cannot yield *philosophical knowledge* (which aims to tether to the object itself). I, however, believe that, when understood in the horizon opened by recollection, the method of hypothesis can lead to knowledge. I disagree with Landry that the method of hypothesis is restricted to the mathematicians’ use and thus, we need another method for the philosophers’ use that would end with knowledge. Rather, I believe that when the method of hypothesis is in a philosopher’s hand, i.e. in the hand of someone ready to engage in recollection of the most abstract and ultimate forms including the Good, it is a philosopher’s method and thus can reach knowledge. The *Meno* gives us only a hint of how the philosopher might proceed in using it in order to advance to knowledge, while the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* elaborate in more detailed and explicit ways on how that can be done (See Benson 2006, 85-99). The condition, however, for the method to succeed is that it must be used in a metaphysical horizon akin to that described by recollection,

namely a horizon that guarantees the existence of universal, eternal, and unchanging truth.

Socrates introduced the theory of recollection in order to show that knowledge and learning in general are possible. The possibility of eventually reaching and recognizing the truth is guaranteed by the affinity between our reason and the rationality of the world (the “kinship of all nature”, cf. 81c9-d1). When the dialectical method of search is carried far enough, recollection guarantees attainment of knowledge. Thus, in our case, if the method of hypothesis is carried far enough, that is, if we investigate by its means the conditions for the possibility of virtue being stable, eternal, unchanging, and good, and if knowledge also shares all of these qualities and is instrumental to virtue, we can, in principle, turn into knowledge our current opinions about the relation between virtue and knowledge. Landry is right to think that, as uttered in the *Meno*, the claims ‘virtue is good’ and ‘virtue is knowledge’ are mere true belief as they ground the understanding of the Good itself. But if we trust that recollection can in principle give us access to the Good itself, we can expect to turn the current opinions into knowledge. The difference will be reflected not in the linguistic expressions that we use to speak of it, but in the disposition of the soul contemplating that truth. In other words, the same linguistic expression can be stated sometimes as opinion and at other times as knowledge.

If the account here proposed is correct, elenchus and the method of hypothesis are to be seen as working hand in hand. Elenchus signaling inconsistencies that allow the method of hypothesis to move forward and select more and more plausible claims as hypotheses to be tested and eventually tied down with reasons confirming them. However, coupling these two methods is not

sufficient for reaching knowledge. All they can do by themselves is increase the consistency among our beliefs, but this offers no guarantee that we are heading to knowing the way things are. This is where the theory of recollection becomes crucial, as a metaphysical account that explains the possibility of these dialectical methods to help us advance from mere opinions to knowledge. The kinship between the soul of the knower and the intelligible aspects of the objects under investigation, which recollection both presupposes and accounts for, guarantees at once our ability to identify truth when encountered, our awareness that we know when we do, and our ability to advance from one thing recollected to another, and thus understanding the objects of search in a network and not as mere isolated items.

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NOTES

1 Scholars sometimes distinguish between direct and indirect elenchus. See, for instance, Robinson 1953, 22-26. The difference between the two is that indirect elenchus refutes a thesis by deducing a falsehood from that thesis in conjunction with some other accepted premise(s), while direct elenchus reaches the contradictory of the initial thesis without making that thesis a premise in this argument, that is, without ever assuming the truth of the refutand. Robinson argues that the former type is the most frequent in Plato's dialogues (24). The general stages of elenctic arguments presented above suit both forms. The difference is that in indirect refutation the thesis proposed in step a) is taken as one of the premises from which the conclusion will be derived (*reductio ad absurdum*), while in direct refutation the thesis initially proposed is never assumed as a premise.

2 Fine takes a different view. She argues that elenchus can lead to true opinion and knowledge: 'elenchus need not end in *aporia*; the elenctic method can take one all the way to knowledge. To show this, Socrates questions the slave further, until the slave eventually states the right answer (84d-85b); this further stage of questioning involves the elenctic method no less than does the initial stage, and so Plato shows that the elenchus can go beyond the exposure of ignorance to the articulation of true beliefs' (Fine 1992, 208-9). I believe that Fine is right to say that elenchus need not end in *aporia* and can contribute to positive results. However, I cannot agree with the claim she seems to be making that elenchus can lead to knowledge *all by itself*; to lead to knowledge elenchus needs to be supplemented by (an)other method(s) of search, whether the method of hypothesis or collection and division, or some other dialectical approach. Fine is right that all that Socrates needs to do to lead the slave to knowledge is to keep questioning him until he gives the right answer, but we need to acknowledge that Socrates' questioning cannot proceed randomly and it leads best when its steps and trajectory follow the strategy of a dialectical method that is not reducible to elenchus, but rather incorporates elenchus into a more constructive approach. In addition, while elenchus plus some more constructive approach might lead to knowledge, we cannot really account for that achievement as knowledge in the absence of a metaphysical account like the one provided by the theory of recollection. To put it simply, it is only within the metaphysical horizon of recollection that elenchus becomes a *method of purification* and thus, at least indirectly a method that guides us in the direction of knowledge (even if it doesn't reach that final stop by itself), whereas without the metaphysical horizon of recollection elenchus is a mere *test for internal consistency of a belief set*, and not yet a practice of purification.

3 Unless otherwise specified, translations are mine.

4 Scholars like Klein and Bluck warn us about the sense of *eidōs* in this context (Klein 1965, 48-50, Bluck 1961, 221-27). In particular, they argue that we should not identify

its meaning here with the technical sense it acquires in Plato's later dialogues as part of his elaborated 'theory of Forms'. Although an account of Forms is not explicitly developed in the *Meno*, and although *ousia* and *eidōs* have here (72b1-e) the general meaning of an explanatory account or cause for a thing's being what it is, later parts of the *Meno*, and in particular the theory of recollection (81a-86d), are based on the implicit assumption of Platonic Forms. Since, as we shall see, part of the dialogue's message is that only a reply in terms of intelligible universal objects conceived on the model of Platonic Forms can adequately satisfy Socrates' search for the essence of virtue, it is plausible to regard the present use of *eidōs* as a first stage in Plato's development of his mature theory. To support the view that Plato himself conceived of the Socratic search for *eidōs* as convergent and continuous with his mature thoughts about Forms, let us notice that when Socrates attempts to determine the metaphysical and epistemic status of Forms in the *Phaedo* (65d), the first Forms that he mentions are the same three instances (size, health, and strength) that he uses in the *Meno* in the immediately following analogy with the essence of virtue (*Meno* 72d). In addition, the frequent designation of Forms as *to ho estī* (*Phaedo* 74d6, 75b1, 75d2, 78d4, 92d9) suggests again the continuity with the *ti*-question raised in the earlier dialogues, and in particular with the *Meno*'s reference to virtue as what it is itself by itself (*auto kath' auto ti estī aretē*, 100b7) (Kahn 1996, 337-38 also points out these connections).

5 In the *Meno* Socrates does not undertake the task of proving the stronger claim that, in spite of our actual irrational or mistaken desires for bad things, we all actually have also a deeper, rational desire for what is really good, the way he does in the *Republic*.

6 On the traditional view, going back to Homer, Greeks used to distinguish between manly virtue (courage), on the one hand, and qualities such as wisdom, justice, temperance, and piety, conventionally called by scholars quiet or co-operative virtues, on the other. Manly virtue has to do primarily with the individual in and for himself, quiet virtues with human interactions in the city. Courage used to be associated primarily, if not exclusively, with men, while the co-operative virtues were primarily associated with women and were considered of inferior value. *Meno* generally subscribes to common traditional views and the superiority of manly over co-operative virtues is one of the common opinions that he endorses. The traditional view that courage is of highest value for men is also reflected in the linguistic connection between *andreia* (courage) and *anēr* (man). *Andreia* literally means manliness or manly spirit; being *andreios* means to be truly a man. Cf. H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 1996. For a detailed account of the traditional conception of manly and co-operative virtue see Adkins, 1960.

7 The source of this difficulty stems from the fact that Socrates seems to make three claims which, taken together, are inconsistent: (i) the slave recollects; (ii) the slave does not acquire knowledge; (iii) recollection explains

acquisition of knowledge. My solution to this puzzle is that while the ultimate aim of recollection is to reach knowledge, recollection of true opinions about eternal and immutable objects, like the truths of mathematics, is a preliminary step towards that final aim. Hence the slave's recollection of true opinions is already an illustration of recollection, since he recollects true opinions about eternal and unchanging objects and understands to some extent reasons why those are true.

8 For the view that sense perception is of no use to recollection in the *Meno* see Vlastos 1965, 143-67, Gulley 196, 12-13, Gulley 1954, 194-213, Gallop 1975, 115, Buchmann 1936, 68-69, and Scott 2006, 103-105. Vlastos and Gulley argue that the *Phaedo's* suggestion about the positive role of perception in triggering recollection is an absolutely new aspect of Plato's theory. For criticisms of this position see Bedu-Addo 1983, 228-48, esp. 241-42, H.D. Rankin 1958, 81-86, Dunlop 1975, 51-56. At the opposite end of the spectrum Ross argues that recollection is entirely based on perception (Ross 1951, 18).

9 This point illuminates another divergence between my present account and the one developed by Fine. When Fine equates knowledge with true belief plus an account, she does not insist on the necessity that the object of knowledge be a universal, rather than a particular, and neither does she clarify what counts as adequate account or explanation (Fine 2004, 71-78). Fine's insistence on knowledge being propositional obscures the fact that for Plato it is primarily the disposition of the soul towards understanding rather than the capacity to articulate sentences that count as explanations that makes the whole difference in term of true epistemic achievement. Explanatory accounts fall short of knowledge unless they are anchored in universal intelligible realities.

10 Scholars have often expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that Socrates knows in advance the solution to the mathematical problem, for this a) makes Socrates direct the slave to the answers rather than let him respond freely and b) it weakens the analogy between the two investigations since in the ethical conversation Socrates doesn't know the solution in advance (Bostock 1986, 112, Weiss 2001, 83). But there are good reasons why Plato chooses the mathematical problem whose solution is known in advance. More important than the fact that Socrates knows the answer to the geometrical problem is the fact that Meno and we (the readers) do so, since the illustration is a successful piece only for someone who can appreciate the slave's advance from falsehood to truth. Furthermore, while it is true that the sequence of Socrates' leading mathematical questions is to some extent affected by his knowledge in the field, the fact that Socrates does not know the essence of virtue does not necessarily make his conversation with Meno proceed in a completely random way. For one thing, Socrates has many opinions about virtue; for another, Socrates' elenchus with Meno proceeds through an ordered sequence of questions guided by methodological principles: the priority of knowing the essence over a thing's derivative qualities, the requirements for unity, universality, and necessity of

a definition, and the demand that the dialectical partners offer relevant answers.

11 Gulley (1962, 9) and Grote (1867, 17-18) take Plato's invocation of kinship as referring exclusively to a relation between soul and the Forms, but not also among the Forms themselves. Seeskin leaves the matter undecided as to whether kinship describes a relation between soul and Forms or among Forms themselves, yet he too, just like the other scholars, is inclined to think that it can be only one of them (Seeskin 1987, 109).

12 In the *Sophist*, for instance, elenchus is used to determine the way *megista gene* combine with one another (*Sophist* 250b-253d).

13 For the view that the slave boy's true beliefs are the result of recollection, see also Scott 2006, 98-120, 182-83, Gentzler 1994, 257-95, and Gonzalez 1998, 167-73. That the slave's true opinion results from recollection is not to say that true opinions are always acquired through recollection. True opinions can also be acquired through sense perception and observation, through hearsay or guessing, etc. What makes the slave's case an instance of recollection is not that some of the opinions he asserts happen to be true, but rather the fact that he arrives at them through a process of rational mediation whereby he envisions ideal mathematical objects and relations in order to finally 'see' that the line sought for is the diagonal. Indeed, at the stage actually reached by the slave, his 'sight' of this truth is still feeble and dim. All he can say at this point is that the newly acquired opinion is more acceptable than his previous false ones, since it is more consistent than those were with the host of other beliefs he entertains. But since he cannot give sufficient reasons for its truth, he still falls short of knowledge.

14 This should not be taken to mean that at the end of our dialogue the participants will have attained knowledge of the essence of virtue, but only that, through extended application of the hypothetical method, this kind of accomplishment could eventually occur. In the *Meno* we witness the method's development, but not also its final and absolute success.

15 I first developed this view in Ionescu 2007, 109-153, esp. 109-111; much of what follows in this section reiterates the reasoning developed there. A few other scholars also argue that the method is applied through to the end of the dialogue. See Kahn 1996, 311-13, Vlastos 1988, 381n60, Benson 2003, 95-126, Benson 2015, 92-182 and Scott 2006, 129ff. While all of the scholars just mentioned agree that the method is applied throughout the remaining part of the dialogue (87d2-100b4), they often disagree over the actual course of Socrates' hypothetical reasoning, as well as over the implications resulting from it.

16 In his latest book, Benson provides an extensive and detailed analysis of the method of hypothesis, and he too recognizes the usefulness of elenchus as integral part of the method of hypothesis (Benson 2015, 154-182). While thus consistent in its major tenet with Benson's position, my present account goes a step beyond his work, insofar as I also identify the reason why the application of the

hypothetical method yields a confusing and aporetic result in the *Meno*. The reason for that, I argue, is that midway through the application of the method Socrates seamlessly switches from using virtue, knowledge, and teaching, in the senses he understands these to using the same concepts in Meno's and Anytus' understanding. This switch, I argue, is not due to an intrinsic limitation of the method, nor is it indicative of a grave omission and oblivion on Socrates' part. Rather, it represents a skillful pedagogical device whereby we are taught the importance of preserving the consistency of meanings in the concepts we use throughout our reasoning, and also witness the ignorance of Socrates' interlocutors.

17 Scholars do not generally agree with this view, and argue instead that Socrates is yielding to Meno's request and proceeds to investigate a derivative quality of virtue prior to investigating its essence. See, for instance, Robinson 1953, 114-22, Brown 1967, 63-65, Crombie 1963, 538, Bluck 1961, 23, Rose 1970, 1-8, Sternfeld and Zynskind 1978, 31, 33, 51-52, Meyers 1988, 173-80, Gonzalez 1998, 175-79, and Seeskin 1993, 45-46. For a different view see Bedu-Addo 1984, 1-14 and Benson 2015, 95-102.

18 While most scholars read the remaining part of the dialogue as abandoning Socrates' maxim about the priority of the essence over the derivative qualities of a thing, they often provide divergent interpretations of this situation. Some take it as indication of the discrepancy between Plato's and Socrates' approaches, arguing that Plato, who is more sensitive to our intellectual limitations, has come to disagree with Socrates' unrealistic demands. Most scholars, however, take it as an explanation for the aporetic ending of the dialogue. They argue that the dialogue ends in *aporia* precisely due to the abandonment of Socrates' maxim. My own view differs from both of these lines of interpretation.

19 Benson perceptively argues that the method of hypothesis in the *Meno* follows the stages of the hypothetical method in the *Phaedo*, except they are now taken in reverse order. Thus, according to the *Phaedo*, Benson writes, '[f]irst, one should examine whether the consequences of the hypothesis agree with one another – whatever precisely that means. And second, one should attempt to derive the hypothesis from a yet “higher” hypothesis, and so on until one reaches something “adequate” – again, whatever exactly that means. [...] *Meno* 87d2-89c4 provides an example of the second procedure (an argument to the hypothesis from a ‘higher’ one), while 89c5-96d4 provides an example of the first (an argument from the hypothesis)’ (Benson 2003, 115).

20 My understanding of the five stages, first advanced in Ionescu 2007, is consistent with Benson's 2015 account, although he identifies only four stages, where I identify five. The difference in the number of stages stems from the fact that I acknowledge the argument to the conclusion that virtue is not possessed by nature as a distinct stage of the same method's application (Stage 3), whereas Benson doesn't acknowledge it as a separate stage. According to him we have: (1) the proof stage *Meno* 87b-d, (2) the upward path of confirmation stage

(87d2-89c4); (3) the downward path of the confirmation stage (89c5-96d4); (4) a reconsideration of the upward path of the confirmation stage (96d5-100b4). At the end of his investigation Benson declares that most likely the confusing ending is due to a defect in the method's application (Benson 2015, 180), but he offers no suggestions as to what the presumed defect is about. I argue that the reason why we end in a confusing situation resides in a pedagogical strategy of shifting seamlessly from one set of meanings of virtue, teaching and knowledge (Socrates') to another (Meno's and Anytus'), and I identify Stage 3 as the moment when these shifts occur for the first time. In an earlier account Benson identified three stages of the method's application: (a) an argument *to the hypothesis*, deriving 'virtue is knowledge' from the hypothesis 'virtue is good' (87d2-89c4)—corresponding to what I identify as stages 1 and 2; (b) an argument *from the hypothesis*, testing whether virtue is teachable by searching whether there are any teachers of virtue (89c5-96d4) – corresponding to what I identify as Stage 4; (c) a *reconsideration* of the argument *to the hypothesis*: if true opinion is also good and beneficial for action, then virtue need not be knowledge (96d-100b4) – corresponding to what I identify as Stage 5.

21 Exceptions to this are only two passages: (1) 97a6-98b10, where Socrates draws the distinction between knowledge and true opinion, and (2) 100a1-7, where Socrates envisions the possibility of a genuine teacher of virtue on account of knowledge.

22 The argument proceeds by showing that none of them has been able to impart excellence to their own sons, although (a) they did not lack willingness to do so, since they have been concerned to provide their sons with the best education in other crafts (93e6-8, 94a4-6, 94b4-8, 94c-e2) - horsemanship (93d2-3), wrestling (94c3, c5), javelin-throwing (93d4), music (94b6), athletics (94b5), and (b) their sons' natures seem not to have been deficient, since they have been able to assimilate the instruction received in various crafts (93d). Consequently, the explanation for the statesmen's failure seems to be that virtue is not teachable (94e2).

La relectura positiva de la tradición poética griega en el Banquete de Platón

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ABSTRACT

The Platonic reevaluation of traditional poetry in positive terms that we read in the *Phaedrus*, in as much as it is conceived therein as a valuable educational resource for posterity (*Phaidr.* 245a1-5), does not strictly imply anything new in the Platonic corpus, but rather a systemization and complementation of a set of ideas about the origin and function of poetry that Plato had already shared in some of his early, transitional and late dialogues. From this broad set of ideas, I am interested in this study in concentrating especially on a series of passages taken from the *Symposium*, in order to compile two lines of analysis in this paradigmatic late dialogue which, I understand, constitute a clear precedent for the positive conception that Plato finally assumes about traditional poetry in the *Phaedrus*.

Keywords: Plato; *Symposium*; Poetry; Tradition; Rereading.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Así como a lo largo de sus diálogos Platón somete a un continuo reexamen su teoría de las Ideas, lo mismo cabe decir respecto de otros tópicos centrales que estructuran su filosofía, como por ejemplo la cuestión del *éros*, de la *manía* y, en lo que atañe a nuestro tema, la del estatus atribuido a la poesía tradicional. Para el caso del *éros*, piénsese en las diferencias estructurales que exhiben *Banquete* y *Fedro*, en tanto que en el primer diálogo se le niega al amor su condición de dios, mientras que en el segundo se le restituye su carácter divino;¹ y, en lo que respecta al tópico de la *manía*, la concepción negativa que de ella se desprende en algunos diálogos de transición, medios y en los dos primeros discursos del *Fedro* –el de Lisias y el primero de Sócrates–, y su posterior rehabilitación desde una óptica divina en la palinodia socrática.² Es justamente este nuevo planteamiento que Platón formula allí respecto del valor y función de la *manía* el que tendrá una implicancia fundamental en su reevaluación de la poesía tradicional en términos positivos; pues liberada ya de las exigencias de racionalidad y de austeridad prescritas en *República*, tal poesía es concebida en *Fedro* como un valioso recurso educativo para la posteridad (*Phaidr.* 245a1-5).³ En efecto, el que allí recibe todos los honores y fama inmortal por sus obras no es precisamente el poeta cuerdo y austero de *República*, sino más bien el poseído o maniático. Podemos, en este sentido, decir que a la altura del *Fedro* Platón es plenamente consciente de que la cuestión del *éros* y la de la poesía tradicional demandan más de un enfoque analítico; o, dicho de otra manera, que es difícil, teniendo en cuenta sus constantes revisiones de tales tópicos, extraer una concepción unívoca sobre ellos.

Pero esta concepción de la poesía que puede leerse en *Fedro* no implica en términos estrictos

una novedad dentro del *corpus* platónico, sino más bien una sistematización y complementación de un conjunto de ideas acerca del origen y función de la poesía que Platón, como veremos, ya había diseminado en algunos de sus diálogos de juventud, transición y madurez. De ese amplio conjunto, en lo que sigue me interesa concentrarme sobre todo en una serie de pasajes tomados del *Banquete*, a fin de relevar en este diálogo paradigmático de madurez dos líneas de análisis que, a mi entender, constituyen un claro antecedente respecto de la concepción positiva que Platón termina por asumir en *Fedro* sobre la poesía tradicional. En primer lugar, la aparición de una línea vinculada al tópico de la inspiración divina como origen del discurso poético; en segundo lugar –y en estrecha relación con lo anterior– una línea de consideración elogiosa sobre las obras de los poetas tradicionales. Veamos entonces cómo juega en el *Banquete* esta concepción positiva de la poesía tradicional que confluye en el *Fedro*.

I. LA VALORACIÓN POSITIVA DE LA POESÍA TRADICIONAL EN EL DISCURSO DE SÓCRATES-DIOTIMA

Desde el inicio del *Banquete* Platón deja asentado el motivo principal que da origen a la propuesta de Fedro, basada en que cada uno de los oradores presentes pronuncie un encomio en honor del dios *Éros*. Tal motivo es la falta de una acabada atención y caracterización de este dios por parte de la tradición poética griega. Recordemos aquella propuesta, recogida por Erixímaco:

Fedro, en efecto, me está diciendo a cada paso, lleno de indignación: '¿No es irritante, Erixímaco, que en honor de algu-

nos otros dioses haya himnos y peanes compuestos por los poetas y en cambio en honor del *Éros*, que es un dios de tan elevada importancia y categoría, ni uno solo, entre tantísimos poetas que han existido, haya compuesto jamás siquiera un encomio?' (*Symp.* 177a5-b1).⁴

Si se tiene en cuenta esta falta de interés hacia la figura de *Éros*, que Fedro, a través de Erixímaco, resalta en los poetas, y que actúa a la vez como desencadenante de su posterior alabanza, podemos leer la serie de discursos pronunciados por los oradores, a la manera de un diálogo con la tradición poética en los términos de una rectificación y complementación de ésta en lo que toca a la esencia y propiedades del dios *Éros*. De allí se explica, por lo demás, el constante gesto de apelación a dicha tradición que puede advertirse en cada uno de los discursos pronunciados, apelación cuyo fin es dar sustento o valor de ejemplaridad a sus respectivas tesis sobre la genealogía, naturaleza y efectos de *Éros*. Baste como ejemplo de ello las diversas referencias a Homero y Hesíodo que leemos en los discursos de Fedro –quien también alude, entre otros, a Esquilo y Eurípides–, Pausanias, Erixímaco, Aristófanes, Agatón y Alcibíades.⁵ Pero es sobre todo en el discurso de Sócrates-Diotima donde me interesa centrar mi análisis, a fin de reconocer en él la valoración positiva de las obras de los poetas tradicionales destacada en diálogos previos. Acerca de esta referencia continua en la obra de Platón al contexto poético tradicional, Nusbbaum señala apropiadamente que la escritura de Platón constituye una alusión continua al contexto poético,

tanto en su elección de imágenes como en los relatos que contiene y en su estilo literario, hasta el punto de que el significado

de muchos de sus aspectos importantes se nos escaparía si no tuviésemos en cuenta dicho contexto.⁶

El encomio a *Éros* por parte de Sócrates-Diotima retoma la estructura formal apuntada en el discurso previo de Agatón. En efecto, Diotima, vía Sócrates, hace en principio referencia a la naturaleza y propiedades de *Éros*, para luego pasar a describir sus obras o efectos en los hombres. En este último punto referido a las funciones de *Éros*, puede leerse una definición general de los términos ‘poesía’ (*poíesis*) y ‘poeta’ (*poietés*), cuya finalidad es ilustrar la distinción entre un uso ‘genérico’ y ‘específico’ (i.e. de sus especies particulares) del término ‘*éros*’.⁷ Por un lado, es ‘producción’ (*poíesis*) todo lo que es ‘causa’ (*aitía*) de que algo pase del no ser al ser; de forma tal que las diversas actividades comprometidas en el conjunto de todas las técnicas son, en sentido amplio, ‘producciones’ (*poiéseis*), y sus ‘artesanos’ (*demiourgoí*), ‘productores’ (*poietai*).⁸ Por otro, en sentido específico, son ‘poetas’ (*poietái*), propiamente hablando, los que se circunscriben a una parte del conjunto total de la producción, relativa al ámbito musical (*Symp.* 205c5-c9).⁹ La ‘imitación’ (*mímesis*) constituye así un cierto tipo de ‘producción de imágenes’ (*poíesis eidólou*), y el ‘poeta’ (*poietés*), en tanto lleva a ser algo que antes no era, un productor cuyo resultado es un producto específico: el ‘poema’ (*poiéma*). Como al respecto afirma Heidegger, este pasaje constituye un claro testimonio de la posición preeminente que adquiere la técnica poética dentro de la totalidad del arte griego:

Si finalmente aludimos con ‘arte’ a lo producido por un producir, a lo allí puesto en tal producir y al producir mismo, entonces el griego habla de *poieîn* y *poíesis*. El hecho de que la palabra *poíesis* se haya

reservado de manera especial para nombrar la producción de algo en palabras, o sea, el hecho de que *poíesis*, como ‘poesía’, se haya convertido preferentemente en el nombre del arte de la palabra, el arte poético, es un testimonio de la posición preeminente que adquiere este arte dentro de la totalidad del arte griego. Por ello tampoco es casual que Platón, cuando lleva a la palabra la relación entre arte y verdad y plantea una decisión de la misma, trate en primer lugar y de manera dominante del arte poético y del poeta.¹⁰

A través de esta caracterización general de los términos ‘poesía’ y ‘poeta’ en ambos sentidos (amplio y específico), y su consiguiente analogía con el término ‘*éros*’, Platón procura, además de revelar la equivocidad propia que denota el término ‘*poíesis*’, destacar la relación entre tres nociones clave que organizan el discurso de Sócrates-Diotima: el *éros* (en tanto impulso erótico-daimónico), la *poíesis* (en sentido amplio y estricto) y la inmortalidad. En efecto, el *éros* es, en última instancia, amor de la inmortalidad (*éros tês athanasías*, *Symp.* 207a3-4), cuya plasmación se expresa puntualmente en la naturaleza mortal – animal y humana – bajo la mediación de la ‘generación’, ‘procreación’ o ‘reproducción’ (diferentes formas de volcar el término ‘*poíesis*’), procreación que implica, según el cuerpo, la *poíesis* de hijos naturales, y, según el alma, de hijos espirituales, siempre bajo el estímulo de la belleza:

Así, pues, los que son fecundos según el cuerpo se dirigen en especial a las mujeres y ésta es la forma en que se manifiestan sus tendencias amorosas, porque, según creen, se procuran para sí mediante la procreación de hijos inmortalidad,

memoria de sí mismos y felicidad para todo tiempo futuro (*Symp.* 208e1-5).¹¹

Los hombres que conciben en las almas llegan así a dar a luz la sabiduría y las demás virtudes, de las que precisamente son ‘progenitores todos los poetas’ (*poietai pántes genitores*) y cuantos ‘artesanos’ (*demiourgôn*) se dice que son inventores (*Symp.* 209a3-5). La dimensión erótico-poiética que Platón descubre en la poesía redefine en este sentido al poeta tradicional (‘todos los poetas’) como un tipo de creador especial que busca, por medio de su obra, alcanzar la inmortalidad. Ésta, en tanto causa final de ese impulso erótico-poiético¹² que mueve a los poetas –y a los célebres legisladores, como veremos más adelante–, se traduce concretamente en ‘obras del alma’ o ‘hijos del espíritu’. En una palabra, en la generación o procreación de virtudes tales como la moderación y la justicia, ligadas al ordenamiento de las ciudades y de las comunidades.

Nótese aquí resignificada la concepción de los poetas como ‘padres’ o ‘progenitores’ (*gennétores*) del saber en términos prácticos, concepción que ya podía leerse en un diálogo temprano como el *Lisis*, y que contrasta claramente con la opinión negativa del poeta tradicional como ‘fabricante de apariencias’ postulada en *República*. Dicho pasaje del *Lisis* se inscribe en el marco de una de las aporías en las que recae el diálogo al buscar definir en qué consiste la amistad (*philia*) o el ser amigo en los términos de una relación de reciprocidad entre el amante y el amado: ‘Cuando alguien ama a alguien, ¿quién es amigo (*phílos*) de quién, el amante del amado, o el amado del amante? ¿O no se diferencian en nada?’ (*Lys.* 212a8-b2).¹³ Ante esta aporía, Sócrates le propone a Lisis un cambio de rumbo, que implica una apelación a la palabra de los poetas tradicionales:

Y creo que es más fecundo volver allí donde nos desviamos, y preguntemos a los poetas, pues éstos son para nosotros como padres y guías del saber (*patéres tês sophías kai hegemónes*). Ellos, naturalmente, no se manifiestan desinteresados de los amigos cuando los tienen; pero dicen que es un dios el que los hace amigos, haciendo que coincidan entre sí. Si no me equivoco dicen cosas como: ‘Siempre hay un dios que lleva al semejante junto al semejante’ y les hace conocerse. ¿Es que nunca te has tropezado con estos versos? (*Lys.* 213e4-214b1).¹⁴

Se plantea aquí un nuevo rumbo que apunta a la búsqueda de un principio explicativo que pueda dar cuenta de la *philia*, tomando como base el tópico de la atracción o amistad de lo semejante por lo semejante, que aparece formulado por vez primera en Homero (por ejemplo, en *Od.* XVII 218: ‘la divinidad lleva constantemente al semejante hacia su semejante’), y en algunos filósofos de la naturaleza (como Empédocles y Anaxágoras).¹⁵ Pero más allá del acuerdo parcial que Platón pueda llegar a tener con la postura de los poetas acerca de la amistad, y más allá del final aporético del *Lisis*, leemos en este pasaje la imprescindible apelación a la palabra autorizada de los poetas tradicionales a fin de examinar el problema de la *philia*. En una palabra, su requerimiento en tanto instrumentos de formación y guías del saber para todas las cuestiones de índole práctica. Tal gesto de apelación a su palabra autorizada se advierte asimismo en cada uno de los discursos sobre el *Éros* que ofrecen los selectos oradores del *Banquete*.

Volviendo a este último diálogo, Platón se detiene en la descripción minuciosa del proceso de *poíesis* de estos ‘hijos espirituales’, a saber, poemas, leyes e instituciones, por parte

de poetas y legisladores célebres en estado de preñez, precisamente porque tales obras son más ‘bellas e inmortales’ que los ‘hijos naturales’ que ellos pudieran llegar a dar:

Cuando alguien se encuentra a su vez preñado en el alma de estas virtudes desde niño, inspirado como está por la divinidad (*éntheos òn*),¹⁶ al llegar a la edad conveniente desea ya parir y engendrar [...]. Y por tener contacto y trato con lo bello, alumbrá y da vida a lo que tenía concebido desde antes; a su lado o separado de él se acuerda siempre de ese ser y con su ayuda cría en común con él el producto de su procreación, de tal manera que es una comunidad mucho mayor que la de los hijos la que tienen entre sí los de tal condición, y un afecto mucho más firme, ya que tienen en común hijos más bellos y más inmortales (*kallíonon kai athanatotéron paídon*) (*Symp.* 209a8-c7).¹⁷

Cabe destacar en este pasaje una de las pocas –si no la única– menciones en el *Banquete* del tópico de la inspiración divina en relación con la *poíesis*, según el alma, de hijos espirituales, si bien la apelación a lo divino ya se había dejado entrever cuando Diotima hacía referencia a la procreación de hijos naturales:

Conciben todos los hombres, ¡Oh Sócrates!, no sólo según el cuerpo sino también según su alma, y una vez que se llega a cierta edad desea procrear nuestra naturaleza. Pero no puede procrear en lo feo sino tan sólo en lo bello. La unión de varón y de mujer es procreación y es una cosa divina (*ésti dè tòuto theíon tò prágma*), pues la preñez y la generación son algo inmortal que hay en el ser viviente, que es mortal (*Symp.* 206c1-8).¹⁸

II. INSPIRACIÓN DIVINA Y LABOR POÉTICA EN *APOLOGÍA*, *ION* Y *MENÓN*

Así como otros tópicos esenciales del platonismo, el de la inspiración poética ocupa un rol destacado dentro del conjunto de los diálogos. Abordado en diferentes períodos de su obra e inscripto en contextos temáticos disímiles, la apelación a la inspiración divina en relación con la labor poética describe un amplio arco que va desde la *Apología* a las *Leyes*, pasando por el *Ion*, *Menón* y *Fedro*. Detengámonos, a través de un somero repaso, en la *Apología*, *Ion* y *Menón*, sólo por atender a tres casos representativos en función de dicho tópico.

Los pasajes puntuales de la *Apología* que me interesa destacar se inscriben dentro del marco de la defensa de Sócrates ante las antiguas acusaciones que contribuyeron, según él, a crear desde antaño una falsa imagen de su persona, y sobre la cual se apoya la más reciente acusación legal y pública promovida por los acusadores Meleto, Ánito y Licón. La razón de su falsa imagen y de su creciente enemistad con importantes figuras de los círculos político-intelectuales atenienses se origina precisamente cuando da comienzo a una investigación (o misión divina, como él la denomina) que tiene por objeto poner a prueba la veracidad del mensaje oracular referido a su sabiduría (*Apol.* 21b8-c2; 21e5-22a1). Como es sabido, el blanco de su investigación fueron los representantes más reputados de las técnicas o saberes tradicionales de la época, es decir, los políticos, los poetas y los artesanos. Si bien, lejos de refutar, los resultados de su examen confirmaron aún más el pronunciamiento oracular, atendamos sobre todo al pasaje donde Sócrates relata su indagación acerca del presunto saber que detentaban los poetas en general:

En efecto, tras los políticos me encaminé hacia los poetas, los de tragedias, los de ditirambos y los demás, en la idea de que allí me encontraría manifiestamente más ignorante que aquéllos. Así pues, tomando los poemas suyos que me parecían mejor realizados, les iba preguntando qué querían decir, para, al mismo tiempo, aprender yo también algo de ellos. [...] Por así decir, casi todos los presentes podían hablar mejor que ellos sobre los poemas que ellos habían compuesto (*Apol.* 22a8-b8).

Hasta aquí podría decirse que el tono general de la crítica es de corte epistémico, ya que desde la perspectiva de Platón nos enfrentamos ante una clase de creadores que, a pesar de referirse a diversos asuntos y de aparentar saber sobre todos los oficios, no pueden en rigor dar cuenta de ellos en sus obras; crítica en parte similar a la de *República*, con la salvedad de que en esta obra no aparece destacada, como en la *Apología*, la vía de la inspiración divina como respuesta al origen de ese saber, sino sólo una fuerte crítica al paradigma tradicional de poesía y, sobre todo, a Homero, su fundador.¹⁹ Pero además de esta crítica de corte epistémico, encontramos en la *Apología* el primer indicio del tópico de la inspiración divina en relación con la labor poética, tópico retomado más tarde en el *Íon* a partir de un examen del presunto saber del rapsodo o intérprete del poeta:

Así pues, también respecto a los poetas me di cuenta, en poco tiempo, de que no hacían por sabiduría lo que hacían, sino por ciertas dotes naturales y en estado de inspiración (*enthousiázontes*) como los adivinos y los que recitan los oráculos. En efecto, también éstos dicen muchas cosas hermosas, pero no saben nada de lo que dicen (*Apol.* 22b8-c3).

Lo que Platón objeta aquí no es tanto la inspiración divina que pudiera llegar a detentar un poeta (i.e. lo que da cuenta del discurso poético mismo), como el hecho de que, a causa de ella, se sienta habilitado para hablar acerca de otros asuntos y saberes que no entran dentro del área de su competencia: ‘A causa de la poesía, creían también ser los más sabios de los hombres respecto de las demás cosas sobre las que no lo eran’ (*Apol.* 22c5-6). Platón apela así a la antigua concepción de la inspiración divina no sólo para poder dar cuenta del origen del discurso poético, sino también a fin de explicar este exceso de corte epistémico en el que incurren los poetas. Porque el problema –y de allí la crítica– aparece justamente como consecuencia de este exceso, es decir, cuando los poetas trascienden los límites de su competencia o dominio específico, defecto que vuelve a repetirse en el caso de los artesanos, a quienes Sócrates reconoce también la posesión de un tipo particular de arte o técnica (*téchne*):

Estaba seguro de que encontraría a éstos [artesanos] con muchos y bellos conocimientos (*pollà kai kalà epistaménous*). Y en esto no me equivoqué, pues sabían cosas que yo no sabía y, en ello, eran más sabios que yo. Pero, atenienses, me pareció a mí que también los buenos artesanos incurrieran en el mismo error que los poetas: por el hecho de que realizaban adecuadamente su arte, cada uno de ellos estimaba que era muy sabio también respecto a las demás cosas, incluso las más importantes, y ese error oscurecía su sabiduría (*Apol.* 22d1-e1).²⁰

Mientras que en el *Ion* se advierte, como veremos, una más clara negación del estatus técnico-epistémico de la labor de los poetas y rapsodas, junto con la consiguiente explicación del origen de sus obras a partir de la apelación

a la inspiración divina, en la *Apología*, aun cuando no se llegue a poner en duda el valor positivo de sus obras en términos literarios y pedagógicos ('dicen muchas cosas hermosas' o 'muchos y bellos conocimientos'), Platón critica duramente a los poetas cuando, apoyándose en su dominio técnico específico, pretenden invadir otros asuntos y saberes sobre los cuales no detentan un conocimiento de la verdadera naturaleza de su objeto, ni son capaces de dar cuenta de las actividades que tales asuntos y saberes comprometen.²¹ Ello es lo que de alguna manera explica en los poetas tradicionales la coexistencia de sabiduría e ignorancia:

De modo que me preguntaba yo mismo, en nombre del oráculo, si preferiría estar así, como estoy, no siendo sabio en la sabiduría de aquellos ni ignorante en su ignorancia o tener estas dos cosas que ellos tienen (*Apol.* 22e1-4).

Otra muestra del valor de ejemplaridad positiva que detentan los poemas homéricos en este diálogo de juventud puede leerse en *Apología* 28b9-d5, donde Sócrates traza un marcado paralelo entre la ejecución, aun a riesgo de muerte, de su misión filosófica encomendada por el dios, con la que tuvieron en el pasado semidioses muertos en Troya tales como Aquiles, quien, sabiendo de antemano el destino trágico que le esperaba por boca de su madre Tetis, quiso dar muerte a Hector a fin de vengar a su amigo Patroclo. Para ello Platón cita aproximadamente el diálogo mantenido entre Tetis y Aquiles en *Il.* XVIII 96-104. Y en una línea similar son ejemplares las palabras de Sócrates en otro diálogo temprano como el *Crat.* 391c8-d1: 'Pues si no te satisfacen tampoco estas cosas, es preciso aprender de Homero y de los demás poetas'.

A diferencia, pues, de la mayor parte de los intérpretes que sólo resaltan el aspecto negativo

o irónico de la referencia a los poetas tradicionales en la *Apología* –o, más aún, en el conjunto de los diálogos tempranos–,²² puede leerse esta obra a la manera de un reconocimiento de las virtudes y límites del discurso poético; pues no sólo vemos la primera apelación y análisis de la inspiración divina como su fuente, así como el resaltado de su valor positivo en términos literarios y pedagógicos, sino también los defectos en que tal discurso incurre cuando sobrepasa su dominio específico. En este sentido, si los poetas tradicionales no trascendieran los límites de su técnica específica, no habría problema alguno con ellos, puesto que es en ese punto donde se muestran como incompetentes.²³

Sin entrar en profundidad, pasemos ahora al *Ion* para ver cómo vuelve a aparecer el tópico de la inspiración divina a la luz del examen del presunto saber o técnica del rapsoda, intérprete de la obra de los poetas. Aquí Platón, además de reflejar el estatus que detentaban los poetas y los rapsodas en la educación tradicional griega, aborda de forma específica el antiguo tema de la inspiración poética que recorre toda la literatura griega, y cuyas primeras apariciones encontramos en la invocación a las Musas que da inicio a los poemas homéricos y hesiódicos, y en Demócrito –es interesante recordar al respecto especialmente los fragmentos 18 ('Lo que un poeta escribe con entusiasmo e inspiración divina es, sin duda, bello') y 17 ('No se puede ser un gran poeta sin inflamación de ánimo y sin una especie de hálito de locura')–,²⁴ entre otras referencias previas. Como la mayor parte de los diálogos de juventud, el *Ion* se inscribe dentro del cuestionamiento socrático de los saberes tradicionales y, sobre todo, de los presuntos expertos que los detentaban y que circulaban con prestigio en el marco de la cultura ateniense de su tiempo. Si bien el blanco de su crítica son aquellos cantores o recitadores profesionales y ambulantes denominados 'rapsodas'

(literalmente ‘cosedores de cantos’), que no eran poetas sino más bien declamadores de poesía en las ciudades griegas y en los grandes festivales, el diálogo desemboca, en la medida en que los rapsodas oficiaban como meros intérpretes de los poetas, en un cuestionamiento del carácter técnico-epistémico del discurso poético y rapsódico.²⁵

Partiendo del supuesto de que toda *téchne* –ya sea poética, pictórica, musical, médica, etc.– es un ‘todo’ en la medida en que implica un determinado género de investigación o dominio específico, Sócrates no se cansa de repetir a lo largo del diálogo que la capacidad o habilidad de Ion como rapsoda no se debe a una determinada ciencia (*epistéme*) o técnica (*téchne*), nociones empleadas aquí de forma indistinta (*Ion* 532c5-d3; 537c5-7).²⁶ La conclusión que se desprende y repite a lo largo del *Ion* es simple: la capacidad (*dúnamis*) del rapsoda para ‘hablar tanto y tan bellamente sobre sus asuntos’ (*Ion* 534b8-c1) no se deriva de una *téchne* o *epistéme* específica y sistemática –vinculada, como todo saber de esta clase, al campo del intelecto (*noûs*)–, sino que le acaece a la manera de un don, fuerza, poder, posesión o entusiasmo –por citar sólo alguno de los términos que aparecen como sinónimos a lo largo del diálogo– de origen divino (*Ion* 533d1-4). Si bien el examen gira en torno a la capacidad del rapsoda, en la medida en que él sólo representa un eslabón intermedio de la palabra del poeta, dicha conclusión terminará por afectar sobre todo la capacidad de éste último:

La Musa misma crea inspirados (*enthéous*), y por medio de ellos empiezan a encadenarse otros en este entusiasmo (*enthousiazónton*). De ahí que todos los poetas épicos, los buenos, no es en virtud de una técnica por lo que dicen todos esos bellos poemas, sino porque

están endiosados y posesos (*éntheoi kai katekh/chómenoi*). Así también los poetas líricos hacen sus bellas composiciones no cuando están serenos (*émphrones*), sino cuando penetran en las regiones de la armonía y el ritmo poseídos por Baco, por un don divino, según el cual cada uno es capaz de hacer bien aquello hacia lo que la Musa le dirige; uno compone ditirambos, otro loas, otro danzas, otro epepeyas, otro yambos. En las demás cosas cada uno de ellos es incompetente» (*Ion* 533e3-534a4; 534b7-c5).²⁷

Al ser su capacidad (*dúnamis*) de naturaleza divina, tanto el poeta como el rapsoda carecen de entendimiento y, por tanto, no pueden dar cuenta de los principios técnicos subyacentes a las acciones que describen en sus poemas. Se revelan, en una palabra, incompetentes en términos técnico-epistémicos; porque si fuera una técnica o ciencia la que los habilitase para hablar, deberían, en la medida en que sus poemas reflejan diversas temáticas y múltiples técnicas, hablar bien y con inteligencia de todas las cosas a las que hacen referencia.²⁸ Homero, por ejemplo, hace alusión en sus poemas a diversas técnicas como la adivinación, la medicina, la del auriga, la pesca o la estrategia, entre otras, pero sin poder dar nunca cuenta de ellas en forma específica (*Ion* 538a5-b3; 540a5-6). Y sabemos, puesto que es una de las conclusiones más frecuentes en la mayor parte de los diálogos tempranos, que un saber que no alcanza a dar cuenta de sí mismo no constituye un auténtico saber. Como los poetas y, de forma indirecta, los rapsodas no pueden hablar con inteligencia respecto de todas las cosas sobre las que poetizan, ya que ni cuentan con un saber o técnica acerca de ellas ni tampoco pueden justificar cada una en su dominio específico, Sócrates concluye que el poeta no

es un técnico, sino un inspirado, un enajenado o maniático; porque al igual que los profetas y adivinos, el poeta crea a partir de esta fuerza o entusiasmo divino que lo conmueve.²⁹ Pero esta conclusión que, desde un punto de vista epistémico, en tanto se apoya en la dicotomía inteligencia (*noûs*) - don divino (*theía dýnamis* o *moíra*),³⁰ deslegitima la labor poética y rapsódica, abre al mismo tiempo la puerta para una de las apreciaciones positivas más elocuentes acerca de las obras de los poetas tradicionales dentro del *corpus* platónico, la cual constituye un claro antecedente del *Fedro*:

Porque es una cosa leve, alada y sagrada el poeta, y no está en condiciones de poetizar antes de que esté endiosado y sin razón (*éntheós kai ékphron*), y no habite ya más en él la inteligencia (*noûs*). Mientras posea este don, le es imposible al hombre poetizar y profetizar (*Ion* 534b3-7).

Platón refuerza esta visión positiva cuando, además de trazar un firme parentesco entre el poeta y lo divino, afirma que las obras de los grandes poetas tradicionales no sólo son numerosas, hermosas y de gran valor (*Ion* 534c7-d4), como dirá más tarde en *Banquete* y *Fedro*, sino que son en última instancia de factura divina (*Ion* 534e1-5).

Esta cuestión del origen divino del poema aparece presentada en el *Ion* mediante una de las más bellas metáforas que hallamos en el *corpus* platónico: la de la cadena (*ormathós*) de la inspiración divina, que engarza entre sí los eslabones o anillos (*daktúlioi*) representados por las Musas, el poeta, el rapsoda y, por último, el espectador, cadena por la cual fluye el mensaje poético impulsado por un entusiasmo divino (*Ion* 535e7-536b4).³¹ Mediante esta imagen de la cadena del entusiasmo divino, Platón busca opacar la conclusión negativa que se desprendía

del examen del discurso de los poetas y rapsodas en clave técnico-epistémica. Es decir, nos abre aquí una nueva perspectiva que permite dar cuenta del discurso poético, ya no a partir de una técnica poética (*téchne poietiké*), sino como consecuencia de un entusiasmo de origen divino. Esta perspectiva volverá a aparecer resignificada en el *Fedro* a través de una distinción entre los estados de *manía* divina y cordura humana (*Phaidr.* 245a5-8), de la cual Platón desprende dos clases de poetas: eminentes (maniáticos) e imperfectos (cuerdos).³²

En suma, si bien el *Ion* se apoya sobre la diferenciación entre un saber técnico organizado (*téchne*) que puede dar cuenta de sí mismo y un decir poético inspirado por la divinidad (*theía moíra*) que no sabe realmente lo que dice, cabe leer en este diálogo no sólo –y como habitualmente se lo hace– un claro cuestionamiento de la capacidad del poeta y del rapsoda en términos técnico-epistémicos,³³ sino también un intento de explicar y de justificar el discurso poético desde otro punto de vista, vinculado al ámbito de lo divino, así como también de revalorizar las obras de los poetas tradicionales, en tanto ellas expresan muchas cosas excelentes, bellas, verdaderas, y de gran valor para la humanidad.

Al término de un diálogo de transición como el *Menón*, hallamos un planteo similar al del *Ion* en lo que toca a la explicación de la capacidad de los poetas, con la diferencia de que en el *Menón* la oposición básica se da entre las nociones de ‘opinión verdadera’ (*dóxa alethés*) y ‘conocimiento’ (*epistémé*), mientras que en aquel diálogo, como vimos, se da entre ‘inteligencia’ (*noûs*) y ‘don divino’ (*theía moíra*). Partiendo de la base de que los políticos más célebres de su tiempo –como Temístocles, Arístides, Lisímaco, Pericles o Tucídides, entre otros– no adquirieron la excelencia (*areté*) a causa del conocimiento, cuyos rasgos esenciales son la estabilidad y la enseñabilidad (‘si la

virtud fuese un conocimiento, evidentemente sería enseñable' *Men.* 87c5-6), ya que si fuera así deberían habérsela podido enseñar a sus discípulos a fin de hacerlos virtuosos como ellos mismos, Sócrates concluye por tanto que tales políticos actúan bajo la guía de una opinión correcta o don divino, inestable e intransferible por definición (*Men.* 99b11-c5).

Volvemos a leer en *Menón* el clásico cuestionamiento socrático a los presuntos saberes, encarnado esta vez, como en la *Apología*, en la figura de los políticos tradicionales. Justamente me interesa el *Menón* en tanto incluye dentro del marco de este cuestionamiento otros discursos que, desde un punto de vista epistémico, no pueden, incluso expresando y llevando a buen término muchas y grandes obras verdaderas y bellas, dar cuenta de sí mismos, como es el caso del discurso de los poetas tradicionales, a quienes vuelve a emparentar, como ya lo había hecho en el *Ion*, con aquellos hombres y mujeres sabios en asuntos divinos, vates y adivinos:

Correctamente llamaríamos divinos a los que acabamos de mencionar, vates, adivinos y poetas todos, y también a los políticos, no menos que de éstos podríamos decir que son divinos e inspirados (*theíous kai enthousiázein*), puesto que es gracias al hálito del dios y poseídos por él, como con sus palabras llevan a buen fin muchos y grandes designios, sin saber nada de lo que dicen (*Men.* 99c11-d5).

La conclusión del diálogo reafirma el vínculo discurso político - opinión verdadera (o don divino),³⁴ dejando aporéticamente planteada la posibilidad de una solución en tanto vuelva a priorizarse la pregunta por la esencia (*qué* es en sí la *areté*) que dio origen al diálogo, para a continuación indagar *cómo* la *areté* se da en los hombres, es decir, si es enseñable o no (*Men.*

99e4-100a2). En el caso puntual de los poetas, que es el que nos importa, es claro que la inspiración mediante la cual éstos dan forma a sus creaciones acontece –por lo que Platón viene afirmando desde diálogos anteriores– como un don imprevisible e inestable. Si bien en la crítica a los políticos de su tiempo, bajo el marco de la distinción opinión verdadera - conocimiento, Platón trae a colación la figura de los poetas tradicionales, no debemos pensar que lo que dice de aquéllos se ajusta completamente a lo que afirma sobre éstos. Porque, pensando en términos ético-políticos, en el caso del obrar poético no resulta necesario que existan poetas capaces de hacer poetas también a los demás; contrariamente, en el caso del obrar político ello sí sería sumamente deseable, en función de la estabilidad y progreso de todo orden ético-político. Son, como es obvio, dominios diferentes que se vinculan en cuanto al origen (divino) del tipo de discurso, pero que tienen una incidencia claramente desigual en el orden de la *pólis*, lo que lleva a que el poeta divinamente inspirado pueda seguir explicando sin problemas su discurso en los términos de un don inestable e intransferible.

Otro dato positivo que se desprende del *Menón* es que así como Platón no descarta la presencia de la *areté* en hombres bellos y buenos, e incluso en grandes estadistas tanto de la actualidad como del pasado, tampoco la niega en los grandes poetas tradicionales, como es el caso puntual de Píndaro, de cuya obra Platón llega a citar un poema para apoyar la doctrina de la inmortalidad del alma ('Algo verdadero, me parece, y también bello dicen Píndaro y muchos otros de los poetas, cuantos son divinos', *Men.* 81a8-b2). Estos poetas se relacionan con aquellos estadistas no sólo en cuanto a la incapacidad de enseñar su respectiva *areté* a sus hijos o discípulos, sino también por el carácter bello y verdadero que poseen sus grandes obras políticas y poéticas.³⁵

III. HOMERO, HESÍODO Y ‘LOS DEMÁS BUENOS POETAS’

Tras esta breve panorámica, podemos observar el esbozo de una concepción positiva respecto de la figura y del estatus positivo de las obras de los poetas tradicionales, cuyo contorno, como vimos, va delineándose desde la *Apología*, *Ion*, *Lisis* y *Menón*,³⁶ hasta desembocar, bajo la mediación del *Banquete*, en el *Fedro*. Es precisamente en este último diálogo donde, como señalamos al inicio, puede leerse una sistematización y complementación de la concepción de la poesía como inspiración divina, en cuya configuración los pasajes examinados de *Banquete* constituyen un eslabón clave. Tales pasajes, en efecto, permiten tender un puente hacia el planteo que Platón desarrollará en *Fedro*, ya que recién allí él terminará por sellar la alianza entre *manía* divina, poesía, belleza e inmortalidad, al afirmar que sólo en tal estado de *manía* o posesión divina el alma del poeta podrá llegar a crear bellas e inmortales obras (*Phaidr.* 244a6-8).

Cabe leer, pues, en los pasajes examinados del *Banquete* una clara valoración de las obras de los poetas tradicionales (Homero, Hesíodo y otros), que sigue en la línea de algunos diálogos platónicos tempranos y de transición, como *Apología*, *Ion*, *Lisis* y *Menón*:

Todo hombre preferiría tener hijos de tal índole a tenerlos humanos, si dirige su mirada a Homero, a Hesíodo o a los demás buenos poetas (*toùs állous poiètàs toùs agathòùs*) y contempla con envidia qué descendencia han dejado de sí mismos, que les procura inmortal fama y recuerdo por ser ella también famosa e inmortal; o si quieres, agregó, hijos tales como los que ha dejado Licurgo en Lacedemonia, salvadores de Lacedemonia y, por decirlo así, de la Hélade. También Solón entre

vosotros es honrado por haber dado vida a las leyes y muchos otros hombres [...], por haber mostrado muchas y bellas obras y haber engendrado toda clase de virtud (*pollà kai kalà érga, gennésantes pantoían aretén*) (*Symp.* 209c7-e3).³⁷

Casi al término de la *Apología* hallamos un pasaje similar, donde Sócrates, ya condenado y dirigiendo sus últimas palabras a los jueces que han votado por su absolución, revela su lectura esperanzada y positiva acerca de la muerte, cuyo bien se expresaría bajo dos alternativas: ya sea como una total ausencia de sensación (o un dormir sin soñar), ya sea como un viaje o cambio de morada del alma a fin de que ésta se encuentre en el Hades con todos los que han muerto y, entre otros, con los grandes e ‘inmortales’ (*athánatoi*) poetas del pasado con los que todo hombre desearía dialogar: ‘¿Qué bien habría mejor que éste, señores jueces? [...] Sería acaso malo el viaje. Además, cuanto daría alguno de vosotros por estar junto a Orfeo, Museo, Hesíodo y Homero?’ (*Apol.* 40e6-41a7, c6-7). Tal como leemos en *Banquete*, los más reputados poetas y legisladores no sólo nos dejaron como legado muchas obras bellas e inmortales,³⁸ razón por la cual se han instituido en su honor diversos cultos por haber tenido tales hijos espirituales y no naturales, sino que mediante tales obras lograron transmitir a la posteridad un catálogo de virtudes.³⁹

Si bien hallamos en *Banquete* un reconocimiento explícito de las obras de los poetas tradicionales, cabe destacar también que sus productos constituyen, según Sócrates-Diotima, ‘imágenes de *areté*’ (*eídola aretês*), por contraposición al engendramiento o procreación de ‘virtudes verdaderas’ (*aretái alethê*), propio del iniciado o filósofo que, eventualmente, pudiera llegar, ‘de repente’,⁴⁰ a la revelación final de los

grandes misterios narrados por Diotima,⁴¹ es decir, a la aprehensión de la Idea de belleza:

¿Es que no te das cuenta de que es únicamente en ese momento, cuando ve la belleza con el órgano con que ésta es visible, cuando le será posible engendrar, no imágenes de virtud, ya que no está en contacto con una imagen, sino virtudes verdaderas, puesto que está en contacto con la verdad (*ouk eídola aretês, háte ouk eídólou ephaptoménoi, allà alethê, háte toû alethoús ephaptoménoi*); y de que al que ha procreado y alimenta una virtud verdadera le es posible hacerse amigo de los dioses y también inmortal, si es que esto le fue posible a algún otro hombre? (*Symp.* 212a2-7).⁴²

Notemos aquí una diferencia importante respecto de la posición que Platón asumía en *República*. En efecto, allí el poeta tradicional, en tanto ubicado en un tercer grado ontológico-epistemológico en relación con la verdadera realidad (Idea de cama), no llegaba a engendrar, como en *Banquete*, una imagen de *aretê*, sino más bien una ‘imitación de una apariencia’ (*phantásmatos mímesis*). En este sentido, la novedad del planteo del *Banquete* residiría en que, al engendrar el poeta tradicional una imagen de *aretê* (y no una imitación de una apariencia), puede ubicárselo, siguiendo la jerarquía ontológica-epistemológica tripartita de *República* X leída desde el *Banquete*, en un segundo nivel respecto de la verdad (poeta de segundo grado), mientras que en *República* Homero y los demás poetas tradicionales aparecen tipificados peyorativamente como poetas de ‘tercer grado’.⁴³

Detengámonos, por último, en la concepción del poeta tragicómico como modelo del verdadero artista, que leemos casi al término

del *Banquete*, puesto que en ella cabe leer otra clara revalorización de la tradición poética en términos positivos. En dicha ocasión, Aristodemo –vía Apolodoro– rememora:

Pero lo capital fue que Sócrates les obligó [a Agatón y Aristófanes] a reconocer que era propio del mismo hombre saber componer comedia y tragedia, y que quien con arte es poeta trágico también lo es cómico (*Symp.* 223d2-6).⁴⁴

La pregunta que se desprende naturalmente de este pasaje es: ¿quién, de entre los selectos oradores participantes del encomio a *Éros*, encarna en el *Banquete* a ese hombre capaz de componer tragedia y comedia a la vez? Aquí pueden arriesgarse algunas opciones interpretativas respecto de esta última escena protagonizada por Sócrates, Agatón y Aristófanes: o bien para Sócrates el más claro exponente de su concepción del artista es Aristófanes;⁴⁵ o por el contrario, en la medida en que el poeta trágico Agatón consideraba que su encomio a *Éros* tenía ‘parte de broma y parte de comedia’ (*Symp.* 197e7-8), es este poeta el más fiel representante de la definición socrática del artista; o, en tanto eran obligados por Sócrates a admitir tal concepción, ni Agatón ni Aristófanes la representan ya que cada uno de ellos se desempeña con soltura sólo dentro de su género respectivo, y no en ambos a la vez; o bien Sócrates esgrime su definición del artista ideal ante estos dos poetas (y no ante otros) porque veía que ellos eran, en potencia, los que podían llegar a poner en acto tal concepción. O, por último, también podría pensarse que la concepción socrática no es más que una referencia indirecta a Platón mismo, pues al fin y al cabo es éste quien, al escribir el *Banquete*, logró hacer interactuar en este diálogo diferentes géneros discursivos, entre ellos el trágico y el cómico, y

quien a través de tal interacción dio cuenta de un nuevo perfil de poeta y de cierta intención reformadora en la cultura teatral ateniense de la época.⁴⁶ No es nuestra intención abonar aquí alguna de tales opciones interpretativas –todas éstas plausibles y con suficiente apoyo textual–, sino más bien destacar que no se trata de un hecho casual que Aristófanes y Agatón, dos representantes de la tradición poética, sean los únicos oradores que se quedan, al término de la velada, despiertos y platicando con Sócrates acerca de los atributos que caracterizan a un verdadero artista.

CONCLUSIÓN

Como señalamos al comienzo del artículo, en el *Fedro* la poesía terminará siendo pensada en función de la siguiente serie conceptual: *manía* divina, belleza e inmortalidad. Pero vimos aquí cómo Platón, previamente en *Banquete*, ya había atisbado las condiciones de posibilidad para dicha serie, al establecer una estrecha vinculación entre las nociones de *éros*, *poésis* e inmortalidad. Esta forma de concebir la poesía supone un claro contraste con la concepción negativa acerca del paradigma poético tradicional que Platón asume en los libros II, III y X de *República*, paradigma cuyos rasgos cabe recordar de forma somera y esquemática, dado que ello excede los límites de nuestro análisis. El paradigma poético tradicional implicaba para Platón, en efecto, una *mímesis* de caracteres y conductas malas tanto del orden humano como del divino; imágenes del vicio (*kakías eikósi*) que terminaban por sembrar en las almas de los niños y jóvenes disvalores como la cobardía, la intemperancia, la mezquindad, la blandura y avidez de riquezas. Además de detentar una presunta omnisciencia acerca de todos los oficios, el poeta tradicional buscaba reflejar

en sus obras el lenguaje del hombre ordinario, apelando para ello a la dimensión *cosmética* del lenguaje (*Rep.* II 369b5-374d7),⁴⁷ es decir, a un estilo pictórico, ornamentado y puramente imitativo –de allí las reiteradas analogías y desplazamientos entre la figura del pintor y la del poeta tradicional, o, en los términos del *Sofista*, entre fabricantes de simulacros visuales y verbales–, cuyo poder hechiza las almas de sus destinatarios amarrándolas al ámbito de lo visible, sensitivo y emotivo, e impidiendo así su elevación a lo racional.

Sobre la base de las cuatro dimensiones (religiosa, ético-política, ontológico-epistemológica y psicológica) en torno a las cuales hace girar su crítica al paradigma poético tradicional, Platón prescribe, por contraste y a grandes rasgos, una serie de pautas que deberá plasmar en sus obras el nuevo tipo de poeta proyectado para la *pólis* ideal de *República*, a fin de componer una poesía austera, bella y saludable (*Rep.* III 401c4-d3). En términos religiosos, el poeta deberá imitar la divinidad como esencialmente buena (sólo causa del bien), simple, inmutable, y veraz en palabras y obras;⁴⁸ alabar en sus composiciones el Hades; suprimir quejas, lamentos, risas exageradas y todo tipo de debilidades en boca de dioses, héroes y hombres de bien, y dejar de representar a los injustos como felices y a los justos como desgraciados. En términos ético-políticos, deberá imitar sólo los modelos de carácter y conducta de los hombres de bien. En términos ontológico-epistemológicos, se ocupará de realizar una imitación de la verdad (más que de una apariencia), es decir, una *mímesis* con conocimiento de los caracteres virtuosos, o, en su defecto, con una ‘opinión recta’ (poeta de segundo grado o nivel) que implique algún tipo de comunicación con el filósofo guardián que detenta la *epistémé* y, justamente por ello, ‘utiliza’ correctamente las obras poéticas en términos pedagógico-políticos. En términos psicológicos,

deberá imitar el elemento *logistikón* del alma, a fin de promover la regulación y moderación de los impulsos irracionales ligados al deseo y la ira, privilegiando un modelo de conocimiento que procura ir más allá del mero testimonio de los sentidos, dando lugar así a la unidad y el dominio de sí. En términos formales o estilísticos, el poeta procurará expresarse a través de un estilo austero, menos agradable que el puramente imitativo –tragedia y comedia–, a saber: el estilo narrativo mixto (en el que la imitación ocupa una pequeña parte con respecto a largos trozos de narración); deberá seguir, en una palabra, el marco ya establecido por el género de los himnos a los dioses y los encomios de los héroes.⁴⁹

No sólo es distinto, por tanto, el punto de vista desde el cual se enfoca la poesía tradicional en *Banquete* y *República*, sino también la cuestión de los criterios de composición que priman en tales diálogos: mientras que en *Banquete* Platón le asigna una mayor preeminencia al criterio ‘estético’ vinculado al aspecto agradable o seductor de la obra poética, en *República* puede advertirse un mayor énfasis puesto en el criterio utilitarista, ligado a lo útil o provechoso de aquella, esto es, a su corrección ético-política (*Rep. X 607e1-2*) en función del mejoramiento de los regímenes políticos y la vida humana.⁵⁰ En suma, Platón reconoce en *Banquete* –y posteriormente en *Fedro*– su profundo respeto por el linaje de la tradición poética griega y, sobre todo, por su importante función social y educadora para la posteridad, dejando en claro que el punto de vista desde el cual piensa allí la poesía tradicional no es exactamente el mismo que el de *República*. Al no encuadrarse dentro de un proyecto de reforma filosófico-política de la *pólis*, podemos desprender del *Banquete* una valoración positiva de aquellos representantes de la poesía tradicional que en *República* Platón se disponía a excluir por las razones –de índole religiosa, ético-política, ontológico-epistemológica y psicológica– mencionadas.

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NOTES

- 1 Para este contraste entre el carácter divino atribuido al *Éros* en *Fedro* y la insistencia por parte de Diotima en la negación de tal carácter en *Banquete*, cf., entre otros, Guthrie 1975, 386, nota 192, quien no ve la necesidad de excusar a Sócrates por llamar a *Éros* en *Fedro* un dios y en el *Banquete* un *daímon*: 'Allí le venía bien a su propósito hacer al Amor un intermedio y un intermediario, y adaptó en consonancia la mitología popular; aquí la puede aceptar sin alteraciones. Jugar de esta manera con los mitos era un recurso literario común, que emplean con entera libertad los otros interlocutores del *Banquete*'. Véase en la misma línea Nussbaum 1986, 282, y Ferrari 1992, 262-268.
- 2 Como ejemplo de los efectos negativos (i.e. vileza, insensatez, intemperancia, engaño, esclavitud, entre otros) propios del estado de *mania* en algunos diálogos previos al *Fedro*, véase especialmente *Men.* 91c3, *Crat.* 404a4, *Symp.* 213d, 215c-e, y *Rep.* I 329c, II 382c8-e3, III 400b2, 403a7-11, VII 539c6, IX 573a-b. Para la oposición entre

manía y *sophrosýne*, cf., entre otros pasajes, *Prot.* 325b5. Verdenius 1962, 137 destaca en este sentido la contraposición entre el amor ‘sensato’ y ‘moderado’ ponderado en *Rep.* III 403a7-11, V 474d-e (la descripción de los efectos nocivos del amor desmedido) y *Leg.* V 731e5-732a1 (‘En efecto, el que ama se engeuece respecto de lo amado, de modo que juzga mal lo justo, lo bueno y lo bello, porque piensa que siempre debe preferir lo suyo a lo verdadero’), y el ‘enloquecido’ alabado en *Fedro*.

3 Desligada de las razones intelectuales y éticas, la teoría de la posesión divina se revela en *Fedro* como una explicación alternativa de la capacidad de los poetas tradicionales. Cf. al respecto Guthrie 1975, 206.

4 Sobre la fecha de composición del *Banquete*, se piensa en general que la obra es anterior al *Fedro*, y aproximadamente contemporánea de *República* y *Fedón*. Para este punto, cf., entre otros, Dover 1965, 2-20, y Brandwood 1990.

5 Sobre el uso platónico de la citación poética, véase asimismo en este sentido Cook 1996, 75-76, y Vicaire 1960, 77-149, 158-192; y, más puntualmente sobre el Homero de Platón, cf. especialmente Chandran Madhu 1999, 87-95.

6 Nussbaum 1986, 41.

7 Para un análisis específico de esta analogía entre *poiesis*, *poesía* y *éros*, cf. especialmente Casertano 2013, 366-370.

8 Para este uso genérico de *poiesis*, *poiéma* y *poietés*, cf., entre otros, Lucas 1968, 54.

9 En *Soph.* 219a10-b12, Platón vuelve a ofrecer, en el contexto de la distinción entre dos tipos de técnicas (adquisitiva y productiva) dentro de las cuales busca encuadrar al sofista, una definición del término ‘*poiesis*’ acotada al ámbito de la *mimesis*, definición según la cual *poiesis* representa un cierto tipo de producción de imágenes, y no de realidades individuales.

10 Heidegger 1961, 160.

11 Al referirse a las leyes nupciales, Platón vuelve en *Leyes* IV 721b6-c6 sobre esta idea central del *Banquete* 206b1-208b6 acerca de la participación de lo mortal en lo inmortal por medio de la generación, o de la procreación como la única inmortalidad alcanzable. Sobre este punto, cf. especialmente Hackforth 1950, 42-45, y Cornford 1967, 137. Si bien Platón suscribe en *Banquete* la participación de lo mortal en lo inmortal a través de la procreación físico-espiritual, ello no significa que lo mortal represente la inmortalidad del mismo modo que lo representa lo divino. Guthrie 1975, 374-375, y la mayor parte de los intérpretes, destacan aquí una clara contraposición platónica entre la inmortalidad temporal (o secundaria) y la vida eterna.

12 Según Cornford 1967, 133, Platón emplea el término *éros* para referirse al impulso del deseo en todas sus formas. En este sentido es concebido como una fuerza única o caudal de energía, que se dirige según canales divergentes y hacia metas que varían.

13 Sobre esta ambigüedad del término *philia* (y derivados) en *Lisis* y su relación con *éros*, cf. especialmente Hyland 1968, 32-46.

14 Respecto de esta apelación a los poetas tradicionales como guías, véase Cook 1996, 79.

15 Este tópico aparece de forma frecuente en el *corpus*

platónico. Entre otras referencias, véase *Gorg.* 510b2-4, *Symp.* 195b5, *Rep.* I 329a2-4, *Leg.* IV 716c2-4; y asimismo Aristóteles, *EN* IX 3, 1165b 16-17.

16 Nos apartamos aquí, como la mayor parte de los traductores del *Symposium* (Brisson, Allen, Gil, Martínez Hernández, entre otros), de la lectura de Burnet, según la cual debe leerse *étheos* (joven, mancebo, célibe, soltero), en vez de *én-theos* (poseído o inspirado por un dios).

17 Véase en una línea similar *Phaidr.* 258b10-c5: ‘¿Y qué? Cuando un orador o un rey, habiendo conseguido el poder de un Licurgo o de un Solón o de un Darío, se hace inmortal logógrafo en la ciudad, ¿acaso no se piensa a sí mismo como semejante a los dioses, aunque aún viva, y los que vengan detrás de él no reconocerán lo mismo, al mirar sus palabras escritas?’. Sobre los progenitores de estos hijos espirituales, afirma Cornford 1967, 139: ‘De tal suerte son los poetas y los artistas creadores, cuyas obras sobreviven y transmiten a la posteridad sus pensamientos. Incluso el educador engendra hijos de clase más hermosa y duradera, al plantar sus ideas en esas mentes vivas en donde vivirán otra vez, para engendrar de nuevo otras generaciones de hijos espirituales. Y junto al educador se coloca el legislador –Licurgo o Solón–, los cuales dejan leyes e instituciones como medios permanentes de ejercitar a sus conciudadanos en la virtud’. Para el tema de la unidad esencial de la poética y la erótica en *Banquete*, cf. Ricoeur 1965, 455.

18 Giuliano 2005, 216-218 lee la doctrina del ‘entusiasmo poético’ en el *Banquete* a la luz del retrato de Sócrates presentado por Alcibiades en su discurso.

19 Recordemos al respecto dos pasajes de *República* X en donde Platón resaltaba, dentro del marco de la dimensión epistemológica de su crítica a la poesía tradicional, el carácter omnisciente que aparenta el poeta: ‘Así, decimos que el pintor nos pintará un zapatero, un carpintero y los demás artesanos, sin entender nada de las artes de estos hombres; y no obstante, si es buen pintor, podrá, pintando un carpintero y mostrándolo desde lejos, engañar a niños y hombres necios, haciéndolos creer que es un carpintero de verdad. [...] Y creo, amigo, que sobre todas estas cosas nuestro modo de pensar ha de ser el siguiente: cuando alguien nos anuncie que ha encontrado un hombre entendido en todos los oficios y en todos los asuntos que cada uno en particular conoce, y que lo sabe todo más perfectamente que cualquier otro, hay que responder a ese tal que es un simple y que probablemente ha sido engañado al topar con algún charlatán o imitador, que la ha parecido omnisciente (*pánsophos*) por no ser él capaz de distinguir la ciencia, la ignorancia y la imitación’ (*Rep.* 598b8-d5). Sobre esta confusión que el imitador provoca en la audiencia, cf. especialmente Belfiore 1983, 44-45.

20 Sobre el término *téchne* en los griegos y su relación con lo que nosotros denominamos ‘arte’, cf. Tatarkiewicz 1960-68, 31; 1976, 80, para quien, en tanto se trata de habilidad productiva mental y manual, debe traducirse como ‘maestría’ o ‘técnica’, a fin de resaltar la amplia gama de oficios y de técnicas que englobaba tal término para los griegos; Heidegger 1961, 85, 160, Collingwood 1938, 6, Warrly 1962, 52-57 y Gadamer 1977, 53, 386, quienes destacan

en la misma línea la discrepancia que existe entre nuestro sentido eminente de 'arte', ya separado del contexto de práctica productiva (sobre todo a partir de la emergencia de la estética como disciplina filosófica en el siglo XVIII), y el que tenían los griegos. Respecto de la historia de dicha noción como saber práctico organizado desde Homero a Platón, cf. especialmente Isnardi Parente 1966, 1-6. Para un resumen de los rasgos fundamentales que determinan la estructura de una *téchne*, cf. Jaeger 1957, 517, y Nussbaum 1986, 143-145.

21 Sobre la conveniencia de que cada uno se dedique al oficio que le es propio, y no se inmiscuya en territorios ajenos, sobre todo los vinculados a la 'técnica política' (*politikè téchne*), es ilustrativo un pasaje del *Protágoras* en el cual Sócrates se dirige al personaje homónimo que sostiene la enseñabilidad de la *areté*. Es precisamente este traspasar la esfera de la técnica específica o, en términos de *República*, la violación misma del principio de la especialización de las funciones, lo que Platón critica duramente a los poetas (al igual que a la clase política), puesto que, sin saber, se refieren en sus obras a cuestiones que atañen, entre otras, al gobierno de las ciudades. Recordemos al respecto, entre otros pasajes paradigmáticos, *Rep. X* 598b6-d5.

22 Como ejemplo de esta opinión predominante, véase, entre otros, Collingwood 1925, 164-167, Schaerer 1930, 136, y Guthrie 1975, 93, 201. Para este último intérprete, tales alusiones a los poetas inspirados por la divinidad deben leerse en clave irónico-negativa, lo cual lo lleva a contraponer sin justificación los planteos de la *Apología* y del *Ion* sobre la inspiración divina con el de la *manía* poética del *Fedro*. Estiú 1982, 21-26 hace referencia al aspecto negativo de la doctrina platónica de la inspiración divina entendida como ignorancia, si bien reconoce en *Fedro* un 'aspecto positivo' de ella, en tanto compromete un 'saber supra-racional'; Nussbaum 1986, 297-300, por su parte, considera que en los diálogos tempranos sólo cabe hablar de una caracterización negativa de la labor inspirada de los poetas tradicionales. Sobre el *Ion* como un temprano ataque a la poesía, cf. más recientemente Stern-Gillet 2004, 199.

23 Para la actitud ambivalente de Platón respecto de la poesía en *Apología*, véase especialmente Halliwell 2002, 39-40.

24 Respecto de las teorías de Demócrito sobre la inspiración y su estrecha relación con la concepción platónica de la posesión divina del poeta, cf., entre otros, Delatte 1934, 28-79, Dodds 1951, 87 y Giuliano 2005, 177-183. Para un análisis exhaustivo de la idea de inspiración poética en la literatura griega arcaica (de Homero a Píndaro), cf. especialmente Murray 1981, 87-89, 99-100, quien suscribe la tesis de que antes de Platón tal idea no implica necesariamente posesión o locura extática, ni incompatibilidad con el arte o la *téchne*. Subraya en este sentido que recién a partir de Platón el concepto de inspiración poética pasa a ser entendido como sinónimo de *enthousiasmós* o *manía*, y a oponerse por tanto al de *téchne*.

25 La opinión de los intérpretes varía respecto del blanco al que estaría apuntando la crítica platónica en el *Ion*.

Para algunos, en efecto, la mira está puesta sólo en el personaje homónimo, un rapsoda caracterizado como pretencioso y banal; otros consideran que se refiere a los rapsodas en general, pero no a los poetas; y para otra línea interpretativa Platón se sirve de los rapsodas para hacer referencia a los poetas (cf. Tigerstedt 1969, 21); por último, están los que sostienen que el objeto de la crítica implica tanto los poetas (especialmente Homero) como sus panegiristas (Guthrie 1975, 205, nota 261). Siguiendo esta última línea de lectura, Sócrates interroga en el *Ion* el presunto saber del soberbio rapsoda homónimo, experto sólo en materia de Homero, retomando aquel tipo de investigación (o misión divina) que en la *Apología* dirigió hacia los políticos, poetas y artesanos, a los cuales ya interrogaba con el fin de refutar el mensaje oracular según el cual él era el más sabio de todos los atenienses.

26 La equivalencia o sinonimia entre *epistéme* y *téchne* (así como entre *epistémon* –conocedor, entendido– y *technítes* –artista, artesano–) no sólo se repite a lo largo del *Ion* (cf. 541e1-2, entre otros pasajes), sino también en otros diálogos como en *Rep. IV* 438c6-e8 y *Polit.* 295d7-e1, 300e7-9, donde arte real (*basiliké téchne*) y ciencia política (*politiké epistéme*) son equiparados. Respecto de esta indistinción entre *téchne* y *epistéme* en Platón, cf., entre otros, Jaeger 1957, 515, y Nussbaum 1986, 142.

27 Para un análisis de este pasaje, cf. especialmente Cook 1996, 82.

28 Sobre este contraste entre el saber de los artesanos y la ignorancia propia de los imitadores, cf. Menza 1972, 263-264, 282-284, y Moravcsik 1982, 29-46, quien señala que el imitador difiere del artesano en que desconoce las especificaciones funcionales de los objetos que representa. Nussbaum 1986, 274, por su parte, explica dicha imposibilidad epistémica del poeta a la luz de los efectos que la inspiración divina ejerce sobre éste.

29 Sobre las formas que asume el pensamiento técnico en los griegos, cf. especialmente Vernant 1965, 280-301, quien analiza la delimitación de una concepción racional de la *téchne* entre los siglos VII y V a. C., la cual implica su progresiva desvinculación de lo mágico y de lo religioso. Según este intérprete, en Homero aún no está determinada la diferencia entre el logro técnico y el éxito mágico; de allí que el término *téchne* se aplique al saber hacer de los *demiurgoí*, categoría social que abarcaba indistintamente a los profesionales del metal y de la madera, las comunidades de adivinos, de heraldos, de curanderos y de aedos.

30 Para el uso ambiguo de la noción de *theía moira* en el *corpus* platónico, cf. Stern-Gillet 2004, 195-199. Esta intérprete destaca que tal noción era infrecuente en la Grecia antigua y que Platón es uno de los autores que más la emplea, hasta el punto de que termina por reemplazar la noción de *theía moira* por la de *mímesis* en su explicación del proceso poético.

31 Respecto de la relación entre esta imagen de los anillos magnetizados y el interés científico de Demócrito por el magnetismo, cf. Delatte 1934, 57. A la mayor parte de los intérpretes, como Wilamowitz 1919, II 43; Gadamer 1934, 189-190; Guthrie 1975, 206; Murdoch 1977, 11; Nehamas

1988, 294, nota. 1; y Leszl 2004, 197, que suscriben la opinión de una actitud platónica negativa hacia los poetas en *Ion*, en tanto que éstos no detentan conocimiento alguno, les cuesta sobremedida armonizar esa actitud con pasajes tales como este de la metáfora del imán o anillos por los que pasa la influencia divina, en los que Platón brinda una bella y compleja descripción del estado mental del poeta. Por ello Guthrie 1975, 93, 206, por ejemplo, debe reconocer que en ciertos pasajes del *Ion* encontramos en Platón ‘una cierta nota de simpatía’ dirigida hacia los poetas, la cual contrasta claramente con el seco rechazo por su ignorancia divina formulado en la *Apología*. Este intérprete explica asimismo esa nota como parte de la ambivalencia de Platón en relación con la poesía, cuya actitud oscila entre la alabanza irónica (en *Apología* y *Menón*), cierta simpatía (*Ion*), una extraña mezcla de desaprobación y afecto (*República* y *Leyes*) y la estimación y admiración (*Fedro*).

32 Sobre la apelación del poeta a las Musas, cabe subrayar un contraste entre la concepción que puede observarse en Homero, Hesíodo y Píndaro, por un lado, y la teoría platónica de la posesión divina, por otro. Para la primera, el poeta apelaba a las Musas únicamente como autoridad superior, recibiendo de ellas ayuda divina en su relato, sin que ello implicase que aquéllas entraran en él o que le inspirasen o le poseyeran. En esta concepción homérico-hesíodica, lejos de estar fuera de sus cabales, el poeta era un maestro inteligente y un educador (o un primitivo *sophistés*), con una sabiduría y un saber propio. Para Platón, por el contrario, la Musa está, como destacan algunos intérpretes (véase, entre otros, Dodds 1951, 87, 101-102, nota 122; Tigerstedt 1970, 169, nota 32; y Guthrie 1975, 203-205, *realmente dentro* del poeta. De hecho, el concepto de inspiración poética como un género de *enthousiasmós* o *manía* extática contrapuesto al arte o la *téchne* no aparece antes de Platón (cf. Murray 1981, 87-89, 99-100), aun cuando ciertos especialistas (como Havelock, entre otros) persistan en igualar las nociones griegas arcaicas de inspiración con el concepto platónico de *furor poeticus*.

33 En este sentido Wilamowitz 1919, II 43, Jowett 1953, I 102, y Friedländer 1964, II 136 sostienen que en el *Ion* la vieja disputa entre filosofía y poesía –explicitada más tarde en *República* X– ya está operando en la mente de Platón. Más recientemente, Stern-Gillet 2004, 199, concibe el *Ion* no como un elogio, sino más bien como un temprano ataque a la poesía que preanuncia el de *República*. Para una lectura contraria y más afín a la nuestra, cf. especialmente Grube 1973, 278-279.

34 Sobre la ‘opinión verdadera’ o ‘recta’ (*orthè dóxa*) como algo ‘intermedio’ entre el conocimiento y la ignorancia, cf., entre otros, *Symp.* 202a2-9: ‘¿No sabes que el opinar rectamente, incluso sin poder dar razón de ello, no es ni saber, pues una cosa de la que no se puede dar razón no podría ser conocimiento, ni tampoco ignorancia, pues lo que posee realidad no puede ser ignorancia? La recta opinión es, pues, algo así como una cosa intermedia entre el conocimiento y la ignorancia’.

35 Greene 1918, 24, subraya al respecto que no cabe

hablar en *Menón* de una ‘depreciación de las obras de los poetas’.

36 Sobre la distinción entre las figuras del poeta y del filósofo en los diálogos tempranos (*Apología*, *Ion* y *Menón*) y medios (*República*), cf. especialmente Nussbaum 1986, 297-300, para quien el estado de delirio o de inspiración irracional del poeta se contraponen al buen sentido y auto-dominio del filósofo.

37 Véase en la misma línea *Leg.* V 727c4-d5. Otra mención de los ‘buenos y antiguos legisladores’ puede leerse en *Charm.* 154e8-155a3, 157d9-158a2; *Hipp. mai.* 285e3-6, *Lach.* 188a6-b4, *Prot.* 326d6, 343a1-b3; *Symp.* 209c7-e3, *Rep.* X 599c6-e4, *Phaidr.* 258b10-c5, *Tim.* 20d7-21d3, y *Criti.* 108c5-d8. Para el punto de vista positivo respecto de la poesía en *Banquete*, cf., entre otros, Else 1986, 12; Corrigan – Glazov-Corrigan 2004, 216-220.

38 Es interesante resaltar la frecuencia con la que Platón repite este sintagma en los diálogos tomados como antecedentes del *Fedro*.

39 Sobre la revalorización de estos poetas y legisladores, cf. especialmente Greene 1918, 19-20, y Asmis 1992, 344-345.

40 Para un análisis del sintagma ‘de repente’ (*exaíphnes*), cf. Rosen 1968, 288-325, Robin 1933, 183, y Nussbaum 1986, 249-252.

41 Guthrie 1975, 374-375, interpreta en este sentido que las ‘imágenes de virtud’ sólo pueden ser engendradas en el marco de los misterios menores.

42 Para una crítica del *clímax* de plenitud o del amor contemplativo y autosuficiente que supone la aprehensión de la Idea de Belleza, cf. especialmente Vlastos 1973, 3-42. En su análisis de la revelación final a la que se enfrenta el iniciado, Nussbaum 1986, 48, 249-252, sostiene asimismo que Platón termina por reconocer en *Banquete* que el logro de tal autosuficiencia racional exige el abandono de gran parte de la vida humana y de su belleza.

43 Para un análisis de las diferencias entre los planteos de *República* y *Fedro* respecto de la relación entre filosofía y poesía, así como de la poesía filosófica que asume el estilo socrático en este último diálogo, cf. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1919, 43, quien ya resaltaba cómo a la altura del *Fedro* Platón termina por reconocer el bien que existe en la creación inconsciente de los poetas; y Nussbaum 1986, 270, 486, según la cual no cabe, como interpretamos nosotros, hablar en *Fedro* de una plena rehabilitación o concepción positiva de la poesía tradicional que había sido desacreditada en *República*.

44 Basándose en el principio –clave para la consecución de su programa de reforma filosófico-política de la *pólis* ideal– de la especialización de las funciones, vimos que en *Rep.* III 395a1-b6 Platón le hacía sostener a Sócrates justamente la tesis contraria a la vertida aquí respecto del verdadero artista, es decir, la prescripción de la imposibilidad de la práctica simultánea de funciones (ya se trate de la práctica de los géneros trágico y cómico, o de rapsoda y actor a la vez, entre otras funciones). Sobre la aparente contradicción entre tales pasajes de *Banquete* y *República*, cf. Murdoch 1977, 148, y Guthrie 1975, 366, n. 139.

45 Entre los tópicos trágicos que vertebran el discurso de Aristófanes en el *Banquete*, cabe destacar, entre otros:

el recurso a la mitología vinculado al mito acerca de la integridad de nuestra antigua naturaleza humana y de su ulterior pérdida (*Symp.* 189d5-7); la *hýbris* de la antigua naturaleza humana (*Symp.* 190b5-c1); los seres humanos como juguetes de los dioses (*Symp.* 190c7-d6); la concepción trágica del *éros* como un intento de restauración de la antigua integridad perdida (*Symp.* 191c8-193c7); la no intervención de la razón práctica en el proceso de búsqueda erótica (*Symp.* 192b5-c2, 192c7-d2); la piedad e impiedad para con los dioses (*Symp.* 193a3-b2, 193d1-d5). Y entre sus tópicos cómicos, pueden mencionarse: los movimientos físicos de la antigua naturaleza humana (*Symp.* 190a4-d6); las deliberaciones de los dioses (*Symp.* 190c1-3); y la vinculación entre los pederastas y la política (*Symp.* 192a2-7). Sobre esta cuestión, véase especialmente Bury 1932, xxx, Jaeger 1957, 575-576, Lesky 1957-8, 254, 285, Dover 1966, 41-46, Nussbaum 1986, 238-243 y Nichols 2004, 203.

46 Sobre Sócrates (y, por tanto, Platón) como encarnación de este poeta tragicómico, cf., entre otros, Hartland-Swan 1951, 3-18, 99-141, Rodríguez Adrados 1969, 1-28, Clay 1975, 238-261, Patterson 1982, 76-93, Stokes 1993, 128, Nightingale 1995, 1-12, y Riegel 2013, 277-282. Por su parte, Nussbaum 1986, 262-263, agrega que también puede considerarse como tragicómico el discurso de Alcibiades.

47 Para la analogía que la cosmética guarda con la retórica, la poesía mimética y la pintura, véase Belfiore 1983, 47, nota 10; Rodrigo 2001, 146-152, nota 27.

48 En *Teeteto* 176b1 llega a definir la vida filosófica como una ‘imitación de la divinidad’.

49 El modelo dialógico-filosófico –y ello aparece claramente explicitado en *Leyes* VII 817a2-e3– constituye el mejor ejemplo de *mímesis* de la vida más bella y mejor, es decir ‘una cierta poesía’ filosófica que Platón erige finalmente como *parádeigma* para las futuras generaciones de poetas y maestros de niños y jóvenes

50 Sobre Platón como un pintor del *éthos*, cf. especialmente Villela-Petit 1991, 89-90. *Le commerce de la vérité*

Le commerce de la vérité: économie et commerce dans les *Lois* de Platon¹

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ABSTRACT

Unlike the accepted idea that Plato's view of trade and business is totally negative, my claim is that the whole set of limitations the Athenian prescribes to trade in the *Laws* only aims at minimizing its bad effects. Far from completely disapproving trade in itself, Plato acknowledges it has a practical positivity. Besides the needs, which are the first and most evident ends of trade and business, Plato shows that these activities also have to do with truth and justice, and can fulfill a truly positive moral and political function in the city of Magnesia under certain conditions.

Keywords: business, *Laws*, money, Plato, trade, truth.

INTRODUCTION

On prête souvent à Platon un préjugé hostile aux activités mercantiles tant intérieures qu'extérieures, en particulier dans les *Lois*. À l'appui de cette idée, on invoque, pour le commerce avec les cités étrangères, l'idéal d'autarcie que les *Lois* paraissent viser, ainsi que le danger de corruption que ce type de négoce fait peser sur les mœurs de la cité ; et, pour le commerce intérieur, la condamnation sans appel prononcée par l'Athénien contre l'avidité matérielle que ces échanges favorisent.²

Pourtant, on note souvent aussi que le portrait du commerce dans ce dialogue n'est pas complètement négatif. L'Athénien incrimine davantage une certaine pratique du commerce – sa pratique 'financière', celle qui ne vise que le profit et dont la forme privilégiée est la revente au détail (καπηλεία) d'un produit acheté en gros – que le commerce lui-même. Il se livre même à un éloge de la vente au détail (XI, 918a) qu'il qualifie de 'bienfaitrice' (εὐεργέτης, 918b) quand elle est pratiquée conformément à ce qu'elle est par nature, à savoir quand, grâce à la monnaie, elle introduit de la commensurabilité entre des biens qui en sont de prime abord dépourvus (XI, 918a-c ; d-e).

Néanmoins, même les commentateurs des *Lois* qui reconnaissent cette positivité aux activités commerciales ne leur rendent pas complètement justice, faute de voir deux choses: d'une part, que le commerce n'est qu'un cas particulier des pratiques tournées vers l'acquisition d'argent, qui sont précisément celles que l'Athénien écarte le plus possible de la cité des Magnètes ; d'autre part, que les enjeux du commerce dans ce dialogue dépassent de loin les questions économiques. Ainsi en va-t-il dans un article de S. Sauvé-Meyer, le seul qui, à ma connaissance, se livre à un examen détaillé de ces passages des *Lois*.³ Si l'auteure note à juste

titre le double portrait brossé du commerce par l'Athénien – il est à la fois déprécié et loué – elle ne s'étonne pas, en revanche, de la valorisation étonnamment *très* positive dont il fait l'objet quand il est bien effectué. La preuve en est dans le choix des extraits qu'elle examine. À propos du passage XI, 918a8-c3, son commentaire est le suivant: 'Le négoce (spécifiquement l'échange de marchandises contre de l'argent) a la fonction bénéfique d'égaliser et de faciliter la distribution des ressources (918a).' Elle poursuit un peu plus loin en ces termes: 'La véritable fonction du *kapèlos* n'est pas de maximiser son propre profit par l'échange, mais plutôt de pourvoir aux besoins de la communauté en facilitant la distribution convenable des ressources.'⁴ Tout ceci est exact: la recherche du profit est une pratique altérée des activités économiques en général, et des activités commerciales en particulier dont la véritable fonction est d'assurer une 'distribution convenable des ressources' grâce à la monnaie comme moyen de mesure. Mais le texte qui suit ce passage, et que l'auteure ne cite pas et ne commente pas, laisse attendre du commerce bien plus qu'une simple 'distribution convenable des ressources'. L'Athénien prononce en effet à son sujet un véritable éloge, quand il est correctement accompli:

Supposons [...] qu'une prescription contraigne pendant un certain temps les hommes qui en tout lieu sont les meilleurs de tenir auberge, d'ouvrir boutique ou d'exercer quelque activité de cette sorte [...], nous saurions alors quelle affection et quel attachement (ὡς φίλον καὶ ἀγαπητόν) méritent chacune de ces professions et nous aurions pour elles toutes, qui seraient pratiquées selon la règle et dans une intégrité incorruptible, la révérence qu'on a pour une mère et pour une nourrice.

Lois XI, 918e

Ce qui échappe aux commentateurs de cette section, c'est que la forte suspicion et les limites étroites pesant sur les activités commerciales dans le reste des *Lois* sont précisément à la mesure de l'importance symétrique que l'Athénien leur reconnaît quand elles sont bien exercées. Derrière les objets échangés, qu'il s'agisse de biens ou de services, Platon perçoit qu'il est moins question de satisfaction économique que de vérité et de justice, au sens où ce qui circule dans les transactions commerciales, c'est aussi et peut-être avant tout une relation éthique et politique. Les mesures qu'il propose pour encadrer les pratiques commerciales n'ont pas seulement pour objet d'assurer les conditions d'un commerce juste parce qu'exempt de fraude, mais de garantir la circulation de la vérité au service de la justice à l'un des niveaux les plus élémentaires et fondamentaux des échanges ayant cours dans la cité. Le commerce dans la cité des *Lois* est, c'est ma thèse, un commerce de la vérité.

Pour le montrer, j'exposerai d'abord les motifs pour lesquels l'Athénien préconise de limiter les échanges commerciaux, en soulignant que la défiance qu'il leur témoigne vise moins le commerce lui-même qu'une économie 'financière' tournée vers l'acquisition d'argent et dans laquelle le commerce jouerait un rôle essentiel. Je montrerai ensuite quelles mesures législatives il propose pour encadrer un commerce certes réduit mais inévitable dans la cité. Enfin, je conclurai en montrant pourquoi l'enjeu de ces mesures ne se limite pas à l'économie mais a pour objet la vérité et, par elle, la justice. Avant d'y venir, précisons que le grec ne dispose pas d'un terme général désignant ce que nous entendons par 'commerce', à savoir des transactions d'achat et de vente, principalement monétaires, et destinées à dégager un profit ou un bénéfice. Il serait plus juste de parler de 'transactions commerciales' ou

d' 'échanges commerciaux' pour lesquels le grec emploie une multiplicité de mots, selon la voie de commerce adoptée (par terre ou par mer), et selon que le négoce se fait en gros ou au détail.⁵ À quoi il faut ajouter que le sens de ces mots n'est pas totalement fixe, et que ni la recherche d'un bénéfice ni la dimension monétaire ne sont nécessairement présentes dans ces transactions.⁶ Ces précautions terminologiques prises, je parlerai néanmoins de 'commerce' par commodité.

LIMITER LE COMMERCE, LIMITER LE DÉSIR D'ARGENT

Dans le projet de colonie que l'Athénien élabore avec Clinias et Mégille, tout signale une claire intention de limiter les activités commerciales avec l'étranger, afin de créer le contexte le plus favorable pour acquérir la vertu et pour que la cité ne dépende le plus possible que d'elle-même. C'est ce qui apparaît à la fois dans les considérations géographiques relatives au choix du territoire de cette colonie, ainsi que dans son orientation économique générale.

La géographie de la cité contre la tentation du commerce (IV, 704b-705b)

Le commerce de la cité que Clinias a la charge de fonder pour y établir une colonie de Cnossos est limité d'abord par la géographie des lieux, présentée au livre IV. Précisons que c'est une géographie 'politique': ce qui pourrait passer pour du déterminisme matériel est plutôt ici à entendre comme un ensemble de déterminations ouvrant vers des possibles. La nature du territoire envisagé pour cette colonie ne pèse pas de *tout* son poids sur son avenir, puisque son exploitation et son organisation dépendent aussi, et sans doute d'abord, de

conditions politiques et morales, en particulier de l'idée du bien à laquelle les interlocuteurs sont arrivés dans les livres antérieurs. Ce bien, c'est l'unité de la *polis*, obtenu par des lois qui se préoccupent de toutes les vertus et de leur juste hiérarchie (I, 625c-628e).

Située à environ quatre-vingts stades de la mer (soit environ 14km), la cité produit presque tout ce qu'il lui faut, si bien qu'elle 'ne manque d'à peu près rien' (σχεδὸν οὐδενὸς ἐπιδεής), et elle n'a pas de cité voisine proche (704c). Tout, dans ce portrait géographique et dans l'analyse qu'en propose ensuite l'Athénien, traduit de sa part de fortes réserves vis-à-vis du commerce avec l'extérieur. À commencer par son 'Quoi? Que dis-tu?' (παπαί, οἶον λέγεις, 704c) quand il apprend de Clinias que la cité a 'les meilleurs ports [s.e. naturels] qu'on puisse avoir' (704b): l'Athénien voit un grave défaut là où Clinias voit un grand avantage. Sur le ton de la tragédie, son exclamation traduit son inquiétude devant une situation qui risquerait de coûter le bien politique à cette nouvelle cité, si elle n'était compensée par d'autres avantages, notamment celui de produire presque tout ce qu'il lui faut.

Dans le bilan qu'il dresse des probabilités que la future cité a d'atteindre ou non la vertu étant données ces conditions géographiques, il expose ensuite les raisons de ses réserves à l'égard du commerce avec l'extérieur:

En effet, si elle devait être au bord de la mer, avec de bons ports, si elle ne produisait pas tout ce qu'il lui faut et si elle devait manquer de beaucoup de choses, [la cité] aurait besoin d'un grand sauveur pour éviter d'offrir une multitude de mœurs aussi bigarrées que perverses (ἤθη καὶ ποικίλα καὶ φαῦλα), conséquence naturelle d'une telle situation. En fait ces quatre-vingts stades apportent une consolation. À vrai dire, notre cité est située

plus près de la mer qu'il ne le faudrait, dans la mesure où tu la dis pourvue de bons ports [705a]; cependant, il y a aussi de quoi s'en féliciter. Pour un territoire, la proximité de la mer agrmente la vie de tous les jours; mais en définitive, c'est un "voisinage bien saumâtre". Car en le remplissant de négoce et de business réalisé par la vente au détail (ἐμπορίας γὰρ καὶ χρηματισμοῦ διὰ καπηλείας ἐμπιπλᾶσα αὐτήν), et en implantant dans les âmes des mœurs instables et non fiables (ἤθη παλίμβολα καὶ ἄπιστα ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἐντίκτουσα), cette proximité fait que la cité manque de confiance et d'amitié (ἄπιστον καὶ ἄφιλον) à l'égard d'elle-même, aussi bien qu'à l'égard des autres hommes. En la matière, on peut certes trouver une consolation dans le fait que le territoire produit de tout (τὸ πάμφορος) [705b], même si le fait d'être accidenté l'empêche évidemment de produire à la fois de tout et en grande quantité (οὐκ ἂν πολύφορος τε εἶη καὶ πάμφορος ἅμα). Car si la cité pouvait faire cela en même temps, elle exporterait beaucoup (πολλὴν ἐξαγωγήν), ce qui emplirait ses coffres de monnaie d'argent et d'or; et [...] c'est là ce qui engendre pour ainsi dire la pire des calamités pour une cité qui doit acquérir des mœurs nobles et justes.

Lois IV, 704d-705b

Ce passage décrit une hypothèse et ses conséquences: les effets moraux et politiques négatifs que le commerce avec l'extérieur aurait sur une cité dont il serait la principale ressource économique pour se procurer le nécessaire. Les effets moraux, tout d'abord, consisteraient en un manque d'unité des mœurs, la bigarrure faisant écho au

portrait de la démocratie dans la *République*, régime de la multiplicité plutôt que de l'unité.⁷ Chacun y mène la vie qu'il souhaite, sans souci d'aucune valeur commune. Quant au caractère pervers ou mauvais (φαῦλα) que le commerce insufflerait aux mœurs, il tiendrait probablement au fait, souvent noté, que le commerce se prête particulièrement bien à la tromperie – ce qui ne signifie pas qu'il l'implique toujours.⁸ Quand elle a lieu, cette tromperie n'est pas forcément intentionnelle: s'il n'est pas aussi médecin ou maître de gymnastique, le revendeur de nourriture, en gros ou au détail, ignore si son produit est bon ou mauvais pour le corps, et il en va de même pour le client (*Protagoras* 313c-d). Le commerce est, en tant que commerce, un art ignorant: ni vrai ni faux, il peut faire passer, au propre comme au figuré, le faux pour le vrai. Le soupçon qui pèse par nature sur lui, notamment aux yeux d'une certaine aristocratie, provient de la puissance d'illusion dont il est capable.⁹ C'est pour cette raison que Platon dépeint toujours les sophistes en commerçants avant d'entrer dans le détail de leurs théories.¹⁰ Selon lui, ils exploitent cette ignorance inhérente au commerce en tant que commerce pour écouler du faux et de l'injustice sous des dehors de vérité et de justice. Dans notre passage des *Lois*, l'Athénien souligne que le risque de tromperie inhérent au commerce introduit dans les âmes des mœurs instables et par là peu fiables. L'appât du gain (χρηματισμοῦ) peut en effet conduire à des pratiques commerciales douteuses. Trois lois sur le commerce proposées plus tard par l'Athénien en donnent indirectement une idée (XI, 917b-d): il est interdit de vendre une même marchandise à deux prix différents le même jour, de vendre des produits falsifiés, et de faire l'éloge (ἔπαινος, 917c) de sa marchandise. Dans les trois cas,

le commerce met en jeu une éthique de la vérité, qui se trouve menacée par les pratiques malhonnêtes visées dans ces lois. En effet, qu'une même marchandise soit vendue le même jour à deux prix distincts laisse planer un doute sur son 'vrai' prix et sur l'intégrité du vendeur, sans compter le préjudice causé à l'égalité entre les clients. L'objet falsifié est, bien sûr, la tromperie par excellence, où le faux-semblant se donne pour ce qu'il n'est pas. Enfin, l'éloge dans sa pratique la plus ordinaire repose sur l'ignorance de son objet, et entend 'le doter de tous les attributs, pour proclamer l'excellence de sa nature, de façon à faire apparaître qu'il est le plus beau et le meilleur possible – aux ignorants, cela va sans dire, mais pas en tout cas [...] à ceux qui savent à quoi s'en tenir' (*Banquet* 199a).¹¹ Quand il repose sur l'ignorance et la rhétorique, l'éloge peut faire passer un âne pour un cheval et, cas plus grave, le mal pour le bien (*Phèdre* 260b-d).

Ainsi pratiqué, le commerce ruine ensuite les relations les plus élémentaires dans la cité, hors de la sphère domestique. Une économie principalement marchande affecte l'unité de la *polis* en la privant de cette amitié (*philia*) et de cette confiance indispensables pour souder les citoyens entre eux.¹² Cette cité n'est plus une, c'est un agrégat d'individus qui se méfient les uns des autres, et ce sentiment se tourne aussi contre 'le reste des hommes', c'est-à-dire les étrangers. Le commerce, on le verra, n'est jamais étranger à la guerre chez Platon.

La cité des *Lois* aura cependant de grandes chances d'échapper à ces travers, grâce à deux limites de nature géographique, qui s'appliquent respectivement aux importations et aux exportations, avec comme conséquence mécanique une limitation du commerce de détail. Ce qui sauve la future colonie des importations massives, c'est que

son territoire produit de tout (τὸ πάμφορος, 704d; 705b): la diversité lui évite d'importer, du moins d'importer beaucoup.¹³ Mais cette première limite géographique pourrait devenir un danger, si elle n'était elle-même limitée quantitativement: couplée à l'abondance (πολύφορος, 705b), la diversité risquerait d'alimenter un appétit de richesse dont, l'Athénien l'a montré, il ne sort en général rien de bon, ni à l'intérieur de la cité ni dans ses rapports avec les autres cités.¹⁴ Fort heureusement, la production n'atteint pas de grandes quantités – ce qui empêche de grandes exportations tout en suffisant au nécessaire.

La géographie freine donc ce que l'Athénien semble considérer comme la 'tentation du commerce', ou plus exactement, la tentation d'exploiter l'ignorance inhérente au commerce à des fins de tromperie et de violence, dans l'idée, couramment admise mais fautive aux yeux de Platon, que la richesse serait le critère de la puissance individuelle et collective.¹⁵

Acquérir le nécessaire ou acquérir de l'argent: la question des médiations (VIII, 842c-d)

Dans la continuité de cette géographie, l'Athénien dessine au livre VIII des *Lois* l'orientation générale de l'économie de la future colonie. Elle consistera à acquérir le nécessaire à partir des ressources très variées du territoire, et avec le moins de médiations possible, au détriment d'une économie 'financière', c'est-à-dire médiatisée par des activités permettant d'acquérir de l'argent ou des revenus pour se procurer, par commerce interposé, 'l'équipement de la vie' (ἡ τοῦ βίου κατασκευή, 842c), en particulier 'l'approvisionnement en nourriture'

(κατεσκευασμένα τὰ περὶ τὴν τροφήν, 842c). Ce passage marque néanmoins une avancée par rapport au précédent car le critère auquel recourt l'Athénien pour séparer les activités économiques légitimes des autres se précise. Il n'oppose pas, on va le voir, la 'production' au 'commerce': appliquée telle qu'elle, cette dichotomie moderne manque l'essentiel de ce passage où l'exploitation des mines est rangée dans la même catégorie que le négoce maritime ou l'hôtellerie. L'Athénien n'oppose pas une cité productrice à une cité marchande, mais deux manières de se procurer le nécessaire dont l'une, totalement médiatisée par l'argent, a le dangereux pouvoir de faciliter la recherche de ce qui excède le nécessaire.

En effet, en Grèce, 'les ressources des autres cités peuvent être de toutes sortes et de multiples origines' (842c), et elles disposent en général du double de ce dont disposera la cité à venir, car leur approvisionnement en nourriture provient de la mer et de la terre, tandis que la future colonie se contentera d'exploiter sa terre (842c). La référence à la mer est une allusion au commerce, notamment à l'importance qu'il joue à Athènes pour l'approvisionnement en blé,¹⁶ mais c'est aussi une allusion à la guerre, ces deux pratiques étant souvent liées dans le monde antique en général, et dans l'esprit de Platon en particulier.¹⁷ Déjà au livre IV, immédiatement après le passage sur le commerce commenté plus haut, l'Athénien se réjouissait que le territoire de la future cité fût vierge d'arbres pour la construction de navires de guerre (IV, 705c-707d), comme si la suite naturelle du commerce extérieur était de livrer la guerre pour accaparer les ressources des ennemis. Les motivations économiques de la guerre doivent donc s'éteindre dès l'instant que l'approvisionnement de la cité ne dépend que d'elle-même, ce que les conditions géo-

graphiques doivent en grande partie rendre possible – il y faudra aussi la vertu entière des citoyens (IV, 705e-706a).

L'Athénien énonce ensuite la conséquence d'un tel choix économique pour la cité future:

Aussi bien cela rendra plus facile la tâche du législateur car il lui suffira par ailleurs non seulement de moitié moins de lois, mais de beaucoup moins encore, et de plus ce seront des lois convenant plus à des hommes libres (ἐλευθέροις ἀνθρώποις). Les affaires de négoce maritime, de gros négoce et de commerce de détail, d'hôtellerie ou de perception d'impôt, de mines, de prêts à intérêt, d'intérêts composés, et des milliers d'autres affaires de cette sorte, le législateur en est libéré et leur dit au revoir. Mais c'est aux agriculteurs et aux pâtres, aux éleveurs d'abeilles, à ceux qui préservent et supervisent leur outillage qu'il donnera des lois.

Lois VIII, 842c-d

L'allègement du travail législatif résultant du refus d'une économie 'financière' au profit d'une économie tournée vers l'acquisition plus immédiate du nécessaire se fera au bénéfice des 'hommes libres': en quoi on peut entendre soit qu'ils seront ainsi 'libres des liens du commerce', qui placent la cité sous la dépendance et la menace potentielle des puissances extérieures, soit qu'ils seront 'libres vis-à-vis de leurs appétits', appétits dont a vu que le commerce avait tendance à les attiser. La suite du texte rend ce second sens plus probable. Ce qui est en effet exclu de la sphère législative, ce sont des pratiques en très grand nombre (ἄλλων μυρίων τοιοῦτων, 842d) qui partagent toutes la caractéristique de ne pas fournir directement le nécessaire mais de procurer de l'argent à la cité et aux individus

en vue de l'achat du nécessaire: sans quoi on ne comprendrait pourquoi l'Athénien évoque l'hôtellerie et les mines dans cette liste.¹⁸ Si les activités commerciales sont sans doute celles qui y parviennent le mieux – l'Athénien en nomme quatre formes, l'hôtellerie incluse – ce ne sont toutefois pas les seules. La méfiance de l'Athénien à leur sujet relève d'une méfiance plus générale portant sur le désir d'argent et les pratiques économiques auxquelles il donne lieu, qui risquent d'ouvrir la porte à la démesure et à l'excès.¹⁹ C'est ce que confirmera l'Athénien peu après en interdisant non pas le commerce de détail mais le 'commerce de détail *en vue de faire des affaires*' (καπηλείαν δὲ ἔνεκα χρηματισμῶν, 849d; je souligne). Tous ces éléments invitent donc à nuancer l'hostilité envers le commerce prêtée à Platon sans plus de précision.

Malgré le refus d'une économie placée sous le signe de la médiation financière, les lois sur le commerce et l'argent font leur apparition dans la future colonie parce que la parfaite autosuffisance est à peu près impossible: si le territoire 'ne manque d'à peu près rien' (σχεδὸν οὐδενὸς ἐπιδεής, IV, 704c), c'est qu'il manque de certaines choses.²⁰ Comment alors introduire le commerce dans la cité sans faire le jeu du désir d'enrichissement? Tout l'effort de l'Athénien consiste à le maintenir dans ses marges.

LE COMMERCE DANS LES MARGES DE LA CITÉ

La législation de l'Athénien autour du commerce répond à trois questions: quels biens peuvent faire l'objet du commerce? Qui peut commercer? Quelle forme doit prendre le commerce? L'ensemble de toutes ces prescriptions vise à le rendre le plus extérieur possible à la

cité tout en l'y acceptant dans ses marges et sous certaines conditions.

Les objets du commerce

Les interdictions relatives au commerce portent principalement sur tout ce qui met en péril l'intégrité et l'unité de la cité. Deux sont fondamentales de ce point de vue. La première concerne les lots, c'est-à-dire les parcelles de terrain que les citoyens ont reçues pour y vivre et les exploiter. Il est interdit de 'déprécier le niveau et l'importance des possessions imparties à l'origine [aux citoyens] selon la juste mesure, par des transactions mutuelles d'achat et de vente' (τῷ τε ὠνεῖσθαι καὶ τῷ πωλεῖν, V, 741b). Le lot est un et indivisible, et il sert l'égalité arithmétique entre les citoyens parce qu'un principe d'égalité dans leur rendement a été institué dès le départ, leur taille étant fonction de leur fertilité (V, 745c-d). En vendre ou en acheter une partie contreviendrait à ce principe. À plus forte raison, le lot lui-même est inaliénable et ne peut être ni acheté ni cédé (πριάμενον ἢ ἀποδόμενον, V, 741c), à la fois parce que la cité s'identifie à son territoire, que les lots ne sont pas la propriété des citoyens mais la propriété commune de la cité (V, 740a), et que le nombre de 5040 lots a été déterminé pour répondre à des exigences de proportion et de distribution (V, 737e-738a). De manière plus radicale encore, aucun des citoyens investis d'un lot ne pourra devenir 'ni marchand détaillant ni négociant' (μήτε κάπηλος ἐκὼν μηδ' ἄκων μηδεὶς γιγνέσθω μηδ' ἔμπορος, XI, 919d), ces deux activités risquant de compromettre celle du citoyen et par là l'intégrité de la cité.

La seconde interdiction concerne les importations et les exportations, avec cette différence par rapport aux transactions portant sur le lot qu'il ne s'agit plus d'interdire les exportations et les importations, mais de les limiter selon le double critère de ce

qui est nécessaire ou non-nécessaire pour l'intégrité et l'autosuffisance de la cité, et toujours dans l'idée de restreindre le contact avec l'étranger. Il est interdit d'importer ce qui n'est pas nécessaire – l'exemple le plus précis est celui des encens 'venant de l'étranger' (ξενικά, V, 847b) – et d'exporter ce qui, au contraire, est nécessaire à la cité (VIII, 847b-c). L'autorisation d'importer (εισαγωγίμου, 847d) tout ce qui sert à fabriquer des armes et des instruments indispensables à la guerre n'est pas signalée parce que ces importations seraient les seules permises,²¹ – l'Athénien a mentionné juste avant les importations en général (847b) – mais parce que, destinées à assurer la défense de la cité, elles sont un cas particulièrement important de ce qui lui est nécessaire (VIII, 847c-d), et parce qu'elles doivent se faire pour cette raison dans des conditions précises: elles sont placées sous la direction des commandants de cavalerie (les hipparques) et des stratèges, qui sont 'responsables des importations et des exportations' de ce genre (κύριοι εισαγωγῆς τε καὶ ἐξαγωγῆς, 847d). On peut se demander pourquoi, dans ce passage, l'Athénien mentionne aussi les exportations alors qu'il vient juste avant de parler uniquement des importations de ce qui est nécessaire à la guerre. L'explication se trouve dans la partie suivante de la phrase – 'la cité donnant et recevant en même temps' (διδούσης τε ἅμα καὶ δεχομένης τῆς πόλεως, 847d) – qui renvoie à cette idée que la cité ne peut obtenir ce dont elle a besoin de l'extérieur sans proposer en retour ce dont pourrait avoir besoin la cité dont elle importe les produits. C'est ainsi que dans la *République* Socrate décrit le lien indissociable des importations et des exportations, et qu'il explique la fonction des marchands.²² Les chefs militaires devront donc veiller à la fois à ce que soit importé ce qui est nécessaire pour la guerre, et à ce que ne soient pas exportées les denrées

locales également nécessaires à la défense de la cité. Leur connaissance dans ce domaine leur donne la compétence légitime pour s'occuper de ce type de commerce.

Reste le commerce de détail, qui lui aussi obéit au double critère du nécessaire et du non-nécessaire. 'Les peaux, les vêtements en général, le tissu, la laine et les autres produits du même genre [i.e. produits par les agriculteurs] [...], le froment, l'orge destiné à la farine et tout le reste de la nourriture' ne peuvent être vendus aux citoyens ou à leurs esclaves (849c): ces denrées leur étant nécessaires, ils doivent (et, par hypothèse, peuvent) les produire eux-mêmes. Les artisans et leurs esclaves ayant toutefois eux aussi besoin de ces denrées, ils les achèteront à des étrangers, qui eux-mêmes auront acheté au préalable le tiers d'un douzième des produits tirés du sol et des animaux qui leur auront été vendus par les intendants des citoyens (847e-848a). De même avec les produits mentionnés dans liste précédente: l'étranger les achète aux intendants, donc en gros, et les revend au détail aux artisans et à leurs esclaves (849d). La distance que l'Athénien cherche à maintenir entre les citoyens et le commerce de détail (καπηλείαν, 849d) est notable ici dans les étapes de ces transactions: les intendants (τοὺς ἐπιτρόπους, 849b) des citoyens (qui sont des esclaves ou des étrangers) vendent en gros aux étrangers ce dont ces derniers ont besoin, et ces étrangers à leur tour vendent au détail aux artisans et à leurs esclaves ce dont ces derniers ont besoin (849d), ces artisans étant ceux qui travaillent dans chaque bourg au service de l'exploitation des lots dont les citoyens ont la responsabilité. Reste toutefois un inévitable mouvement d'achat, portant sur 'tous les autres articles et ustensiles dont chacun a besoin' (τῶν δὲ ἄλλων χρημάτων πάντων καὶ σκευῶν ὁπόσων ἐκάστοισι χρεῖα, 849e), que les intendants se procurent auprès des étrangers

pour eux et les citoyens.²³ Ici, l'Athénien n'a probablement pas en vue le commerce de détail, qui suit un achat en gros, mais le commerce à l'unité d'objets produits en petites quantités.

Loin d'être interdit avec l'extérieur et à l'intérieur, le commerce est plutôt très encadré pour ce qui est de son contenu, au nom d'exigences éthiques et politiques. C'est le cas aussi concernant ceux qui sont autorisés à commercer.

Le commerce: l'affaire des non citoyens

La circulation et l'acquisition des biens nécessaires dans la cité des *Lois* sont soumises à un double régime, qu'on pourrait résumer de la façon suivante: on partage dans la cité, on commerce à ses frontières. L'intérieur et les frontières de la cité désignent ici non seulement des lieux (notamment, on va le voir, la place du marché) mais aussi et d'abord des statuts: il y a d'un côté, ceux qui font la cité comme entité politique, à savoir les citoyens et, secondairement, leurs esclaves; et, de l'autre, ceux qui contribuent seulement à la faire: les artisans, leurs esclaves, et les étrangers. Ils ne sont pas vraiment de la cité sans lui être totalement extérieurs non plus.

Ce double régime est explicite dans un passage du livre VIII, dans lequel l'Athénien recommande d'organiser le partage de la nourriture (τροφῆς δὲ καὶ διανομῆς, 847e) selon la coutume 'crétoise', dont il vante la justesse (847e): dans chacun des douze secteurs qui composent la cité (V, 745b-e), le total des produits tirés du sol, des produits saisonniers et des animaux sera divisé en trois parts. L'une est pour les citoyens, une autre pour leurs serviteurs, et la troisième est

destinée aux artisans et en général aux étrangers, qu'il s'agisse de métèques,

qui habitent avec les citoyens et qui ont besoin qu'on leur fournisse une nourriture indispensable (τροφῆς ἀναγκαίου), ou de tous ceux qui arrivent jour après jour à la demande de la cité ou de tel ou tel particulier [...]: cette troisième part sera nécessairement *la seule à être vendue* (ἄνιον ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἔστω τοῦτο μόνον); des deux autres parts, rien ne sera autorisé à être vendu (τῶν δὲ δύο μερῶν μηδὲν ἐπάναγκες ἔστω πωλεῖν).

Lois VIII, 848a-b (je souligne)

On partage avec les siens, on commerce avec les autres.²⁴ Les relations avec ces derniers étant inévitables, c'est la seule façon de maintenir en dehors de la cité au sens politique du terme le 'tiers exclu' que forment les étrangers. Le commerce commence là où la politique s'arrête, avec cette nuance toutefois que ce commerce est encadré par des mesures législatives dont la finalité est proprement politique: garantir l'intégrité de la cité et des citoyens.

Cette extériorisation du commerce, ou sa relégation aux frontières de l'espace politique est cohérente avec le fait qu'il doit être l'affaire des étrangers pour ce qui est de la vente au détail (ξένοσ [...] πωλείτω, VIII, 849d). Il doit l'être parce qu'il est potentiellement dangereux pour les mœurs et pour la cité: toute vente au détail étant en fait la revente d'un produit acheté en gros, c'est là que la tentation et la possibilité d'un bénéfice important se présentent le plus, que l'économie des médiations financières peut œuvrer contre la cité et ses membres. C'est pourquoi l'une des mesures les plus saisissantes pour limiter le désir de richesse dont le commerce de détail porte la menace consiste à 'n'assigner cette profession qu'à des gens dont la

corruption morale ne cause pas un grand dommage à la cité' (XI, 919c): les étrangers, par définition extérieurs à la *polis*, sont donc tout désignés. Il faut certes qu'ils soient en contact avec des membres de la cité mais, on l'a vu, ce ne sont pas directement les citoyens qui se chargent de leur vendre le tiers de la production mais les intendants, qui sont des esclaves et n'exercent donc pas de rôle politique. Il est fort probable que même dans le cas des importations et des exportations relatives à la guerre mentionnées plus haut (VIII, 847c-d), ce ne sont pas les stratèges qui procèdent directement aux échanges, mais leurs esclaves. De même avec le bois que les intendants des campagnes (τῶν ἐν τοῖς χωρίοις ἐπιτρόπων, VIII, 849d) peuvent vendre aux étrangers. En outre, cette vente du tiers de la production se fait en gros, non au détail, ce qui limite les risques de réveiller le désir d'enrichissement chez ces intendants. Dans tous les cas, ce ne sont pas les citoyens qui s'en occupent, et pour le commerce de détail, le plus dangereux, seuls les étrangers peuvent s'en charger et vendre aux artisans et à leurs esclaves, et de façon très marginale, les intendants. On notera que ces trois derniers groupes peuvent seulement acheter au détail, pas vendre, ce qui les préserve de la tentation de l'enrichissement inhérente au commerce de détail.

Espaces et temps du commerce

Une telle relégation du commerce de détail aux frontières de l'espace politique au sens abstrait de cette expression se traduit aussi, sur le plan matériel, dans les lois qui régissent l'installation et le déroulement des marchés dans l'espace et le temps. Commençons par l'espace: celui-ci est organisé de telle sorte que les citoyens et ceux qui leur servent d'intendants ne soient jamais en

contact avec la vente de détail, que ce soit pour vendre ou pour acheter. L'espace commercial est en effet fondé sur la séparation entre ce que les intendants des citoyens vendent en gros aux étrangers, et ce que les étrangers vendent ensuite au détail aux artisans et à leurs esclaves, à quoi semblent correspondre respectivement deux sortes de places du marché. Il y a d'abord celle qui se situe dans chacun des douze villages (VIII, 848d). C'est là que, sous la surveillance des agoranomes chargés de surveiller ce qui touche à la 'modération et à la démesure' (σωφροσύνης τε καὶ ὕβρεως, 849a), les intendants des citoyens vendent aux étrangers la part de la récolte qui leur est réservée, ainsi que d'autres produits. Or la vente au détail de ces produits est interdite sur cette place (849c). Pour pouvoir revendre au détail ces produits aux artisans et à leurs esclaves, les étrangers devront se rendre sur le second type de place du marché, exclusivement dédiées à ces transactions et aux étrangers (ἐν δὲ ταῖς τῶν ξένων ξένος ἀγοραῖς πωλεῖτω τοῖς δημιουργοῖς τε καὶ τούτων δούλοις... ὃ δὴ καπηλείαν ἐπονομάζουσιν οἱ πλεῖστοι, 849c-d). La répétition du commerce de détail dans ces lignes indique qu'il représente le péril le plus grand pour la cité et ses citoyens.

Au souci de la différenciation spatiale s'ajoute un souci de transparence, qui se traduit dans le fait que les autres 'articles et ustensiles' (849e) vendus et achetés seront placés à des endroits précis de la place du marché, endroits déterminés par les gardiens des lois et les agoranomes (849e). Ici, il est probable que l'Athénien n'ait pas en vue le commerce de détail, qui suit un achat en gros, mais le commerce à l'unité d'objets produits en petites quantités. En outre, il évoque sans doute le premier type de place du marché, s'il est vrai que ces 'articles et ustensiles' sont ceux 'dont chacun a besoin' (849e), y compris donc les citoyens.²⁵ C'est ce que semble confirmer un passage du livre XI, selon lequel 'tout échange qui se fait par achat ou par vente entre

une personne et une autre se fera par livraison à la place assignée pour chaque article (ἐν χώρῃ τῇ τεταγμένῃ) sur la place du marché' (915d). Dans tous les cas, assigner un lieu aux objets des transactions, c'est s'assurer d'un contrôle plus efficace sur ce qui est vendu et en quelle quantité, ce qui n'est pas étranger, on le verra, aux enjeux de vérité que Platon place dans le commerce.

En ce qui concerne l'organisation temporelle des transactions commerciales, elle présente deux aspects. Le premier porte sur le calendrier mensuel de ces transactions, que l'Athénien établit de la façon suivante. Le 1er de chaque mois sera vendue aux étrangers leur part de blé pour un mois.²⁶ Le 10 de chaque mois, on leur vendra les liquides pour un mois (sans doute le vin et l'huile). Enfin, le 23 de chaque mois on leur vendra les animaux et tous les objets et instruments qu'ont à vendre les agriculteurs (comme les peaux ou les tissus) (VIII, 849b-c). Cette séparation dans le temps et cette mensualité des ventes des différents produits nécessaires a plusieurs effets. Elles s'opposent clairement à l'institution du marché quotidien, qui devait être la règle à Athènes, et obligent ainsi à la modération et à la régularité dans la consommation, laquelle est souvent marquée par l'excès et propice à une spéculation de la part des (re) vendeurs. Le second aspect temporel des transactions commerciales sur lequel la loi se prononce concerne le temps de l'échange lui-même: il doit avoir lieu au moment même où le prix est payé, où la monnaie et la denrée changent de mains (VIII, 849e; δεχόμενον ἐν τῷ παραχρῆμα τιμῇν, XI, 915d). L'interdiction de la vente et de l'achat à crédit (XI, 915d-e), et le fait que la loi restera sourde à toute réclamation de celui qui s'estime lésé dans le cadre de pratiques formellement similaires au crédit – parce qu'il n'a pas reçu la marchandise qu'il a payée d'avance ou parce qu'il n'a pas reçu le prix de la marchandise qu'il a livrée d'avance (VIII, 849e-850a) – signalent bien que le présent de la transaction est un moment décisif

de vérité éthique et de justice. Pour anecdotique et prosaïque qu'il paraisse, son enjeu dépasse le simple échange matériel: il engage la valeur infinie de la justice et de la vérité dans l'échange fini et répété des biens et de la monnaie. Que la transaction doive avoir lieu au présent ne signifie pas qu'elle n'engage pas l'avenir: au contraire, elle doit l'assurer, précisément parce qu'elle aura eu lieu dans les meilleures conditions morales et, par suite, politiques. Qu'il s'agisse de l'espace ou du temps, l'organisation rigoureuse du commerce vise donc un seul et même objectif: donner la plus grande mesure et la plus grande régularité à des activités qui sont le lieu ordinaire de l'excès, du mensonge et de l'injustice. C'est ce que signale aussi la relative positivité morale et politique que l'Athénien reconnaît au commerce, sous certaines conditions, vers la fin des *Lois*.

JUSTICE ET VÉRITÉ: LE SENS DU COMMERCE

De la transparence à la vérité

Pour l'Athénien, l'importance de la vérité et de la justice dans le commerce est d'abord négative ou indirecte: il s'agit, en légiférant sur les transactions commerciales, de mettre à distance tout ce qui pourrait faire obstacle à ces deux valeurs. C'est pourquoi il propose une série de lois et de châtements contre tout ce qui s'apparente à une forme de fraude ou de dissimulation dans les transactions commerciales, en accord avec le souci de transparence évoqué plus haut à propos de l'organisation spatiale du commerce. Ainsi pour toute vente réalisée supérieure à 50 drachmes, quand il s'agit d'esclaves, le vendeur sera tenu de rester en ville pendant dix jours à partir de la date de la vente, pour que l'acheteur ait la possibilité de lui retourner la marchandise sous

certaines conditions qui mettent toujours en jeu la connaissance, de la part de l'acheteur comme du vendeur, de la qualité du 'produit': par exemple si l'esclave est porteur d'une maladie qui n'est pas immédiatement visible, ou s'il a commis un crime (XI, 915e-916d). Si, au moment de l'achat, l'acheteur sait que l'esclave est malade parce que le vendeur le lui a dit ou parce qu'il est lui-même médecin ou maître de gymnastique, la transaction ne peut être annulée; de même s'il sait que l'esclave a commis un crime. Mais tout défaut de connaissance, qu'il soit involontaire de la part de l'acheteur comme du vendeur, ou qu'il résulte d'une dissimulation de la part du vendeur, rendra possible le retour de l'esclave au vendeur, avec des sanctions diverses pour ce dernier. De manière générale et somme toute classique, le commerce ne doit pas nuire à la vérité, et par là à la justice et à la paix dans la cité, comme le confirme l'interdiction générale de vendre quoi que ce soit de falsifié (ἀκίβδηλον, XI, 916d). Dans la loi sur la fraude qui suit immédiatement ce passage, la section consacrée aux punitions (917b-918a) montre que ce sont les transactions commerciales que l'Athénien a particulièrement en vue depuis le préambule (916d-917b), même si elles ne sont pas nommées comme telles. Toute tentative de falsification ou de tromperie relève du même genre que le mensonge (κιβδηλείαν δὲ χρῆ πάντα ἄνδρα διανοηθῆναι καὶ ψευδος καὶ ἀπάτην ὡς ἔν τι γένος ὄν, 916d), les trois formes du faux commercial étant qu'un même objet soit annoncé à deux prix distincts le même jour (917b-c), que l'on vante l'objet à vendre (917c), et que l'on vende une marchandise falsifiée (917c-e).²⁷ S'y livrer en prenant les dieux à témoins, c'est les outrager (916e-917a), eux qui ont des sanctuaires sur chacune des douze places de marché (VIII, 849a).

Éloge du commerce

Mais avec une telle loi, l'Athénien ne se contente pas de sanctionner ce qui, dans le commerce, peut nuire à la vérité et à la justice, il propose aussi de libérer ce qui, dans ces mêmes transactions, leur est favorable. La preuve en est fournie par l'éloge que l'Athénien fait du commerce de détail, à condition qu'il soit pratiqué par des gens honnêtes (XI, 918d-e). Dans ce passage qui n'est pas sans rappeler l'importance que Socrate accorde aux transactions commerciales de détail dans la naissance de la cité au livre II de la *République* (371b-d), l'Athénien montre que ce n'est pas le commerce qui corrompt les hommes mais les hommes qui corrompent le commerce, qui le dénaturent. La *kapeleia* n'a pas pour but de nuire, sa fonction naturelle est au contraire d'introduire, grâce à la monnaie, uniformité et proportion entre choses qui en sont dépourvues (918b-c). Ce sont des procédés malhonnêtes visant l'enrichissement et contraires à la *philia* 'qui ont jeté le discrédit sur ces pratiques' (919b). Activité tendanciellement sophistique qui fait passer le faux pour le vrai dans le but d'en retirer le plus grand profit, le commerce n'est donc pas condamné à être pratiqué de la sorte. Dans le commerce de détail tel que l'institue l'Athénien se joue une part positive de l'armature morale et politique de la cité. Ce commerce, si limité soit-il dans la future colonie, est la forme concrète et élémentaire de la relation éthique et politique que l'Athénien place à la base de la cité: il est, à même l'échange des biens et de l'argent, un exercice en acte de la vérité et de la justice.

CONCLUSION

Que l'Athénien évoque là une pratique idéale ou rêvée du commerce, c'est ce dont témoignent les trois remèdes qu'il envisage pour limiter ses dangers pour la cité: avoir le plus petit nombre possible de marchands de détail (*kapèlôn*), n'as-

signer à cette profession que ceux dont la corruption ne cause pas de tort à la cité, et travailler à éviter la dégradation morale de ces marchands (919c). On notera qu'avec ce dernier remède, il nuance le pessimisme anthropologique qui se dégage des deux autres.

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NOTES

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- 2 Stalley 1983, 101 et 103; Baeck 1994, 69-70; Alvey 2011, 79. Voir *Leg. IV*, 704a-705c; XI, 918e-919b. Cf. *Rep. IV*, 435e-436a.
- 3 Sauvé-Meyer 2002.
- 4 Sauvé-Meyer 2002, 388; 390.
- 5 Benveniste 1969, 140.
- 6 Karvonis 2011.
- 7 *Rep. VIII*, 557c; 558c.
- 8 Hérodote, *Histoires I*, 153: 'Cyrus demanda aux Grecs qui étaient présents quelle sorte d'hommes c'était que les Lacédémoniens [...]. Sur la réponse qu'ils lui firent, il parla ainsi au héraut des Spartiates: "Je n'ai jamais redouté cette espèce de gens qui ont au milieu de leur ville un endroit (χώρος) où ils s'assemblent pour se tromper les uns les autres par des serments réciproques [...]."' Cyrus lança ces paroles menaçantes contre tous les Grecs, parce qu'ils ont dans leurs villes des places où l'on vend et où l'on achète (ὅτι ἀγορὰς στησάμενοι ὦνῃ τε καὶ πρῆσι χρέωνται), et que les Perses n'ont pas coutume d'acheter ni de vendre ainsi dans des places (ἀγορῆσι), et que l'on ne voit point chez eux de places (ἀγορῆ).'
- 9 Kurke 1989, 540.
- 10 *Soph.* 222b-231e; *Hipp. mai.* 281a-282e. Voir Helmer 2010, 93-98.
- 11 Toutefois, l'éloge qui repose sur un savoir vrai possède une force éducative et politique: par exemple *Leg. VII*, 801e à propos des morts de la cité.
- 12 Sur l'importance de la *philia* dans la cité, voir *Rep. III*, 386a; *Leg. VIII*, 836e-837a.
- 13 À l'époque classique, Athènes, au contraire, recourt massivement aux importations pour la nourriture, notamment le blé. Platon semble répondre ici de très près à un passage de *l'Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponnèse II*, 38, 2: 'Nous voyons arriver chez nous, grâce à l'importance de notre cité, tous les produits de toute la terre, et les biens fournis par notre pays ne sont pas plus à nous, pour en jouir, que ne sont ceux du reste du monde' (ἐπεσέρχεται δὲ διὰ μέγεθος τῆς πόλεως ἐκ πάσης γῆς τὰ πάντα, καὶ ξυμβαίνει ἡμῖν μηδὲν οἰκειότερα τῇ ἀπολαύσει τὰ αὐτοῦ ἀγαθὰ γιγνόμενα καρποῦσθαι ἢ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων) (trad. J. De Romilly, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1962).
- 14 *Leg. III*, 695e-696b.
- 15 *Rep. I*, 343b-344c; *IV*, 422d-423b. Voir aussi *Leg. V*, 742d.
- 16 Voir la note 13.
- 17 *Histoire de la guerre du Péloponnèse I*, 6-17. Voir aussi Y. Garlan, 'Signification historique de la piraterie grecque', «Dialogues d'histoire ancienne», Vol. 4 (1978), 1-16.
- 18 Au contraire du projet d'exploitation des mines du Laurion présenté par Xénophon dans les *Revenus* pour procurer des revenus monétaires à Athènes.
- 19 D'autres mesures le confirment: l'interdiction de

toute espèce de droits à acquitter pour importer ou exporter (VIII, 847b), ou le choix d'une monnaie à usage strictement local et l'interdiction de posséder des devises étrangères (V, 742a-c).

20 Même idée en *Rep.* II, 370e.

21 Contrairement à ce que soutiennent Piérart 1974, 251; et Bresson 2000, 116.

22 'Socrate – Mais si celui qui est chargé [de trouver à l'extérieur ce dont sa cité a besoin] s'en va les mains vides, n'apportant rien de ce dont manquent ceux chez qui on voudrait se procurer ce dont on a soi-même besoin, il reviendra les mains vides, n'est-ce pas?', *Rep.* II, 371b.

Voir Bresson 2000, 118.

23 C'est en ce sens que j'interprète ἐκάστοισι.

24 La notion de partage ou de distribution est omniprésente au livre V à propos du sol: par exemple νεμομένους, 736e; διανομῆς, 737c; διανεμηθήτων, νεμηθήτω, 737e.

25 Voir la note 23.

26 Et tout ce qui est περὶ σῖτον (849b): peut-être la paille et le chaume?

27 Sur l'éloge, voir plus haut p. 5.

Socratic Silence in the *Cleitophon*

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ABSTRACT

Plato's *Cleitophon* is the only dialogue in which Plato presents an unanswered rebuke of Socratic philosophy by an interlocutor. Consequently, most commentators have thus rejected the dialogue as inauthentic, or have otherwise explained away the bewildering Socratic silence at the dialogue's conclusion. In this paper I explore why Socrates chooses silence as the response to Cleitophon's rebuke of Socrates. I argue that (and why) Socratic silence is the only way of "talking" with Cleitophon: Cleitophon's "Socratic speech" implies notions about *nomos*, the soul, and philosophy that turn out to be uniquely anti-Socratic. The dramatic disjunctions between Cleitophon's distorted image of Socrates and the real Socrates, and between Cleitophon himself and Socrates, not only make most poignant the tension between the philosopher and the city but also point to the very conditions of philosophical dialogue.

Keywords: Cleitophon, Eros, Self-knowledge, Socratic Circle, Protreptic, Apology

Plato's *Cleitophon*, and our relationship to it, is strange. The dialogue is woefully short, and isn't really a dialogue at all. Cleitophon levels charges against Socrates that are never taken up and answered. Socrates, much to our irritation, does not respond to Cleitophon as we expect. In fact, after what is really Cleitophon's monologue, Socrates does not speak at all. He is silent. Many scholars have therefore wondered whether the dialogue is incomplete, or perhaps even spurious or inauthentic. Few scholars have thus taken seriously the charges brought forth by Cleitophon in the dialogue.

In this paper, I take seriously the idea that this dialogue, which isn't really a dialogue, is nonetheless a completed whole, written by Plato. The subject of my paper is thus the very problematic Socratic silence at the end of the dialogue. I would like to discuss the possibility that Plato concludes this dialogue with Socrates' silence in order to show the nature, possibilities, and limitations of Socratic philosophical dialogue itself as it is manifest in the *polis*, and how this is revealed through his interaction (and lack thereof) with Cleitophon.

Let me begin by asking: Who is Cleitophon? Apart from his appearance in the dialogue that bears his name, Cleitophon is present in Plato's far better known dialogue, the *Republic*. Cleitophon makes a brief assertion in Book 1, in an attempt to defend a position of Thrasymachus. (Socrates says that Cleitophon has "praised the company of Thrasymachus" at the beginning of the *Cleitophon*.)¹ This assertion turns out to shed a good deal of light on the exchange in the *Cleitophon* itself.

Consider what Cleitophon actually says in the *Republic*. Socrates has just shown Thrasymachus a difficulty lurking in his claim that justice is the advantage of the stronger. The difficulty lies in the possibility for rulers to make errors and thus unintentionally make laws that

are not to their advantage. The people subject to these laws will follow them and thereby end up doing what is not actually to the advantage of the rulers. Thus the people will, in fact, end up doing what is unjust. So if Thrasymachus is saying that justice is what the people must do and what is advantageous to the stronger, it looks that he is facing a contradiction. When the ruler is in error, either they must not do what the ruler says or they must do what is not to his advantage.

It is at this point that Cleitophon interrupts to assert that “the advantage of the stronger is what the stronger believes to be his advantage. This is what must be done by the weaker, and this is what [Thrasymachus] set down as the just.”² The silence after Cleitophon’s assertion is striking. Thrasymachus does not accept this assertion as his own definition but proceeds down a different avenue. Nor does Socrates take up Cleitophon’s definition of justice at that point. Nor (in parallel to the Socratic silence at the end of the dialogue that bears his name) does Cleitophon speak after this moment. This is further confirmation that these two dialogues form some kind of pair. For a similar question must emerge in the *Republic*, as it does in the *Cleitophon*. Why is silence the after-effect to Cleitophon’s assertions in both places?³

Let us therefore consider what Cleitophon’s statement in the *Republic* suggests about him – about his understanding of justice, in particular. Cleitophon’s position is the embodiment and spokesman for the un-questionability of the ruler’s belief.⁴ Cleitophon regards it as a perfectly cogent position that justice could be what he believes is to his advantage, whether it is or it is not. Justice would thus require that people obey the rulers even if the rulers mistake what is to their advantage. Justice is obedience to the law, period, which in this case, means

obedience to the beliefs of the ruler.⁵ With that in mind, we are ready to turn to Cleitophon’s remarks in the dialogue that bears his name.

The *Cleitophon* itself begins in a strange way. Socrates reports to an unspecified “us” what he heard from an unspecified “someone”: that Cleitophon has “criticized spending time with Socrates, while he could not praise too highly the company of Thrasymachus”. All of this is cold, impersonal. Socrates talks about himself in the third person, and talks about Cleitophon as if he is not present. This odd beginning makes us think that Socrates is talking to at least one person other than Cleitophon and giving Cleitophon the cold shoulder, but Cleitophon soon claims that he and Socrates are alone.⁶

The isolated conversation between Socrates and Cleitophon presents us with a kind of image of Plato’s *Apology*.⁷ In the *Apology*, the philosopher is compelled to come before the crowd to answer the city’s charges against him. He must, if he is to survive, essentially give a non-philosophical defense of philosophy for the polis.⁸ Here, however, there is no crowd and the opening of this dialogue is in fact a charge, but aimed against Cleitophon, not Socrates. So at first glance it may appear that the question of Cleitophon’s diatribe against Socrates seems to be: is philosophy after all useless (or dangerous) to the city? But in fact, we should be wondering whether the city has any grounds to defend itself against the philosopher. Can the polis, if it is to survive, defend itself on grounds that are acceptable to the philosopher? That is, Does Cleitophon – as representative of spokesman for the city as it is – successfully defend himself? If so, what would it mean that silence from Socrates is the judgment or verdict?

My own view is that it is under Cleitophon’s understanding of law – in which the ruler’s beliefs circumscribes the whole so that there

is no good determined beyond what the ruler's will has determined – that we human beings are, in Michael Davis' terms, "fundamentally alone". Because in Cleitophon's whole, both philosophy and soul evaporate. Those who do not live philosophically are truly alone, trapped in the web of their own unquestioned beliefs, so well described by Cleitophon in *Republic I*. Such anti-philosophical souls live analogously to the tyrant described in *Republic IX*:

So then, isn't this the kind of prison in which the tyrant is chained? He has the nature we have described, full of many and varied fears and lusts. And greedy though his soul is, he is the only one living in the city who cannot go abroad anywhere, or go and see any of the places other free men are keen to see. He spends most of his life buried in his house... (579b-c)

Cleitophon appears not to be driven by lusts. But there may be a real fear that plagues him, that prevents him from ever really "going anywhere", to speak loosely. Cleitophon is a self-appointed disciple who seeks to be a member of what he sees as a Socratic inner circle. The opening charge against him, that he has been critical of Socrates while praising Thrasymachus, should make us wonder what he wants from Socrates that he thinks he can gain from Thrasymachus. It is important to note that Socrates claims *never to teach anybody, period*. Socrates is not looking for disciples: the words, "Come. Follow Me," are not words that Plato's Socrates would utter.⁹

So what then is Cleitophon's praise and censure of Socrates? Cleitophon begins his description, "When I was together with you I was amazed at what I heard. You seemed to surpass all other human beings...taking human beings to task like a god on the tragic stage..."

(407a) Cleitophon's description of being with Socrates is not dialogic. His praise of Socrates is the praise of authority – godlike, lawgiving, exhortative, ruling authority. It is the power of a preacher or prophet that amazes Cleitophon and causes wonder in him. (408e.)

There are two moments in Socrates' stirring speeches that Cleitophon in his self-appointed role as disciple finds especially wondrous. First, Cleitophon reports that he has learned that cities need friendship (407c-d; 409d) and secondly, Cleitophon says that he has understood that one who does not know how to use one's own soul must "hand over the rudder of his own thought to the statesman", who possesses the art of piloting human beings, which very art is justice itself (408b).

These two themes taken together, I claim, give us the view of the Cleitophontic whole, which is through and through anti-Socratic. For although we see Socrates utter sentences with these very same words in other dialogues, we must ask: what do the words mean to Cleitophon? For Socrates, if friendship is finally possible, it must be philosophically rooted, and such philosophical pursuits ultimately cause division rather than unity within the polis. For Socrates, the only reason one would ever hand over the rudder of his thought to another is when one comes to the realization that one does not know the issue at hand.

Cleitophon does not speak as one who recognizes his own *aporia*. His apparent "learning from Socrates" belies a complete lack of movement in his soul. What he has "learned" from Socrates has been incorporated into the way he sees things, and this has distorted Socrates' teaching. As a disciple, he has imbibed – if only wisdom were like water¹⁰ – what Socrates has poured in, and now he waits for the next offering.

So for Cleitophon, the aim of the ruler is to create harmony in the city between apparently discordant elements and the aim of the ruled, if their souls are not already in line, is to subject themselves willingly to the ruler. Any apparent discord must vanish because there is no good determined beyond the will of the ruler; what appears good from the standpoint of the lawgiver is the good. Pushed to its conclusion, Cleitophon's view implies that there are in fact no real individual subjects in a happy city. There emerges empty abstractions: people are de-particularized members of classes, homogenized so that they may be unified, not souls at all but legal subjects.

What is completely missing from Cleitophon's description of Socrates' godlike exhortations is any notion (indeed, any mention) of philosophy, or any erotic activity at all. Cleitophon himself appears to be all *thumos*, no *eros*. Cleitophon's move from praise to censure of Socrates concerns the question: "what next?". I would like to suggest that this question – Cleitophon's question – is not asked in a philosophical spirit. It is not motivated by wonder. It shows, once and for all, that he has not really awoken from the dogmatic slumber he describes.¹¹ What then moves Cleitophon? It is not a desire for wisdom, as may appear to be the case by his seemingly Socratic examination of others.¹² It is not even a fear of his own ignorance of what is best for him. It is a fear of surrendering power in the face of what one does not know, a fear that prevents inquiry into the fundamental questions Socrates asks. Such a fear is not uncommon and may even be *natural*, but if it is not exposed and recognized for what it is, then it threatens philosophical discourse itself.

Cleitophon's question as formulated assumes that philosophy is a *techne*, like others, with a product or object distinct from its activity. One tells a better technician or

craftsman, in great part, by judging these objects or products. Consider the doctor in relation to her patients, the cook in relation to her meals, the carpenter in relation to her houses. Cleitophon is taken with the idea that the object of justice is friendship in cities¹³ but does not sufficiently raise the question how this relates to virtue of the soul, and he does not consider at all that philosophy (or better: education that aims at the good human being), can't be modeled on a *techne*, whose product is clearly distinct from its process. The goal of a good human being, finally, may not involve "finding the right kind of object...but becoming the right kind of subject."¹⁴

It is here that philosophy – the erotic pursuit of wisdom, which is always both pointing beyond itself and re-evaluating and re-describing itself, is utterly in tension with the whole circumscribed by Cleitophon's rulers. In its obliteration of the distinction between apparent and real, Cleitophon's view denies anything outside itself and can neither take up a standpoint from which to examine itself. But the city as it is, ruled by the ruler's beliefs and nothing else, is blind to such a possibility. To attempt to describe such a goal in terms the city can understand is only to utter nonsense. There is no content for the "exhortation of what comes next" to Cleitophon, if one is Socrates. To sum up: It is the one who praises the self-ignorant ruler who sees no good beyond the realm of his beliefs that demands that philosophy be exhortative and describe what goal we should be moving towards on the model of a *techne*.

So these two visions of the whole – Socratic, philosophical *eros* and Cleitophon's tyrannical *nomos* – cannot be reconciled to one another at all. Nor can they even talk to one another. The silence in response to Cleitophon is a response that Cleitophon's claims about justice in the *polis* are so deeply antithetical to Socratic

philosophy that dialogue between them is impossible. Does this then mean that philosophy is finally useless to the city, according to Plato? If I am right, then this – in a way – is also the wrong question. Cleitophon has failed to explain and defend himself on grounds that the philosopher will accept. Socrates' silence at the end of the dialogue is thus not a condemnation of philosophy, but of Cleitophon's inevitable failure to understand the nature of philosophy, thereby remaining perpetually self-ignorant (on philosophical grounds).

But what we should note in conclusion is that Plato does not therefore silence Cleitophon. Plato is not afraid to let Socrates be accused and thus shows that the philosophical life may be one that incorporated opposing views into the same whole. For Plato dramatically incorporates both Cleitophon and Socrates and thereby implies that the proper standpoint is not to reject the anti-logos that Cleitophon puts forward. The Platonic dialogue holds together both Socratic philosophical discourse and its Cleitophontic counterpart, even if perhaps tragically the polis cannot.

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NOTES

- 1 406a. It is for reasons like this that the *Cleitophon* and the *Republic* are seen as some kind of pair. Most commentators would suggest that the *Republic* follows the *Cleitophon* dramatically. For an argument that there is no definitive answer to this question, see Davis *Soul of the Greeks*, 161.
- 2 340b. A similar argument is used by Socrates against Polemarchus: mistaking who your friends and enemies are is very similar to mistaking what is to your advantage. See 334c.333 See 334c-d.
- 3 One might object that it is not *entirely* true that Cleitophon's assertions in the *Republic* are followed by silence, for the simple reason that we get the following short exchange: "Well, that wasn't what was said," replied Polemarchus. "It doesn't matter, Polemarchus," I said, "but if that is now what Thrasymachus maintains, let us accept it as it is. So tell me, Thrasymachus, was this how you wanted to define justice: that it is the advantage of the stronger as it appears to the stronger, whether it really is to their advantage or not? Is that how we are to take what you said?" To this Thrasymachus replies: "Not in the least," he replied; "do you really imagine I call someone who makes a mistake stronger at the moment when he makes his mistake?" (340c)
- But it is important to note that neither Polemarchus nor Thrasymachus are willing to pick up Cleitophon's suggestion. Socrates does ask *Thrasymachus* if he wishes to adopt it, but never explicitly says that he will discuss this alternative once Thrasymachus disavows it.
- 4 In Orwin's words, Cleitophon "asserts what Socrates gets Thrasymachus to deny, that the will of the rulers is beyond appeal... In never wavering from his interested attachment to legal justice, he is the sole character in the *Republic* who stands first and last for the city as it is..." See Orwin, 130-1131. Cf. Davis, 164-165; Roochnik, 105; Kremer 26; Blits, 82-83. Slings counters that such an approach may be relevant to the passage in the *Republic*, but not to the *Cleitophon* in which there is no enmity shown towards Socrates. See Slings, 57. I think that Slings' rejection of Orwin's view is too hasty and will present reasons for why the Cleitophon in the *Cleitophon* matches the one Orwin describes in the *Republic*.
- 5 This position may reflect the stance Socrates takes towards his own death sentence in the *Crito* when he himself speaks to Crito as an embodiment of the laws of the city. If so, the argument I will be presenting here should

raise two questions: whether the philosopher can make an adequate response to the laws presented as such, and whether this impugns the presentation of the laws of the city presented in the *Crito*. For if, as I will argue, Socrates' silence in the *Cleitophon* is the only possible response, it is still a response that calls into question the legitimacy of Cleitophon's charges. It is in this light that Socrates' presentation of the laws in the *Crito* could be seen.

6 See 406a. Davis discusses how this line is a way into the heart of the *Cleitophon*. He claims that the line provokes wonder about the possibility that human beings are *all fundamentally alone*, and that therefore we must doubt the very possibility of a common good or justice itself. The dialogue opens the door to tragedy. I think Davis is right to highlight the significance of this feature of the dialogue, but my own response to it moves in a somewhat different direction.

7 See Orwin, 120. What Orwin calls a "counter-Apology" is on the right track. But I do not think that Socrates remains on trial here. Rather, it is Cleitophon who must defend himself. If this is the case, however, Socrates' silence could also be a literary convention since Athenian judicial praxis usually did not allow a further response by the accuser (in this case, Socrates). This would also fit with Socrates claim at the beginning of the dialogue that he will be Cleitophon's student and is not going to say anything. Cf. Slings 13-18, 43-46. But this leaves unexplained the deeper puzzle: why would Plato present and leave unanswered these charges against Socrates? A response to this question requires a more substantive claim about the purpose of the dialogue as a whole.

8 I would suggest that Socrates' own defense speech in the *Apology* does not succeed in providing a non-philosophical defense of philosophy and the *Cleitophon* may give some reasons why. However, my account here does not rely on this claim.

9 At *Republic* 432c, for example, he suggests that Glaucon should follow him. The context makes clear that he is not requesting that Glaucon should be his disciple, but that he should be his partner in inquiry. Cf. 474c

10 Cf. *Symposium* 176d.

11 407c.

12 I agree with Slings that this episode in the dialogue is constructed to resemble a parody. Slings, 3, 93, 102. Cf. Rowe, 305-306.

13 409d.

14 Lear, 86. It is noteworthy that it is not only students of Strauss who use this language in speaking about the *Cleitophon*. Cf. Slings 170, 175-176. Orwin is right to highlight the disappearance of music and gymnastic from Cleitophon's examples. Such "arts" are hard to describe on Cleitophon's model. See Orwin 1987, 126-127.

The Form of the Good in Plato's *Timaeus*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide evidence that the Form of the Good (as we know it from the *Republic*) is still present in the *Timaeus* and is ontologically independent from the Demiurge and his Paradigm. This claim is supported by selected passages from *Timaeus'* text, but it is also based on *Phaedo's* theory of causation and on the simile of the sun in *Republic*. It is also highlighted after a detailed comparison between the philosopher-kings and the Demiurge, and after the emergence of their striking similarities.

Keywords: Plato, *Timaeus*, Good, Demiurge.

One of the many philosophical problems that we face in the *Timaeus* is raised by the claim that the God who created the world (from now on we shall call him 'Demiurge')¹ is good (*Tim.* 29d7-30a2). A satisfying explanation of Demiurge's goodness is far from easy, and different approaches have been proposed. However, in this paper I'll try to show that a clear, sufficient and relatively simple interpretation is possible, if we are based on the hypothesis that *Timaeus* follows the theory of causation in the *Phaedo* (including the distinction between 'safe' and 'elegant' cause) and the concept of the Form of the Good in the *Republic*.²

To be more specific, I'll try to show that the Form of the Good of the *Republic* is also presupposed in the *Timaeus* and it plays the same role, and we should consider it as a first principle of platonic cosmology, independent from the existence of Demiurge or even the Divine Paradigm (i.e. the model according to which the Demiurge creates the world). On first impression, this interpretation looks barely possible, since there is no direct reference in the text to this particular Form, with the possible exception of what is said at *Tim.* 46c7-d1.³ In my opinion, this absence has to do with specific purposes *Timaeus* serves, and not with the abandonment of the Good as a cause. A close examination of the text might lead us to this conclusion.

So let me schedule the structure of this paper. In the first part I set out briefly what Plato says in the *Timaeus* about the relation between Demiurge and goodness, and some different approaches among scholars. In the second part I construct the argument that proves the existence of the Form of the Good in the *Timaeus* based on Plato's theory of causation that we find in the *Phaedo*. Finally in the third part I bold the striking similarities between the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* and the philosopher-kings in

the *Republic*, which makes more plausible the assumption that the Form of the Good is still present in the *Timaeus*.

I.

First of all we have to read what Plato says about Demiurge's purpose:

Now, let us state the reason why becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good, and what is good never has any particle of envy in it whatsoever; and being without envy he wished all things to be as like himself as possible. This indeed is the most proper principle of becoming and the cosmos and as it comes from wise men one would be absolutely right to accept it. (*Tim.* 29d7-30a2)

It is worth focusing on two points in this passage: a) Plato calls the goodness of Demiurge 'the most proper principle of becoming and the cosmos' (γενέσεως καὶ κόσμου [...] ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην); b) he also calls it 'reason' (αἰτία). However, there has been a debate whether this 'most proper principle' should be identified with the Form of the Good and so it should be considered as something separate from the Demiurge, or it should be taken as an inseparable attribute of the Demiurge. In the second case, either the Demiurge should be identified with the Form of the Good, or there is no such Form in *Timaeus* as the Form of the Good in *Republic*. This is a problem that was already been raised in antiquity, first by Thrasyllus and then by Gnostics and Neo-Platonists,⁴ and is still a matter of debate.

Wood, for example, adhering to the Middle-Platonist tradition, unites the Good, the

Demiurge, and the Paradigm into a single cause. He claims that the Demiurge is a mythical form of the Form of the Good we find in *Republic*, and that the Paradigm is identical with this Form as well.⁵ The first step of his argument is to identify the Paradigm with the Demiurge: Wood interprets the phrase '[the Demiurge] wished all things to be as like himself as possible' (29e3) as an important indication that the Paradigm of the Universe is the Demiurge himself. Moreover, the Paradigm is called an 'animal', which according to Wood means that the Paradigm must have a soul (based on 30b8).⁶ The second step is to identify the Demiurge with the Good based on *Phil.* 30c: according to this passage the Good is identical with the intellect and wisdom, but neither of them can exist without the soul.⁷

However, I think that *Phil.* 30c is not appropriate for understanding *Timaeus*. The dependence of goodness on the soul might be right for mortal animate beings, but not for Demiurge; nor is it right to assume that the Paradigm has a soul. Because it is referred clearly that Demiurge *creates* the world-soul (and every other soul) using specific ingredients. So if every soul is created, but the Paradigm is eternal and independent from any process of creation, it cannot have a soul.

Moreover, if the Demiurge (who by no doubt has to do with Intellect)⁸ is a mythical form of the Form of the Good that we find in *Republic*, how could such unification between the Good and the Intellect be compatible with the clearly distinctive roles the Good and the Intellect play in the *Republic*? Taking into account the simile of the sun in *Republic* VI where 'nous' (or the soul) is likened with an eye and the Good with the sun, if 'nous' were also likened with the Good, then the eye would be likened with the sun; but this is clearly wrong.⁹ Below I'll explain why the *Timaeus* itself doesn't support this interpretation.

Benitez sees in *Tim.* 29d7-30a2 Plato's attempt to put the causes of the universe under a single principle (in a way similar to the Form of the Good in the *Republic*, which is superior to everything else). He claims that the Good and the Demiurge are essentially one and the same thing, and that this is compatible with Plato's effort to harmonize Ethics with Metaphysics.¹⁰ Similar is also Strange's view: Since the Demiurge is Intellect, and Intellect always aims at good things, we could claim that Plato amalgamates two Aristotelian causes, efficient and final, into one.¹¹

However, this interpretation is not convincing. Having an intellect that always aims at good things doesn't mean that the Form of the Good becomes obsolete. Again, according to the simile of the sun in *Republic*, what the sun and the light are for the eyes, so the Good and the truth are for the intellect; and as an eye sees visible things clearly thanks to the light of the sun, so the intellect knows the Forms thanks to the Good. Thus in Plato the intellect is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the creation of good beings.

Johansen follows Frede's distinction between the notions 'αἴτιον' and 'αἰτία',¹² attributing the first one to the Demiurge, and the second one, 'the most proper principle of becoming', to the purpose of his creation.¹³ So he adopts an Aristotelian reading that interprets the cause-Demiurge as an efficient cause, and the cause-goodness as a final cause. Nonetheless, Johansen claims that what acts as a final cause is not the Good itself, but rather God's desire to make the world as good as possible. But even if Johansen admits that the purpose cannot be separated from the desire of God, he correctly rejects the explanation that this purpose could be reduced just to an aspect of the efficient cause, since 'the most proper principle of becoming' would remain inexplicable.¹⁴

Following this distinction it seems that the purpose of Divine Creation, namely goodness, must be dependent on something separate from Demiurge; it is associated with the notion of 'demiurge' (or 'craftsman'), but this association is not always the case. Plato hasn't excluded the possible existence of malevolent or vicious craftsmen. For example, in *Crat.* 431e1-2 there is a distinction between two craftsmen of names, one of them being good, while the other arguably is bad. And in the *Sophist*, the final (and correct) definition describes the sophist as the less valuable sort of demiurge.¹⁵ Therefore, 'the most proper principle of becoming' is not something self-evident; on the contrary, it is something that can be shown.

II.

A few lines after the beginning of Timaeus' narration there is a passage that dissociates the notion of 'demiurge' from the notion of 'goodness':

Let us return, then, and ask the following question about it: to which pattern did its constructor work, that which remains the same and unchanging or that which has come to be? If the world here is beautiful and its maker good, clearly he had his eye on the eternal; if the alternative (which it is blasphemy even to mention) is true, then on something that has come into being. Clearly he had his eye on the eternal: for the world is the fairest of all things that we have come into being and he is the best of causes. (*Tim.* 28c5-29a6)

This passage raises the question whether the model that is used for the creation of the universe is eternal or belongs to the realm of

becoming. So Plato initially keeps open both possibilities. Immediately after this, the choice of the model is associated with a specific attribute of Demiurge: If the Demiurge has chosen the eternal model, he is good. But if he has chosen a generated one, he is not good (even if such a claim would be a ‘blasphemy’). Nonetheless in both cases he remains a demiurge, a craftsman. Therefore, the notion of ‘demiurge’ does not presuppose the notion of ‘goodness’. Moreover, it seems that it is the very notion of ‘goodness’ that determines the choice of the model by the Demiurge. We’ll examine this claim in a while.

Now, the way that passage 30a is presented (after the distinction between true and reasonable account, and after the introduction of the notion of ‘goodness’) it might give us the impression that Plato regards the statement ‘the Demiurge is good’ as self-evident. Careful reading, however, shows that this statement is not a self-evident premise, but a conclusion that derives from two other premises, very familiar in Plato.

The first one has to do with the relation between cause and effect:

It is unlawful for the best to produce anything but the most beautiful. (*Tim.* 30a6-7)

This statement appears a few lines after the statement ‘the Demiurge is good’, so it might be considered as something that follows upon this statement. But this would be misleading. On the contrary, it is one of the firm platonic beliefs that a cause of a sort is highly related with an effect of a respective sort. This can be shown in a form of equivalence:

Something is the best cause if and only if something else is the most beautiful effect.

This means not only

if something is the best cause, then its effect is the most beautiful,

but also

if something is the most beautiful effect, then its cause is the best.

There is a similar claim in the *Phaedo*:

You’d be afraid, I imagine, of meeting the following contradiction: if you say that someone is larger and smaller by a head, then, first, the larger will be larger and the smaller smaller by the same thing; and secondly, the head, by which the larger man is larger, is itself a small thing; and it’s surely monstrous that anyone should be large by something small. (*Phaid.* 101a5-b2)

Here Plato says that if A is larger than B by a head, the reason why A is larger and B smaller cannot be ... a head! This is reasonable. But what is most interesting is the explanation Plato gives: If a head were the cause that A is larger than B (and B smaller than A), then a) a head would be the cause of two opposite effects (‘the larger will be larger and the smaller smaller by the same thing’), and b) a head, being small, would be the cause of something big (‘the head, by which the larger man is larger, is itself a small thing’). Both cases are rejected, and the second one is called ‘monstrous’.

The passage above might be presented in the following formal way:

If something is a cause of F, it cannot be also a cause of non-F, nor can it be non-F itself.¹⁶

If we apply this principle in the *Timaeus* and keep in mind that the notions ‘best’ (ᄁριστο) and ‘most beautiful’ (καλλιστο) refer always to the same object,¹⁷ then it is impossible for something best / most beautiful to create something non-best / non-beautiful, and impossible for something best / most beautiful to be a product of something non-best / non-beautiful.

There is a passage in *Timaeus* revealing that Plato remains firm in the above principle. In 41c Demiurge says to inferior gods that he cannot create mortal species, because he would equate them with gods; so they (the inferior gods) have to do the task. But why doesn’t Demiurge want to equate mortal species with gods? Doesn’t this fact contradict his goodness?

Cornford tries to answer it based on ancient Greek tradition. Recalling Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption* 76a14 Cornford observes that Sky and Sun are masculine and are called ‘father’, while Earth is feminine and is called ‘mother’. He also quotes a relevant passage in *Republic* (509b), where the sun provides generation and food and growth for visible things. Therefore, according to Cornford, Plato prefers here to be consistent with this tradition, so the divine entities that are created by Demiurge should play the role of demiurge too and create mortal species.¹⁸

This answer, however, does not cover the philosophical aspect of this problem: what kind of syllogism, if any, has led Plato to the conclusion that it cannot be the Demiurge that created mortal species, but that the inferior gods did? I think we could answer this if we take into account the rules of platonic cause that we have already seen above in *Phaid.* 101a5-b2.

It is manifest that mortal species are not perfect (see, e.g., *Tim.* 34c3), so the cause of their creation cannot be perfect either. As the Demiurge himself claims, if their cause were perfect, then mortal species would be perfect

as well, like gods. And as far as the creation of their soul is concerned, Plato makes it clear that the Demiurge creates the souls in a way that he is not responsible for any bad acts the mortals may subsequently do (*Tim.* 42d2-4). We see how firmly Plato holds on to his belief about the relation between cause and effect. So we can understand now the meaning of the phrase ‘It is unlawful for the best to produce anything but the most beautiful’ (*Tim.* 30a6-7).

Going back to *Tim.* 28c5-29a6 there seems to be an argument that ‘proves’ the world’s beauty; Plato seems to take the goodness of the Demiurge and the relation between cause and effect as premises, in order to prove that the world is beautiful. Such an argument would go like this:

If the Creator of the world is best, then the outcome of creation, the world, is the most beautiful (premise 1). The Creator of the world is best (premise 2). The outcome of creation, the world, is the most beautiful (conclusion).

The argument is valid, and Plato would hold it is sound as well. But we are wrong if we admit that the statement ‘The world is the most beautiful’ is *proved* by the above argument, as if someone doubted that the world is the most beautiful thing, and Plato ‘proved’ it by introducing an unwarranted premise, that the Creator is good. How much conviction would such an argument carry? On the contrary, the equivalence between cause and effect in the way we’ve seen it before allow us to infer that Plato begins from the premise that the world is beautiful and concludes that the Demiurge is good. So the phrase ‘It is unlawful for the best to produce anything but the most beautiful’ can be restated as: ‘The most beautiful generated being presupposes the best creator’.

But why should we infer that the world is 'the most beautiful' (κάλλιστον) compared to all the other created beings? The answer can be found in various passages in *Timaeus*. But perhaps the most convincing one is the passage where Plato describes the shape of the world:

The shape he gave it was suitable and akin to its nature. A suitable shape for a living being that was to contain within itself all living beings would be a figure that contains all possible figures within itself. Therefore he turned it into a rounded spherical shape, with the extremes equidistant in all directions from the centre, the figure that of all is the most complete and like itself, as he judged likeness to be *ten thousand times more beautiful than its opposite*. (*Tim.* 33b1-7)¹⁹

Thus Plato relies on the view that the world has the shape of a perfect sphere. This belief is also not unwarranted; it is based on the astronomical observations and conclusions by his time.²⁰ Compared to any other figure, sphere 'is the most complete and like itself' (ὁμοιότατον τε αὐτὸ ἑαυτῷ σχημάτων). Plato associates the notion of likeness with the notion of beauty, saying that likeness is 'ten thousand times more beautiful than its opposite' (μυρίω κάλλιον ὅμοιον ἀνομοίου). Therefore, as far as beauty is concerned, the world's shape is superior to beings of a different shape.

But what if we compare the world with other sensible spheres, planets for instance? The answer lies in another passage, where Plato compares the beauty of the whole with the beauty of a part. In 30c, where the discussion is about the Divine Paradigm, Plato says that any part is imperfect compared with the whole, and anything imperfect cannot be associated with the notion of beauty (30c5).²¹ Since any other

sensible being is part of the world (30c7-d1), any sensible being is imperfect compared to the world, therefore it is less beautiful as well. So the statement that the world is the most beautiful generated being derives from two assumptions: a) the world is spherical, and b) the world is a whole, while anything else is a part of it. Hence the argument goes like this:

The most beautiful generated being presupposes the best creator (premise 1). *The world is the most beautiful generated being* (premise 2). *The world presupposes the best creator* (conclusion).

We may now legitimately eliminate the superlatives (since they don't affect the argument), so we'll have the premise: *A beautiful generated being presupposes a good cause*. Therefore the argument can be restated:

A beautiful generated being presupposes a good creator (premise 1). *The world is a beautiful generated being* (premise 2). *The world presupposes a good creator* [i.e. the Demiurge] (conclusion).

Let us recall passage 29d7-30a2 in order to comprehend the close relation between cause and effect:

Now, let us state the reason why becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good, and what is good never has any particle of envy in it whatsoever; and being without envy he wished all things to be as like himself as possible. This indeed is the most proper principle of becoming and the cosmos and as it comes from wise men one would be absolutely right to accept it. God therefore, wishing that all things should be good [...]. (*Tim.* 29d7-30a2)

What is notable here is the contrast between goodness and envy. According to Johansen, the definition of ‘envy’ that Aristotle gives in the *Rhetoric* B might help us understand this passage.²² Aristotle says that envy is the sadness someone feels because of the fortune other people possess (*Rhet.* 1387b23-5). Contrary to an envious man, a good man desires that other people enjoy goods as well.²³ Aristotle also observes that an envious man envies people similar to him (*Rhet.* 1387b25-6), which means that he does not desire other people to be similar in wealth, glory, or wisdom he thinks they possess. If Plato is in agreement with Aristotle about this concept of ‘envy’, then he’ll agree that a good man, i.e. the opposite of an envious one, desires always other people to become like him.

Plato is opposed to a then widespread belief that the gods are envious.²⁴ If it were so, then the Demiurge would be envious as well, and the beauty of the world would be left unexplained. On the contrary, the Demiurge’s benevolence means that there is no envy in him, and that’s why the world is good.²⁵ So I think that the phrase ‘he wished all things to be as like himself as possible’ (29e3) refers to the goodness of Demiurge. This view is also supported by the sentence ‘God therefore, wishing that all things should be good [...]’ which occurs as an explanation of the ‘as like himself’ (note the ‘γὰρ’ at 30a2). It is also important to see that the ‘the most proper principle’ refers to the word ‘cause’ (αἰτία) in d7. But if we ask what this cause is, the answer cannot be ‘the Demiurge’, because we ask to know why Demiurge created whatever he created. So ‘the most proper principle’ refers to Demiurge’s goodness.

Therefore, the reason why a sensible being is good is because its creator is good as well. But why the creator is good? In the *Phaedo* 105b-c we learn that any question of the form ‘why is x

F?’ can be answered either with the ‘safe cause’ explanation (i.e. ‘because x participates in the Form F’) or with the ‘elegant cause’ explanation (i.e. ‘because of y, and y’s essential attribute is F’).²⁶ Since we accept that Plato has not revised these two types of explanation in the *Timaeus* (and personally I haven’t found such evidence), we may assume that the premise below is presupposed in the *Timaeus* as well:

For any x, if x is F, the x’s F has a cause, and the cause of F is either an entity y, where y is F too (elegant cause), or it is the Form F (safe cause).

So far the argument goes like this:

For any x, if x is F, the x’s F has a cause, and the cause of F is either an entity y, where y is F too (elegant cause), or it is the Form F (safe cause) (premise 1). The Demiurge is good (premise 2). The Demiurge’s attribute ‘good’ has a cause, and this cause is either an entity y, where y is good too (elegant cause), or it is the Form of the Good (safe cause) (conclusion 1).

But as we know for sure in the *Timaeus* there is no other entity that is good and that it caused the Demiurge’s goodness. This means that: *The Demiurge’s attribute ‘good’ has no elegant cause (premise 3).* So it remains the safe cause: *The Demiurge’s attribute ‘good’ has a cause, and this cause is the Form of the Good (conclusion 2, derived from premise 3 & conclusion 1).*

III.

At this point I think it is useful to compare the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* with the philosopher-king in the *Republic*. I believe

that the similarities that this comparison will reveal may convince us that the Form of the Good plays a major role in the *Timaeus*, which is exactly the same as in the *Republic*.²⁷

The introduction of the *Timaeus* reveals its close relation with the *Republic*, since it recapitulates basic claims of the latter work: the distinction between craftsmen/farmers and guardians (17c6-d3), the character of guardians (17d3-18a7), their upbringing and way of life (18a9-b7), the women's role and the concept of family (18c1-e3), and finally the separation of children to their appropriate class (19a1-5).

Two major issues are absent from this recapitulation: a) the metaphysical establishment of the Form of the Good in *Republic* VI-VII, and b) the division of guardians into kings and auxiliaries. According to Johansen, the reason of this absence lies in the different from the *Republic* purpose that the *Timaeus* serves: the *Republic* shows how justice functions internally in a man's soul and in the city, but it doesn't show how a just city would prevail against an unjust city.²⁸ The last one is Socrates' request after the above recapitulation in the *Timaeus*: he wants to see this ideal city in action (*Tim.* 19b3-c8).

Furthermore, the class distinction between only craftsmen and guardians in the introduction of the *Timaeus* is not an abandonment of the tripartite division of soul or classes.²⁹ *Tim.* 18a4-7 reminds us that the spirited and philosophical parts in a guardian's soul are superior to that of others. The notion of 'guardian' in the *Timaeus* is very close to that in *Republic* II.³⁰ So the fact that the Form of the Good doesn't appear in the *Timaeus* in the way it does in the *Republic* doesn't mean that it is not presupposed, and the same is true for the absence of any mention of the philosopher-king. On the contrary, we find many evidence associating the philosopher in the *Republic* with the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*.

Such evidence in the *Republic* is that the guardians are called 'craftsmen': we read in 421b7-c2 that guardians must become the best possible craftsmen in their work, which is the craft of guardianship.³¹ Also the work that a philosopher-king has to do has many similarities with that of the Demiurge; they both have to put in order (κοσμεῖν) the object of their craft. For the Demiurge it is the world in general, for the philosopher-king it is the parts of his soul and the city. For example, we read in *Rep.* 443d that a just man puts in order (κοσμήσαντα) and harmonizes (συναρμόσαντα) the parts of his soul. We find these two words (κοσμήσαντα and συναρμόσαντα) many times in the *Timaeus* describing the work of Demiurge or of inferior gods-craftsmen.³²

Furthermore, the philosopher

by consorting with what is ordered and divine and despite all the slanders around that say otherwise, himself becomes as divine and ordered as a human being can (*Rep.* 500c9-d1)

and also

our constitution [will] be perfectly ordered, if a guardian who knows these things is in charge of it (*Rep.* 506a9-b1).

A similar point we also find in the *Gorgias*: after describing what 'craftsman' means, i.e. the one who puts in order the object of his craft (*Gor.* 503e-504a), and after giving a few examples about houses and ships, Plato mentions the case where the soul is put in order (*Gor.* 504b-d). Moreover, in the *Symposium*, whoever has in his soul wisdom and the other virtues he is called a 'craftsman', and the greatest one is whoever puts in order (διακόσμησις) his city (*Symp.* 209a3-8).

So we expect that a king, as any other craftsman, should do his work by following a model, a paradigm. And indeed this claim is supported by some passages in *Republic*; the ideal city described by Socrates can be used as a paradigm for the future philosopher-king, who will try to render a real city similar as much as possible to the ideal one. Already in *Rep.* 369a5-7 Socrates asks us to turn our attention towards a city made by words, in order to locate justice and injustice within it.³³ This point though, is made clearer in 472d9-e5: the ideal city, the description of which is already completed, plays the role of an ideal model, and even if it cannot be fully made in reality, this does not mean that the model is insufficient and its description wrong.

However, the most characteristic description occurs in 500d-501c. I copy here the whole passage because of its importance for our subject. The philosopher-king works clearly like a craftsman, and more specifically like a painter.³⁴ When we read these lines it is impossible to ignore the *Timaeus* and its description of the Demiurge:³⁵

And if he [the philosopher] should come to be compelled to put what he sees there into people's characters, whether into a single person or into a populace, instead of *shaping* [πλάττειν (d6)] only his own, do you think that he will be a *poor craftsman* [κακὸν δημιουργὸν (d6)] of moderation, justice, and the whole of popular virtue?

He least of all.

And when the majority realize that what we are saying about the philosopher is true, will they be harsh with him or mistrust us when we say that the city will never find happiness until its outline is

sketched [διαγράψειαν (e3)] by painters who use the divine model [θείω παραδείγματι χρώμενοι (e3)]?

They won't be harsh, if indeed they realize this. But what sort of *sketch* [διαγραφῆς (a1)] do you mean?

They'd take the city and the characters of human beings as their sketching slate, but first they'd wipe it clean- which isn't at all an easy thing to do. And you should know that this is the plain difference between them and others, namely, that they refuse to take either an individual or a city in hand or to write laws, unless they receive a clean slate or are allowed to clean it themselves.

And they'd be right to refuse.

Then don't you think they'd next *sketch the outline of the constitution* [ὑπογράψασθαι ἄν τὸ σχῆμα τῆς πολιτείας (a9)]?

Of course.

And I suppose that, as they work, they'd look often in each direction, towards the natures of justice,³⁶ beauty, moderation, and the like, on the one hand, and towards those they're trying to *put into* [ἐμποιοῖεν (b4)] human beings, on the other. And in this way *they'd mix and blend* [συμμιγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες (b4)] the various ways of life in the city until they produced a *human image* [ἀνδρείκελον (b5)]³⁷ based on what Homer too called 'the *divine form and image*' [θεοεἶκελον (b7)] when it occurred among human beings.

That's right.

They'd erase one thing, I suppose, and draw in another until they'd made characters for human beings that the gods would love as much as possible.

At any rate, that would certainly result in the finest sketch. (500d4-501c3)

Like the Demiurge in the *Timaeus*, so the philosopher-king follows the rules of crafting. On the one hand he looks toward his model, which is the realm of Forms, and on the other towards his 'material', which is human beings like him, and he tries to render it as similar to the model as possible. Two technical terms here describing the process of crafting (συμμειγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες) are repeated many times in the *Timaeus*, when the work of creator-gods is described.³⁸ And also the description above is called 'μυθολογία', a myth of a sort that is expressed in words, but it could be applied in reality (501e2-5).

Lastly, the same claim can be found also in *Rep.* 592a10-b5: The ideal city that has already been described is called 'a model in heaven'; I take it as an intelligible model,³⁹ based on which the philosopher is able to put in order firstly his soul, and after that, in some cases his city.

Now let's consider again the claim that there is no Form of the Good in the *Timaeus* because there is no clear mention of it. In *Rep.* 500d-501c the Good is absent as well, and based solely on this passage someone could infer that three principles are enough to make a perfect city: a) the intelligible model, b) the philosopher-demiurge, and c) his 'material', i.e. the citizens. But of course such an inference is wrong. The description of the Good comes only a few pages after, and we know its importance for the right interpretation of the above scheme. Let us recall 506a4-7, according to which no one will completely know what is beautiful and just and the like, without knowing the Form of the Good. Only then does one deserve to be 'a guardian'.

There is also another case where the model is clearly associated with the Good. In 540a8-b1 we read that philosophers-kings use the Good as their model for putting in order their souls and city. This means neither that we have two different models, the Good and

the ideal city, nor that these two are one and the same thing. So there is no reason to draw such conclusion in the *Timaeus* when we read something similar in 46c7-d1.⁴⁰

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NOTES

1 I use the words 'demiurge', 'craftsman' or 'creator' (with small 'c' or 'd') interchangeably as one and the same thing, with the same meaning. On the other hand, I use the words 'Demiurge' or 'Creator' (with 'D' and 'C' capital) both as a proper noun (of the God who created the universe according to *Timaeus*) and as that divine entity who has the same characteristics that every demiurge / creator shares. Similarly, when I refer to a platonic Form I use sometimes only the adjective with capital first letter (e.g. 'Good' instead of 'the Form of the Good').

2 All passages in quotes or in block quotations referring to Plato's text in this paper are translated by the following authors respectively: *Republic*: Grube 1992. *Phaedo*: Gallop 1990. *Timaeus*: Lee 2008. *Sophist*: White 1993. Many parts of the argumentation of this paper originate from chapters of my PhD thesis "The First Principles of the Sensible World in Plato's Philosophy" (Athens, 2014). I am grateful to my supervisor prof. Vassilis Karasmanis for his overall help. Also I would like to thank prof. Paul Kalligas and Pantazis Tselemanis for their useful comments.

3 Even in this case, scholars translate 'τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου ἰδέαν' in a way that mentions no Form of the Good. Cornford 1997, 157, e.g., translates: 'Now all these things are among the accessory causes which the god uses as subservient in achieving the best result that is possible'. See also Lee 2008, 37: 'All these are among the contributory causes which god uses as servants in shaping things in the best way possible'.

4 According to Vorwerk 2010, 88ff., Middle-Platonists like Alcinous assumed that the Demiurge, the Paradigm and the Form of the Good are one and the same cause. Their main argument was that Plato calls the Demiurge 'maker and father' (*Tim.* 28c3), later he calls the Paradigm a 'father', and in the *Republic* he likens the Form of the Good to the sun. In the *Republic*, as sun provides visible things with 'coming to be, growth and nourishment' (509b2-4), so the Form of the Good provides objects of knowledge with 'being and essence' (509b7-8); so the Form of the Good seems to play the role of the father as

well. Numenius is the first Platonist who distinguishes between 'maker' and 'father' assigning them to different principles. Numenius claimed that being good is not identical with the Good, and since the Demiurge is said to be good (at *Tim.* 29e1), he cannot be the Good, but is good only by participation in this particular Form. More specifically, Numenius claims that the Demiurge is to be seen as a genus divided into two kinds: one is the Demiurge-Maker who is identical with the Divine Craftsman of the universe; the other is the Demiurge-Father who is identical with the Form of the Good and with the Paradigm, is called 'Form of Demiurge' and 'First Intellect', and is the cause of Demiurge-Maker. Like Numenius, Plotinus separates the Good from Demiurge, but unlike Numenius he does not assign to the Good attributes of the Intellect, because he puts emphasis on the phrase 'beyond being' in *Rep.* 509b8-9. See also Armstrong 1966, 225; Opsomer 2000, 113; Benitez 1995, 114. Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* II, 359ff. calls 'ridiculous' whoever identifies the Good with good God, and he identifies 'the most proper principle of becoming' with Aristotle's final cause. But who plays the role of final cause in this case? Is it the Form of the Good, or is it the goodness of Demiurge? Proclus, *ibid.*, 361, 2-14 seems to reply 'both, somehow', because on the one hand the final cause is attributed to the goodness of the Demiurge, but on the other hand the Demiurge as Intellect participates in the Form of the Good, that's why he is good. See also Opsomer 2000, 115.

5 Wood 1968, 255.

6 Wood 1968, 256-7.

7 Wood 1968, 257.

8 See, e.g., *Tim.* 47e3-4, which is a direct reference to the Demiurge: 'In almost all we have said we have been demonstrating what was crafted through intelligence'. For a more detailed analysis on the association between Demiurge and Intellect see Menn 1995.

9 In the *Republic* Plato mentions that the eye is 'the most sunlike', but this doesn't mean any strong association with the sun, and the same is true for the power of vision: 'Sight isn't the sun, neither sight itself nor that in which it comes to be, namely, the eye. – No, it certainly isn't. – But I think that it is the most sunlike of the senses. – Very much so.' (508a11-b6).

10 Benitez 1995, 119.

11 Strange 1999, 407-8.

12 Frede 1987, 129.

13 Johansen 2008, 473-4. In the *Philebus*, however, there is no such distinction, where the nature of a maker is called both 'αἴτιον' and 'αἰτία' (*Phil.* 26e6-8). But in the *Timaeus* this distinction seems to work.

14 Johansen 2008, 475.

15 See *Sophist's* last paragraph: 'Imitation of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere and unknown sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making, the word-juggling part of production that's marked off as human and not divine. Anyone who says the sophist is of this "blood and family" will be saying, it seems, the complete truth'. (268c8-d4)

16 'Non-F' is equal to 'the opposite of F', provided that F represents the attributes that their denial has only one candidate. See *Prot.* 332c-d. So for example 'non-beautiful' means 'ugly', 'non-fast' means 'slow' etc.

17 What is best, it is also most beautiful, and vice versa. The word 'best' (ἄριστος) is the superlative of the adjective 'good' (ἀγαθός). So it is useful to keep in mind that Plato follows the ancient Greek tradition and puts together the two adjectives 'beautiful and good' (καλὸς κἀγαθός) holding them interdependent. In *Tim.* 53b5-6, for example, the elements of the universe are called 'best and most beautiful' after Demiurge's intervention. See also *Tim.* 87c4-5: 'The good, of course, is always beautiful'. Also, *Lys.* 216d2: 'I claim that the good is beautiful'. See also *Rep.* 376c5 and 396c1. But even if both 'good' and 'beautiful' are always attributed to the same objects, it doesn't mean that the Form of the Good and the Form of the Beautiful are one and the same. For a more detailed defense of this claim see Barney 2010, 363-367. In a nutshell Barney supports that something good might function as a cause in a way that is impossible for something beautiful: a good X can make something or someone else good as well, while a beautiful X cannot function in an analogous way; so B becomes beautiful because its *efficient* cause A is good, not because it is beautiful too. I admit that Barney's interpretation raises many philosophical questions that demand a closer examination. But whatever the right answer is, it doesn't affect our current position: the notions 'good' and 'beautiful' refer always to the same objects, but they are not identical.

18 Cornford 1997, 141.

19 Words in *italics* are my own modification in Lee's translation, because this is the exact meaning of 'μυρίῳ κάλλιον'. Lee translates it as 'incalculably superior to', which I think is misleading.

20 Vlastos 1975, 38-40.

21 An indirect repetition of this claim can also be found in *Laws* 903b-d, where the part exists for the sake of the whole, and a demiurge looks at the whole. See also Solmsen 1963, 484.

22 Johansen 2008, 477.

23 See for instance in *Rep.* 421d onwards, where the philosopher-king desires the best possible for his people. The fact that he will not permit them the access to excessive wealth is not due to envy, but to knowledge about what is best for the city (keep also in mind that the lower class of craftsmen possesses more wealth than philosophers-kings, who have no private wealth). About the contrast between a philosopher and an envious person see also *Rep.* 500c1-5.

24 See, for example, Hdt., *Hist.* 2, 40, 6-7: 'τὸ θεῖον ἐπισταμένῳ ὡς ἔστι φθοροπρόν'. Similar cases we find in the myth of *Prometheus Vincitus*, who is punished because of his generosity towards human beings; also in Aristophanes' *Wealth*, where we learn that Wealth is a god blinded by Zeus because of Zeus' grudging. See also Vlastos 1975, 27-8 (especially note 7).

25 See Taylor 1928, 78. Also Crombie 1962, 376.

26 For a detailed analysis on this topic see Vlastos 1973,

81ff.; Gallop 1990, 176ff.

27 Many commentators make this claim; however they don't proceed into further analysis. Vlastos 1975, 28 mentions that the Demiurge's goodness 'opens the way to a radically new idea of piety for the intellectual which the traditionalists would have thought impious: that of striving for similitude to God. If I were in a apposition here to trace out the implications of this idea, I think I could show how inspiring it is and yet disquieting, for it connects with the ominous notion of the philosopher king in the Republic'. Santas 2001, 190-1 takes it for granted that in the *Timaeus* the Form of the Good is presupposed, and that the Demiurge totally grasps this Form in contrast to Socrates in the *Republic* who is afraid that he might look ridiculous had he tried to describe it. Also Silverman 2010, 76 holds that we have to admit the close relation and similarities between philosopher-kings and Demiurge in order to understand the Form of the Good. See also Rickless 2007, 14; Rowe 2007, 131; Seel 2007, 175; Khan 2013, 206.

28 This is the meaning of the myth of Atlantis and its war against Athens. See Johansen 2004, 9.

29 For the tripartite division of the soul in the *Timaeus* see 69d, 87a, and 89e. See also Johansen 2004, 10.

30 Johansen 2004, 10.

31 To be more specific, in *Rep.* 428d5-10 guardianship is called 'knowledge'. However, in this passage knowledge means 'craft'; this is obvious a few lines below, where the 'knowledge' of guardianship is compared with the other kinds of 'knowledge' (428e3), metal-work among them (428d11-e2). A similar example we find also in the *Statesman*, where kingship and policy are called 'craft', and a couple of lines below they are called 'knowledge' (*Polit.* 266e8-11).

32 See 24c4, 35a8, 37d5, 53a7, 53e8, 54c3, 56d5, 74c7, and 75d7. Similar cases can also be found in *Prot.* 320d5 and *Polit.* 273d4.

33 See also *Rep.* 427d.

34 '[...] the person we were praising is really a painter of constitutions' (*Rep.* 501c5-6).

35 Words in *italics* and in brackets in Grube's translation have been added by me.

36 I agree here with Adam 1929, 42 that 'τὸ φύσει δίκαιον is assuredly the Idea of Justice, as opposed to τὸ νόμῳ δίκαιον'.

37 Adam 1929, 42 pinpoints the double meaning of 'ἀνδρείκελον', which means a human image, but it also means in painting the color of the human skin. Plato seems to play here with both meanings. The second meaning fits with painter's task, which mixes and blends various colors in order to achieve the right tone. The first meaning is analogous to 'θεοείκελον', implying that the philosopher desires to make his citizens (and himself) as similar to gods as possible.

38 See for example *Tim.* 41d5, 68c7, 68d5, 57d4, 77a5, 83b6.

39 Guthrie 1975, 543 in his interpretation of 'in heaven', focuses on the religious character of the passage and he underestimates any connection with the theory of Forms.

Without questioning any literary and religious purposes of this passage, I do think that the connection with the theory of Forms is strong, especially when we compare it with *Rep.* 500d4-501c3.

40 It is worth mentioning that in both cases (*Rep.* 540a9 & *Tim.* 46c8) Plato chooses the verb 'χρῶμαι' (*use*): In the *Republic* philosophers-kings 'use' the Form of the Good for putting in order their soul, the citizens' souls and the city; in the *Timaeus* the Demiurge 'uses' the Form of the Good for putting in order the world. In none of these cases is the Good a substitute for the model.

Dialectical Epimeleia: Platonic Care of the Soul and Philosophical Cognition

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue that Plato's notion of the care of the self is his remedy to the psychological malady he refers to as 'wandering'. The wandering self requires care, and a close reading of the Platonic corpus indicates self-cultivation means stabilizing the soul in accordance with its intelligent nature. I then argue that Plato appropriates the ethical injunction to care for the soul and draws from it an important epistemological consequence. Specifically, his view is that a wandering soul's instability renders it incapable of philosophical cognition. To engender a healthy soul, one must participate in dialectic.

Keywords: dialectic, elenchus, care, affect, soul, wander.

In this paper I argue for a set of distinct but interrelated theses; first, I argue that Plato's notion of the care of the self is his remedy to the psychological malady he refers to as 'wandering'. The wandering self requires care, and a close reading of the Platonic corpus indicates that self-cultivation means stabilizing the soul in accordance with its intelligent nature. I then argue that Plato appropriates the ethical injunction to care for the soul and draws from it an important epistemological consequence. Specifically, his view is that a wandering soul's instability renders it incapable of philosophical cognition. The Platonic insight is that grasping formal reality is only possible for a soul that is in a condition similar to its object. To engender this condition, one must participate in dialectic.

In the first section, I articulate Plato's conception of psychic wandering, and in the second section I demonstrate how understanding the soul's convalescence follows from an analysis of its nature. In the third section, I take up the epistemic consequences of maintaining a healthy soul. In section four, I argue that dialectic cares for the soul. I conclude with some speculative remarks about the role of collection and division in caring for the soul. It is my hope that the paper articulates the intimate connection between Platonic psychology and epistemology.

I. PSYCHIC WANDERING

Just before referring to himself as a gadfly in the *Apology*, Socrates claims that his task is to chide those who care for anything other than their souls. He asks his fellow citizens:

Are you not ashamed of [how you care] [ἐπιμελούμενος ὄπως] to possess as much

wealth (χρημάτων), reputation (δόξης), and honors (τιμῆς) as possible, while you do not care (οὐκ ἐπιμελή) for nor give thought to (φροντίζεις) wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?¹ (*Apology* 29d7-29e3)

One notes in this passage both the proper and improper intentional focus of self-cultivation. One must care for the soul above all else. Indeed, one must care so much for it that one is anxious over it, constantly observes its health, and values it above all other things. Socrates later insists that each citizen should not care for his belongings before taking care that he himself should be as good and wise as possible (*Apology* 36c2-d1).² To care for oneself is to care for one's soul, and psychic cultivation retains epimeletic primacy over caring for anything that belongs to us.³

It is Plato's view that to value and otherwise stake one's psychic satisfaction on the things Socrates mentions in the *Apology*—reputation and honor, wealth, and the body—renders the soul fragmented, divided against itself, prone to change and difference.⁴ A soul oriented toward such things wanders on account of this instability. Consider, first, honor and reputation. In the *Republic*, the transition from aristocracy to timocracy occurs when civil war breaks out in the ruling class. The guardians degenerate into timocrats who no longer cultivate virtue but who care (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) only for war and guarding slaves (*Republic* VIII.547b2-c4). The soul of the young timocrat is pulled (ἐλκόμενος) between concern with other people's praise and the advice of his father. The language indicates that his soul is dragged or forcibly drawn away from justice (*Republic* VIII.550a7-b3). His psychic focus shifts to the desires of spirit alone, which is no longer an ally of reason. The closeness of spirit to reason, and hence of honor to

wisdom and virtue, is what makes the honors (τιμῶντες) of the majority most dangerous to a young man with a philosophic nature (*Republic* VI.494a11-495a9).⁵ Despite its closeness to wisdom, when spirit's desire for honor directs the soul, the soul lacks stability.

An example of this in the Socratic dialogues is the opposition between honor and reputation in the eyes of the majority and those who have true wisdom.⁶ The opposition is clearest when Socrates accuses Callicles of shifting back and forth (μεταβαλλόμενος) in order to please his beloved Athenian δῆμος (*Gorgias* 481e1-e4). Whereas Socrates' beloved Alcibiades changes what he says from one moment to the next (ἄλλοτε ἄλλων ἐστὶ λόγων), his other beloved, philosophy, is far less fickle (πολὸν ἤττον ἔμπληκτος), and always stays the same (*Gorgias* 482a5-b2). Socrates asserts that the son of Clinias (ὁ μὲν γὰρ Κλεινίειος οὗτος) is 'of different words'.⁷ The criticism here is not just of what Alcibiades says or believes; it is of Alcibiades himself, who is inconsistent in both word and deed.⁸ To value reputation is to surrender not just one's opinions but also the condition of one's soul to the wandering conventions of the majority.⁹ For Socrates, it is better to have the many disagree with him than to be out of harmony with himself (*Gorgias* 482b7-c3). Above all else, he values psychic stability.

Next, consider wealth. The lover of wisdom in the *Republic* is moderate and not at all a money-lover (φιλοχρήματος) (*Republic* VI.485e3-5). A soul that loves wealth wanders because its lowest part controls reason, which, of all parts of the soul, cares least for wealth and reputation (*Republic* IX.581b5-7). When the soul is oriented toward wealth, reason becomes instrumental to the satisfaction of appetite instead of governing it (*Republic* VIII.553d1-d7). The condition of the oligarch is such that he is

only able to restrain his unnecessary appetites by means of his carefulness (ἐπιμελείας) (*Republic* VIII.554b7-c2).¹⁰ This ‘care’, however, is not truly care at all, but forceful repression of any desire or act that conflicts with the accumulation of wealth. The oligarch is so afraid of losing his possessions that he trembles (τρέμων) (*Republic* VIII.554d3). The metaphor is apt: the oligarchical soul lacks stability.

When the soul cares for wealth, reason and spirit become slaves to appetite.¹¹ Proper psychic order no longer obtains. The oligarch is internally divided because he follows the dictates of appetite (*Republic* VIII.554d9-e1). His orientation is expressed in the language of psychic affect: the oligarch admires and values (θαυμάζειν καὶ τιμᾶν) (*Republic* VIII.553d4-d5) wealth above all else, and dedicates himself exclusively to its pursuit. Once acquired, he does not spend his wealth but hoards it because its possession is his sole ambition or source of pride (φιλοτιμειῖσθαι) (*Republic* VIII.553d6-7). Accumulation of wealth defines the oligarch, and all the while his soul becomes less unified. Consequently, his soul is not untouched by civil war, but is two instead of one; he is neither harmonious nor single-minded (ὁμοιοητικῆς δὲ καὶ ἡρμοσμένης) (*Republic* VIII.554e3-5).

Finally, consider the body. Socrates does not insist one should ignore one’s physical nature but that one care for it appropriately (*Republic* V.464e4-6, VI.498b3-c4).¹² This care, however, means that the soul governs the body and not the other way around. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates claims that if this relationship is inverted and the soul serves (θεραπεύουσα) the body, upon our deaths the soul will roam (κυλινδουμένη) about the graves and monuments of Hades, forced to wander (πλανῶνται) there as a punishment for its association with the body (*Phaedo* 81b1-e3). This warning is not merely a concern for our psychic well

being in the afterworld but an injunction to live properly in the present. The soul wanders (πλανᾶται) when it pursues what is never the same and is confused because of its contact with it (ἐφαπτομένη). The soul is affectively bound to change. A properly conditioned soul, on the other hand, ceases from its wandering (τοῦ πλάνου) when it reorients its focus to the intelligible. When it dwells there, it is in a condition (πάθημα) that is called wisdom (*Phaedo* 79c2-d8). Wisdom here is represented not as something known, but as something lived. It is an affective condition of the soul, a peculiar psychic orientation, the specifics of which I shall return to in section III.

One of the more common ways Plato presents the body as inducing the wandering of the soul is through its attachment to pleasure. To be sure, there are various kinds of pleasures, some pure, others impure, and others a hybrid, not entirely pure, but necessary (*Philebus* 35d8-50e4).¹³ Nonetheless, Plato often depicts those who equate the life of goodness exclusively with the life of bodily pleasure as those who are the most psychically unstable. Socrates clearly shows this in his representation of the tyrant, who, wholly focused on the pleasures of food, drink, sex, and the like, wanders throughout his life (πλανῶνται διὰ βίου), incapable of grasping what is ‘higher up’ (*Republic* IX.585d1ff).¹⁴ The condition of such a soul is like a vessel full of holes, entirely insatiable because it can never be filled up (*Gorgias* 492e7ff). To equate this sort of pleasure with goodness is to render one’s life ‘full of wandering’ (πλάνης) (*Republic* VI.505c6-8).

Plato appropriates the Socratic injunction that we care for ourselves and refigures it into an account of the wandering effect that reputation, wealth, and the body produce in the soul.¹⁵ The fleeting nature of its desiderata renders the soul scattered. Its wandering does

not follow merely from its attempt to cognitively grasp an unknowable object, but from valuing its object and pursuing it to the point that it conforms itself in accordance with the ontological profile of that object. As over and against this wandering, the soul that cares for itself achieves a healthy condition synonymous with organization and order (*Gorgias* 504b4ff, *Phaedrus* 247a8-b3, 256a7-b7, *Republic* IV.443c9-444a2, *Laws* X.898a8-c8).

II. PSYCHIC STABILIZING

To care for the soul is to stabilize its wandering by reorienting its focus in accordance with its intelligent nature.¹⁶ Before his death, Socrates tells his companions in the *Phaedo* that intellect arranges and establishes things (κοσμεῖν καὶ ἔκαστον τιθέναι) to be the best that they can be, and claims that he himself chooses best on the basis of intellect (*Phaedo* 98d6-99b2). The person who cares for his soul is acutely aware of the psychic possibilities of health and sickness because he is familiar with their cause (αἴτιος), intellect (νοῦς). Both conditions presuppose the conformation to or deviation from intellect, which establishes κόσμος, or order. The exercise of intellect engenders a healthy psychic condition, a soul that is properly arranged.¹⁷

Though Plato in the Socratic dialogues does not articulate a philosophically concrete conception of either cause or intellect, Socrates frequently speaks as if caring for anything requires an expertise analogous to training or exercise (*Laches* 186b8-c5, *Euthyphro* 12e1-14b7, *Apology* 24c4-26a7, *Crito* 47a2-48b10).¹⁸ He almost always disclaims for himself any sort of technical knowledge about how to care for the soul.¹⁹ He nonetheless insists that the care of the soul must produce a demonstrable

result of some kind. We witness this for instance in the *Laches*, in which Socrates characterizes the expert in education as someone who, through caring (ἐπιμελεθέντες), is able to make people noble and good (καλοὺς τε κάγαθοὺς ἐποιήσατε) (*Laches* 187a8). Socrates is looking for a teacher who has improved the souls of young people after having treated or attended to them (τεθεραπευκότες) (*Laches* 186a2-b1).²⁰ Similarly in the *Charmides*, Socrates describes the healthy state of the soul as harmony that follows from the correct use of words that affect or modify it.²¹ Words are a kind of charm (ἐπωδή) that enchant the soul and engender moderation within it. Socrates proposes that to treat Charmides' headache, they must care for his soul (θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν) by means of beautiful words (*Charmides* 156d1-157c6).²² Moderation is the condition that purportedly follows from the proper application of words to a soul in need of healing.²³ While a specified articulation of the nature of the care of the soul is absent, it is clear that this activity leads to a psychic condition that is better than the one with which it began.²⁴

The relation between intellect and psychic health is more fully developed at the end of the *Timaeus*.²⁵ Timaeus has just reasserted that there are three distinct types of soul in us that become stronger with exercise (γυμνασίοις) (*Timaeus* 89e3-90b1).²⁶ Intellect is the most sovereign (τοῦ κυριωτάτου) part of the soul, cultivated (ἡδύκóτι) by love of learning and true wisdom.²⁷ Exercise of intellect is thus equated with sovereignty or self-rule.²⁸ It engenders the presence or absence of order in the psyche. Timaeus continues:

Constantly caring [ἀεὶ θεραπεύοντα] for his divine part as he does, keeping well-ordered [κεκοσμημένον] the guiding spirit that that lives within him, he must

be supremely happy. Now there is but one way to care [θεραπεία] for anything, and that is to provide the nourishment and motions that are proper to it. And the motions and revolutions that have an affinity to the divine part in us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe. These, surely, are the ones which each of us should follow. (*Timaeus* 90c4-d1)

By nourishing itself on the thoughts and revolutions of the universe with which it bears a natural kinship, intellect keeps itself well ordered, and consequently, the whole soul is stabilized. If we do not exercise intelligence, the soul is scattered and disorderly (*Phaedrus* 248a1-b5, 253c7-255a1).²⁹ To cultivate intellect is to engender a systemically organized soul, and the soul, generally, is nourished by contemplation of what is most appropriate for it.³⁰

Order in the soul thus follows from the exercise of intellect. As the guardians of the *Republic* maintain order in the whole city by loving wisdom, so intellect maintains order in the soul in the same way.³¹ To exercise intellect is to take care (ἐπιμελήσεται) of the whole soul and care for the community of its parts (κοινῇ πάντων κηδόμενος) (*Republic* IX.589a6-b6).³² When intellect is weak, it does not rule the other parts but serves them (θεραπεύειν) and flatters them (*Republic* IX.590c2-6). Such a soul does not care for itself, and without an intelligent configuration, it lacks stability. For this reason, Socrates insists that we care for children and cities by fostering their best element, which in turn establishes an ordered constitution within them (*Republic* IX.590e1-591a3).³³

I have thus far suggested that the exercise of intellect establishes order and balance in a wandering soul. In section IV I will illustrate the epimeletic role that dialectic and the elenchus play in eliciting this psychic condition. First, in

section III, I will develop the epistemological import of the healthy soul and its relationship to the objects of philosophical cognition.

III. AFFECT AND KNOWING

Plato recognizes the wandering effect produced by honor, wealth, and the body, and classifies such phenomena under the heading of δόξα. To see this, consider the following passage from *Republic* VI:

Since those who are able to grasp what is always the same in all respects are philosophers, while those who are not able to do so and who wander among the many things that vary in every sort of way [οἱ δὲ μὴ ἀλλ' ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ παντοίως ἴσχουσιν πλανώμενοι] are not philosophers, which of the two should be the leaders in a city? (*Republic* VI.484b3-7)

Socrates here develops the distinctions established at the end of Book V, in which the majority of human beings are characterized as lovers of sights and sounds, whose conventions 'roll around' (κυλινδεῖται) as intermediates between what is and what is not (*Republic* V.479d3-10).³⁴ Such objects are marked by constant flux and change, and are therefore unintelligible insofar as they never remain the same. This middle region is not, strictly speaking, knowable, but only opinable (δοξαστόν), a sort of wandering (πλανητόν) intermediate.

This passage and its immediate context in the dialogue seem to be set in a particularly epistemological cast; that is, they seem to illustrate the difference between what can be known and what cannot. To be sure, the objects of δόξα change, whereas the objects of knowledge are always the same. Knowledge is set over what

is, ignorance over what is not. Opinion, the intermediate, is in between what is and what is not (*Republic* V.477a6-b8, 478d3-8). Knowledge and opinion are also capacities of the soul (*Republic* V.478d1-e2). It might seem therefore that the emphasis is peculiarly cognitive, exclusively focused on the soul's ability to know and the content of its knowledge.

The passage, however, is not solely focused on what is known or on the cognitive state of the knower, but also on his affective condition. Those who are not philosophers are characterized as wanderers who are 'lovers' of sights and sounds (φιλήκοοι καὶ φιλοθεάμονες). Because their souls are marked by a desire for the wandering intermediate, they lose themselves (ἴσχουσιν) in the manifold variety of multiplicity. Socrates claims that this psychic orientation indicates that a person is not in his right mind (οὐκ ὑγιαίνει) (*Republic* V.476e1). The difference between the lover of sights and sounds and the philosopher is not merely a matter of the epistemological status of something they claim to know, but also between their affective psychic conditions. The latter 'embraces and loves' (ἀσπάξασθαι τε καὶ φιλεῖν) the objects of knowledge, whereas the former embraces and loves the objects of opinion (*Republic* V.479e10-11). The parallel with honor, wealth, and the body is clear—those who love these things wander, and they are therefore only capable of opining, not knowing.

There is therefore an intimate connection between the affective condition of the soul and the object of its cognition. Such an object is not merely known or opined but desired and longed for. To love doxastic objects makes the soul wander. The philodoxical soul is incapable of grasping intelligible being, not because it intrinsically lacks the capacity to do so, but because it impedes itself from doing so by embracing what wanders. Consequently, it believes

in many beautiful things but not in the beautiful itself (*Republic* 479a1-5).³⁵ The philosophical soul, on the other hand, is able to grasp intelligible reality because it is psychically oriented away from the realm of δόξα. It loves learning that makes clear to it being that always is and does not wander around between coming to be and decaying (*Republic* VI.485a10-b3).

It is of course true that these passages also employ the language of cognition. Socrates and Glaucon for instance agree that because truth is most akin (συγγενῆ) to what is measured (ἔμμετρία)—as opposed to what lacks measure—someone whose thought is by nature measured will more easily see forms (*Republic* VI.486d7-11).³⁶ The opposition on the plane of epistemic truth is clear: the wandering intermediate lacks measure and stability, whereas form is measure, the stable limit that is always the same. To grasp form, the soul must measure and discipline its thinking. Nonetheless, Socrates claims that the person who studies things that are organized and always the same also imitates them (ταῦτα μιμεῖσθαι) and tries to make himself as like them as possible (μάλιστα ἀφομοιοῦσθαι) (*Republic* VI.500b8-7). The emphasis is on complete psychic assimilation. It is not a distinct psychic capacity that I must transform; it is my whole soul. The reason for this is that it is impossible for someone to consort with what he admires without imitating it (ὅτω τις ὀμιλεῖ ἀγάμενος, μὴ μιμεῖσθαι ἐκεῖνο).³⁷ One must conform oneself to what one knows, and this conformation is not primarily expressed in the language of cognition; it is expressed in the language of affect. What I know—indeed, what I can know—is what I admire, desire, and value.³⁸

The lovers of sights and sounds have not made themselves capable of knowing in the strictest sense of the term. They have not cared for themselves. From Plato's own

mouth we hear that knowledge cannot take root (ἐγγίγνεται) in other dispositions (ἐν ἀλλοτρίαις ἔξεσιν). The knowing soul must be affectively akin (συγγενῆ) to the thing it knows (*Letter VII.344a2-4*).³⁹ Once more, the language is instructive. A proper character is required for knowledge to be born within the soul. Knowledge here is not something one acquires instantaneously but is akin to a plant that must germinate and develop over time. A properly cultivated soul is to knowledge as the soil is to the plant; quite literally, it is the ground of growth.

Let us consider more closely the affective condition of the cultivated soul. At the end of Book IX of the *Republic*, Socrates claims that the guardians will foster (θεραπεῦσαντες) the best part of the souls of the children of Kallipolis such that they attain a more valuable state (τιμιωτέραν ἔξι) than solely having a healthy body.⁴⁰ Cultivation of the harmony of the body will always be for the sake of consonance (συμφωνίας) in the soul. As a person of intellect (νοῦν ἔχων), the guardian values the studies (τὰ μαθήματα τιμῶν) that produce this state above all others. He always looks to the constitution within him (ἐν αὐτῷ πολιτείαν) and guards against disturbing it, whether by pursuing irrational pleasure or inordinate wealth. He is also very cautious about honor and avoids anything public or private that might overthrow the established condition of his soul (τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν ἔξι) (*Republic IX.591a5-592a6*). The goal of the pedagogical paradigm of Kallipolis is to engender a balanced soul with an intellectual orientation. This condition is described, as in *Letter VII*, as a ἔξις, a disposition to be in harmony with oneself and to desire to be so because one values it.⁴¹ The guardian values this stability so much that he does not solely seek to know something stable; he wants to cultivate stability within himself. He carefully attends to his own psychic health and

that of future generations, protecting against those sorts of pursuits that splinter or divide the soul. He values, above all, those μαθήματα that produce this psychic stability.

This parallel between the condition of the soul and the objects of epistemology is also present just before Socrates presents the allegory of the cave. No sooner has Glaucon articulated the distinctions between the four sections of the divided line than Socrates claims that, for each section, there is a corresponding affective condition in the soul (παθήματα ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ) (*Republic VI.511d6-e3*).⁴² For each kind of (purportedly) knowable object, there exists simultaneously a related psychic condition. The philosopher seeks out and engages those μαθήματα that elicit from within himself the most stable of all πάθημα. Socrates claims that the objects at the second level of the line, when compared to their images on the first level, are not only thought to be more clear but also to be valued as such (ἐναργέσι δεδοξασμένοις τε καὶ τετιμημένοις) (*Republic VI.511a7-8*). Whatever its condition, the soul values and therefore desires a correspondent type of object. When a wandering soul begins to care for itself and seek stability, it thereby opens up the possibility of its own affective relation with a different sort of desideratum than it previously valued. The philosopher is able to grasp the form, the highest kind of desideratum, because he cares for himself. In the final section, I suggest that dialectic engenders the condition of wisdom and simultaneously renders the soul capable of philosophical cognition.

IV. DIALECTICAL EPIMELEIA

The philosopher in the *Republic* has a clear model in his soul that distinguishes him from the soul that is blind (τυφλῶν) (*Republic VI.484c6*). It is precisely this blindness of soul that dialectic is meant to overcome. The goal is similar in the

Phaedo. Socrates claims that he must be careful to avoid the experience (δὲν εὐλαβηθῆναι μὴ πάθοιμι) of those who ruin their eyes when looking at a solar eclipse (*Phaedo* 99d4-e6). His fear is that, if he tried to grasp things only with his senses, his soul would be blinded (τὴν ψυχὴν τυφλωθείην). The emphasis here is not only on the true object of knowledge but also on the condition of the soul. Socrates must look after or carefully attend to his psychic orientation lest he come to harm. He previously told his companions that when the soul investigates by itself without the aid of the senses, it ceases its wandering and instead enjoys the condition of wisdom.⁴³ Read together, the passages suggest that this blindness should be read metaphorically, as ‘baffled’ or ‘confused’.

Socrates’ proposed solution to his confused psychic condition is to investigate a kind of cause (αἰτία) that will bring stability (*Phaedo* 100c3-e3). He does not hesitate to leave the precise nature of participation unresolved because it is his own psychic health that is his chief concern. To claim that beautiful things are beautiful by participation in the Beautiful is to cling to the kind of cause that is safest (ἀσφαλέστατον). To posit such causes is safe (ἀσφαλές) because in holding firmly to them, the soul will never fall (πεσεῖν). The soul is safe insofar as it is firm or steadfast. To achieve this psychic safety Socrates proposes a method of hypothesis, in which the original hypothesis is itself also subject to hypothetical revision. To engage this method is to take up the task of psychic self-transformation. Whether this method is identical to dialectic in the *Republic* is a question of considerable debate, focused principally on the stopping point of the two procedures and the suspicion that the method in the *Phaedo* is alleged to be second best. Whatever the case, if the method of hypothesis in the *Phaedo* is not identical to dialectic in the *Republic*, it is at least dialectical in the sense that it involves the pursuit

of a higher hypothesis and refusal to cease until one reaches an adequate stopping point.⁴⁴

The adequacy of this stopping point is also expressed in the *Republic* in terms of safety or security. To be sure, dialectic in the *Republic* is the final subject that the guardians study, described as both the power (δύναμις) and science (ἐπιστήμη) by which one grasps the intelligible realm, a journey apart from all sense perceptions to find being itself (*Republic* VI.511b3-d5, VII.534e2-535a1, VII.536d5-8).⁴⁵ However, Socrates also claims that dialectic is the method (μέθοδος) by which the ‘eye of the soul’ is drawn out of the murkiness of the realm of δόξα and its focus reoriented (*Republic* VII.533c6-e2). Dialectic converts (μεταστραφῆσεται) the soul, where conversion is understood as the soul’s ‘turning around’ (περιαγωγή) (*Republic* VII.518d3-7).⁴⁶ The final step in this process, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to a first principle, is undertaken for the purpose of making the soul secure (ἵνα βεβαιώσῃται) (*Republic* VII.533d1).⁴⁷ One engages in dialectic, therefore, not solely for the purpose of grasping an eternally stable object of cognition, but also to psychically stabilize oneself and maintain that condition when faced with the threat of wandering.⁴⁸

It might be objected that dialectic on this account presupposes the very psychic stability it is supposed to engender. One thinks, for instance, of Meno, whom Socrates says refuses to rule himself (σαυτοῦ ἄρχειν) and inquire into the nature of virtue before asking whether or not virtue can be taught (*Meno* 86d3-87c3). Meno is an interlocutor who seems to lack any sort of psychic discipline, hastening to find an answer without having properly asked the question. If, however, dialectic assumes psychic stability on the part of its interlocutor, how, without falling into circularity, can one argue that psychic stability is the goal of

dialectic? One cannot affirm psychic stability as both a condition of possibility for dialectic and its goal without begging the question. The reply that Socrates does, after all, attempt to engage Meno dialectically, will not suffice because Socrates proposes not the dialectical use of hypotheses but the dianoetic; he and Meno will use hypotheses in the way geometers use them.⁴⁹ What recourse does one have for the recalcitrant interlocutor who refuses to participate in dialectic?

Plato's answer to this question, I believe, is the elenchus.⁵⁰ Consider a passage from the *Sophist* (230b4-d4), in which the Eleatic Visitor stresses the necessity of the wandering soul's being made aware of its wandering.⁵¹ The Visitor and Theaetetus are discussing kinds of dividing, and call them by the name discrimination, or division (*διακριτική*). Within *διακριτική* there is separation of like from like—which here receives no name—and separation of the worse from the better, which is called purification (*καθαρτική*). The Visitor characterizes *καθαρτική* as a method of words (*τῆ τῶν λόγων μεθόδῳ*) aimed at acquiring intelligence (*νοῦς*) and understanding relations between kinds of expertise (*Sophist* 226c3-227b6). The practitioner brings this method to bear on two distinct kinds of badness (*κακῶν γένη*) or psychic ailments. The first is wickedness (*πονηρία*), aligned with injustice and insolence. This is the psychic equivalent of sickness or disease (*νόσον*) in the body, understood as discord amongst elements that are naturally of the same kind. Such a soul's beliefs conflict with its desires, its pleasures with its anger, and its pains with its reason (*Sophist* 228a1-b10). As medicine is the cure to a discordant body, so correction (*κολαστική*), akin to justice, is the cure for wickedness.

The second kind of psychic ailment, ignorance (*ἄγνοια*), receives a more detailed treatment

in the text. It is the psychic equivalent of ugliness (*ἄισχος*) or absence of measurement (*ἀμετρία*) in the body (*Sophist* 228c10-d6). We must bear this in mind: because philosophical cognition cannot occur in a soul without measure, the ignorant soul cannot, strictly speaking, know anything. As gymnastics is the cure for the disproportioned body, so teaching (*διδασκαλική*) is the right treatment for ignorance. The situation is complex, however, because ignorance itself comes in two kinds, the most dangerous of which is not knowing but thinking that one knows (*Sophist* 229b7-c7). This is the only kind of ignorance called lack of learning (*ἀμαθία*). The Visitor indicates that the most effective treatment for this condition is not mere admonishment; instead, the person must undergo cross-examination (*ἐλεγχος*):

They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects.⁵² Those people who are being examined see this, get angry with themselves (*ἑαυτοῖς χαλεπαίνουσι*), and become calmer toward others (*πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ἡμεροῦνται*). They lose (*ἀπαλλάττονται*) their inflated and rigid beliefs about themselves (*περὶ αὐτοῦς*) that way, and no loss is pleasanter to hear or has a more lasting (*βεβαιοτάτα*) effect on them. (*Sophist* 230b6-c3)

While the object of the elenchus is seemingly the beliefs of the interlocutor, it is the interlocutor himself who undergoes a psychic transformation. The interlocutor is awakened to his ignorance and is 'set free' or 'released from' (*ἀπαλλάττονται*) his mistaken beliefs, not about any specific opinion, but about himself. This moment

of reflexive self-disclosure, in which the soul sees itself displayed in its own ignorance, is enough to bring pause to the interlocutor and provide him with an initial, albeit minimal, degree of stability for participating in dialectic.⁵³

The elenchus therefore does not just show a contradiction of beliefs but reveals to the interlocutor his own wandering. The emphasis here is on the psychic condition of the interlocutor, not only on what he believes. The soul is angry with itself, ashamed (αἰσχύνῃ) in the face of its own contradictions, and consequently calmer with others.⁵⁴ The elenchus renders the person less combative to dialectical questioning (*Sophist* 230d1-4).⁵⁵ The overall psychic effect of the elenchus is βεβαιότατα, just as the final step of dialectic is undertaken to make the soul secure (ἵνα βεβαιώσῃται).⁵⁶ The elenchus has a ‘steadying’ or ‘firming’ effect, and its consequence is a soul aware of its own wandering, ready to become more stable through the work of dialectic.

V. CONCLUSION

I have argued that for Plato, dialectical self-cultivation disciplines psychic wandering and establishes a healthy intellectual disposition. To love wisdom is not just to love a particular epistemic object but to value and desire a specific comportment. For this reason, Plato insisted that students at his own school train in dialectic, not merely as an exercise in logical reasoning, but because he demanded they undergo an ἄσκησις, or spiritual transformation.⁵⁷ It is of course true that dialectic can yield important epistemological results, but it is equally true that it does so because it engenders an existential transformation in the interlocutor.

I wish to make one final point about dialectic as care of the soul vis a vis the method of collection and division. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates identifies himself as a lover of divisions and collections and identifies those who are capable of making them as dialecticians. The dialectician collects many scattered things into one kind (ιδέα) and then divides each according to its species (ἔιδη) (*Phaedrus* 265d3-266c9). The method also appears in the *Philebus* (18b6-d2).⁵⁸ It is however in the *Statesman* that there is particular focus on the structural features of dialectic. The Visitor from Elea tells young Socrates that we do not engage in dialectic in order to answer just one set of questions. One asks a student a question about the letters composing a word, for instance, not solely for the sake of answering that one question. We practice dialectic for the sake of becoming better dialecticians concerning all subjects (μᾶλλον τοῦ περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικωτέροις γίγνεσθαι) (*Statesman* 285c8-d7). If someone were to argue that a shorter account is better than a longer, it would have to be on the grounds that it makes the partners in discussion better dialecticians. What this amounts to, specifically, is that it would have to make them better at explaining in words the things that are (τῆς τῶν ὄντων λόγῳ δηλώσεως) (*Statesman* 287a1-6). Similarly, the length of an account is not important; what matters is its ability to render the hearer better at discovering the truth (*Statesman* 286d7-e3). Whatever the content, collection and division improves the soul.

None of this, of course, is to say that dialectical content is irrelevant. It is however to insist that, as Nicias cautions Lysimachus in the *Laches*, by conversing (διαλεγόμενος) with Socrates one is inevitably turned around by his words (περιαγόμενον τῷ λόγῳ). One is transformed

through philosophical conversation, or at least rendered pliable to self-transformation. Nicias claims that the interlocutor submits to questions about himself and his way of life, and consequently will take greater pains (προμηθέστερον) over himself, always valuing learning (ἀξιοῦντα μανθάνειν) (*Laches* 187d6-188c3). While the conversation begins with the question of the best way to raise the young boys Thucydides and Aristides, the interlocutors themselves are affected.

Dialectic is not merely a theoretically conceived abstract procedure, but a lived, performable activity for individuals seeking to care for themselves in accordance with their natures. It makes philosophical cognition possible because, as care of the soul, it transforms the interlocutor so that he values wisdom over the wandering objects of δόξα.⁵⁹ The soul that consistently cares for itself becomes thereby the stable ground for the disclosure of intelligible reality.⁶⁰ On this reading of dialectic as care of the soul, a full account of Platonic epistemology takes seriously not just the eternal stability of the knowable formal object but also the temporal psychic condition of the actively knowing subject.

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NOTES

- 1 The citations refer to the Greek of Burnet 1900-1907. All translations are from Cooper 1997. That translation has this line as, "are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess [...]". My modification is to add further emphasis to the theme of care in the passage. Cf. 31b4-5—Socrates approaches like a father or elder brother to persuade people to care for virtue—and 41e2-42a2—Socrates asks his fellow citizens to exhort his own children to care for virtue.
- 2 Cf. 30a7-b4. Socrates seems to suggest elsewhere that one who does not care for wisdom is somehow less than human. See *Apology* 38a5-6—the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being (ἀνθρώπων)—and *Republic* IX.588c2ff—the rational part of the soul is likened to a human being, spirit to a lion, and appetite to a many-headed beast.
- 3 Cf. *Alcibiades I* 127e8-128d11: one does not cultivate oneself when one cares for one's possessions.
- 4 Cf. *Laws* IV.715d7-716b7: a man who prides himself on wealth or honors or physical beauty is a cause of universal chaos.
- 5 Cf. VI.493a6-c8: the danger of sophists is that they tend to the moods and appetites of the δῆμος, learning its convictions (πολλῶν δόγματα), and call this wisdom.
- 6 *Crito* 44c6-9, 48a5-b10—Socrates claims we should not care about what the majority think (τῆς τῶν πολλῶν δόξης)—and *Euthydemus* 303c5-d1—Socrates praises Euthydemus and Dionysodorus because they care (μέλει) nothing for the many or the seemingly important (τῶν σεμνῶν), but only those (purportedly) wise. Cf. *Phaedo* 82b10-d7—philosophers are not afraid of the poverty feared by the many, nor of dishonor and ill repute (ἀτιμίαν τε καὶ ἄδοξίαν), but care for their souls (μέλει τῆς ἑαυτῶν ψυχῆς).
- 7 Anton 1980, 52-59, argues that to hold contradictory beliefs is indicative of 'inner chaos', and that inconsistent speech betrays this inner chaos. Cf. *Alcibiades I* 112d8-10—because Alcibiades' opinion about justice wanders (πλανᾷ), he does not know it—and 117a8-118b4—we don't know something if our opinion wanders (πλανᾷ) about it, and we ourselves won't wander if we are made aware of our ignorance.
- 8 Cf. *Alcibiades I* 131e10-132a7—Socrates worries that Alcibiades will become a lover (δημεραστής) of the people—and *Symposium* -216a5-b5: when he is not in Socrates' presence, Alcibiades yields to his desire to receive favors from the crowd (τῆς τιμῆς τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν).
- 9 We find the same criticism directed at sophists in the opening pages of the *Timaeus*, 19e2-8: because sophists wander (πλανητῶν) between cities, their representation of the statesman misses the mark.
- 10 Cf. *Republic* VIII.552e1-3.
- 11 Cf. *Republic* VIII.556a4-b5: citizens in oligarchy should be compelled to care (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) about virtue.
- 12 Cf. *Timaeus* 88b5-c6—we should always exercise soul and body together. Doing so will bring order and

regularity to those elemental disturbances that wander (πλανώμενα) all over the body (88e3-4)—and *Laws* XII.962d1-5: the body must possess virtue in all its completeness, which means it will not take ‘erratic aim’ (μὴ πλανᾶσθαι).

13 In the course of the *Philebus* Protarchus and Socrates agree that a mixed life of intelligence and pleasure is best. See 63a6-64a6 for a hypothetical conversation in which both pleasures and intellectual powers speak; their agreement is that the mixed life will contain intellectual activity, pure bodily pleasure, and ‘necessary’ bodily pleasure. The impure bodily pleasures are omitted insofar as their carelessness (ἀμέλειαν) prevents the exercise of the intellectual powers. See Moes 2000, 113-161, for a systematic overview of the *Philebus* as an account of the care of the soul.

14 Cf. the frenzied democratic soul (*Republic* VIII.561a6-c5) in which all appetites are valued equally.

15 The ‘wandering’ metaphor remains into the late works. In the *Sophist* (230b4-d4), a soul whose opinions wander or vary is one that will learn nothing until it is made aware of its wandering through refutation and cross-examination. Cf. *Statesman* 309a5-6: those who roam about (κυλινομένους) in ignorance are like slaves, as opposed to those who are virtuous. Note also that, in the Socratic dialogues, Socrates often depicts himself as wandering. He speaks of his ‘journeyings’ (τὴν ἔμην πλάνην) in response to the riddle of the oracle at Delphi (*Apology* 22a6), claims that he ‘goes back and forth’ (πλανῶμαι) because he cannot state for sure whether people do wrong voluntarily or involuntarily (*Lesser Hippias* 372d2-e1), and insists that if we look at things the right way we never wander (ἐπλανώμεθα) (*Lysis* 213e1-3). Cf. *Lesser Hippias* 376b8-c6: Socrates wavers (πλανῶμαι) and never believes the same thing. That an ordinary person should waver (πλανᾶσθαι) is not surprising, but if the wise man also does it (πλανῆσθε), it is a problem because ordinary people should be able to stop their wavering (τῆς πλάνης) in the company of the wise. Cf. also *Greater Hippias* 304b7-c4: though Hippias knows what activities a man should practice, Socrates says he is always wandering around (πλανῶμαι) and getting stuck in aporia (ἀπορώ). 16 Cf. *Timaeus* 47c1-4: though the revolutions of our souls wander (πεπλανημένας), we can stabilize them by imitating the unwandering (ἀπλανεῖς) revolutions of the god. Cf. *Laws* X.896e8-897a3 for the different motions in the soul. On becoming like god, cf. *Phaedrus* 248a1-5, *Republic* X.613a8, *Laws* VI.716c1-d4, *Timaeus* 90a2-7, *Theaetetus* 176a5-b8. See also Sedley 2000.

17 The same function can also be predicated of the soul itself in relation to body. As intellect orders soul, soul orders body. See *Gorgias* 465c7-e1: if the soul didn’t govern the body and the body judged the good only on the basis of the pleasant, there could be no distinction between medicine and pastry-baking, and the world of Anaxagoras would prevail. Cf. *Phaedo* 98aff in which Socrates laments that Anaxagoras gives up the notion of cause. For detailed treatment of exercising intellect and ordering the soul, see Ambury 2015.

18 Cf. *Meno* 91a6-92d5. Though some scholars doubt the authenticity of the *Clitophon*, the opening speech (407b1-e2) is clearly Socratic. Clitophon takes on Socrates’ voice and chastises the people of Athens for accumulating wealth that they leave to their sons but not finding “anybody to exercise and train (μελετητόν τε καὶ ἀσκητόν) them adequately”, and for not undergoing such treatment (ἐθεραπεύσατε) themselves.

19 Cf. *Apology* 19e1-20c3—in which Socrates has no expert knowledge in human excellence—with the above quoted passage on the care of the soul (29d7-29e3). Cf. *Gorgias* 521d6-522a7, in which Socrates claims he is one of the few practitioners of the true political craft (ἀληθῶς πολιτικῆ τέχνη) because he seeks to improve the souls of citizens.

20 Cf. *Meno* 92d7-94e2, *Alcibiades I* 110d9-112d7.

21 See Hutter 2001 for the view that in the *Charmides* words destabilize the self to render possible a new, more complete and inclusive order of self. For this destabilization understood as aporia, see Erler 1987, 211ff.

22 On the psychotherapeutic use of ἐπωδή, see Lain-Entralgo 1958. Cf. Socrates’ insistence on conversation as opposed to long speeches in *Gorgias* 447b9-c4, 448c2-449d7, and *Alcibiades I* 106b1-c2. In *Protagoras* 335a9ff, Socrates threatens to leave his conversation with Protagoras because the latter refuses to engage in dialectic (διαλέγεσθαι).

23 See Tulli 1996, who argues that Socratic questioning itself takes on the features of an ἐπωδή.

24 See Christiansen 2000, who argues that ἄρετη in the *Apology* is closely aligned with νοῦς.

25 Cf. *Statesman* 281e7-10: as opposed to contributory causes (συναίτιους) such as spindles, shuttles, and other tools, causes in the strict sense (αἰτίας) are those that ‘look after’ (θεραπευούσας) and make clothes.

26 On the parts of the soul in *Timaeus* see 69c5-70c1, 87a3-4.

27 Cf. *Alcibiades I* 133b7-c7.

28 Cf. *Republic* I.353d3-7—in which Socrates lists the distinct functions of soul that it alone performs: caring, ruling, and deliberating (τὸ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καὶ ἄρχειν καὶ βουλευέσθαι)—and *Republic* I.345d3-e3—every kind of rule seeks nothing other than what is best for what it rules and cares for (ἀρχομένω τε καὶ θεραπευομένω).

29 Cf. *Laws* X.897a1—in which ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and βουλευέσθαι are listed as motions of the soul—and *Laws* X.897a3-b5—a soul may either cleave to divine intellect (νοῦν) or ally itself with absence of intellect (ἀνοίῳ). In the latter case, the soul is unbalanced and disorganized (μανικῶς τε καὶ ἀτάκτως).

30 Cf. *Phaedrus* 247c3-e6, in which the soul is nourished by contemplating intelligible reality.

31 The parallel of course follows from Socrates’ analogy of the city and soul at *Republic* II.368e2-369a4. Cf. *Republic* IV.440e8-441a4. Socrates’ critique of everyday Athenian politicians follows from this position. See *Gorgias* 515e2-516d4: Pericles was a caretaker (ἐπεμέλετο) of men who should have made them more just while he cared (ἐπεμελείτο) for them. Cf. *Meno* 94a4-d3 and *Alcibiades*

I 118c3-119a7. See also *Laws* I.650b6-9—insight into the nature and disposition of human souls is useful to the art of politics, which is meant to care (θεραπεύειν) for them—and *Statesman* 275e3-8—statesmanship should be aligned with caring (τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν) rather than rearing (τὴν τροφήν). Cf. *Laws* VII.809a3-6—someone who cares for the education of the youth (ἐπιμελούμενους τῆς τῶν παίδων τροφῆς) must direct their development in accordance with goodness. In the latter passage τροφή is subordinated to proper caring.

32 This holds also in the *Phaedrus*: the helmsman (intellect) maintains order between the white and dark horses (spirit and appetite) by pursuing the realm of being. Cf. Socrates' claim in *Gorgias* 516d4-e7 that Cimon—and even Themistocles—was a bad politician because the people he served (ἐθεράπευεν) ostracized him, which would not have happened had he been a good politician. After all, a good driver does not fall out of his chariot but after he has cared for (θεραπεύσασιν) his horses. Cf. *Laws* X.902d2-e2: the helmsman, like the doctor treating (θεραπεύειν) the whole body, will attend to small parts as well as the whole.

33 On the city, see *Statesman* 305e2-6: statesmanship cares for (ἐπιμελουμένην) every aspect of the city by weaving all its elements together. On children, see *Laches* 179a4-b6: Lysimachus and Melesias do not want to permit their children to do whatever they wish, but seek instead to take care (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) of them, and to know how, being so cared for (θεραπευθέντες), they might become the best they can be. On the principle generally, see *Charmides* 156c1-6: good doctors treat (θεραπεύσαι) and cure the part along with the whole.

34 Cf. *Republic* V.476a9-b8.

35 Cf. *Symposium* 210a4-211d1.

36 Cf. *Protagoras* 356c8-e4: “The power of appearance makes us wander (ἐπλάνα) all over the place.” The remedy in this passage for wandering is measurement, which brings “peace of mind firmly rooted in truth.”

37 Cf. *Republic* IX.585c1-3. On imitation of ordered patterns in the upbringing of the young guardians, cf. *Republic* II.377a4-c5, 395b8-396e3, 403d7-e3.

38 Cf. *Phaedo* 64d8-e3—the philosopher doesn't value (τιμᾶν) bodily ornaments but rather devalues or despises (ἀτιμάζειν) them—and 68b8-68c3—the man who fears death is not a lover of wisdom but a lover of body (φιλοσώματος), and a lover of money (φιλοχρήματος) and honor (φιλότιμος). While the *Phaedo* often refers to affects as if they are located in the body, there is also a moment at which Cebes claims that he himself is not afraid of death, but rather it is the ‘child inside’ which is (77e5). Erler 2004 argues that we find here a foreshadowing of the irrational dimension of the soul that appears in the *Republic*, and the *Phaedo* therefore assumes what is made explicit elsewhere, i.e., that affects are psychic. See Notomi 2011—who argues that ‘body,’ in Plato, and specifically in the *Phaedo*, may be understood as a category including wealth, reputation, honor, and physical health—and Sassi 2011—who argues that despite its dualistic tone, the *Phaedo* does in fact depict affects as ‘felt’ in the soul. For

importance of the presence of emotion in the text of the *Phaedo* and its effect on readers, see Gallop 1999.

39 There is another sort of knowledge lurking here that I cannot take up in detail, i.e., self-knowledge. Suffice it to say, I agree with Gonzalez's claim (1998, 270) with regard to *Letter VII* that, “all knowledge of a thing will be inseparable from self-knowledge; without this kind of affinity between subject and object there simply can be no knowledge.”

40 Cf. *Symposium* 210b6-7.

41 Cf. *Republic* VI.485d6-e2: when someone's desires incline strongly for one thing, they are thereby weakened for others. Gill 1985, 18-21 reads this passage as the best evidence Plato provides for the way in which education can actually affect desire, which Plato frequently describes as beyond rational persuasion.

42 This point has not received enough attention in the literature, and where it has, scholars neglect the language of affect—Bloom 1968, 403 speaks of the soul's levels of ‘cognition’; Mueller 1992, 184 calls παθήματα ‘mental states’; Denyer 2007, 290 uses mental ‘event’ and ‘state of mind’.

43 Cf. n26 above.

44 This is one of the similarities between the two for which Byrd 2007 argues. The other is that in both procedures, higher hypotheses entail lower ones. For a brief summary of the scholarship surrounding this issue, see Byrd 2007, n1. For a recent monograph that argues that dialectic is the method of hypothesis correctly employed, see Benson 2015.

45 Cf. *Republic* VII.532a1-e3.

46 Cf. *Republic* VII.514b2: the prisoners in the cave are incapable of turning around (περιάγειν).

47 Gonzalez's exhaustive note on βεβαιουῖσθαι (1998, 222 n27) and the kind of certainty at work in this passage is instructive: “the ‘stability’ attained through the dialectical process is the *fixity of the mind's gaze* on its eternal, intelligible objects (the good, in particular).”

48 Cf. *Parmenides* 135b5-e7, in which Parmenides is impressed by young Socrates' insistence on the existence of forms and his refusal to allow Zeno to remain among visible things and observe their wandering (τὴν πλάνην) between opposites (135e2). While Parmenides' argument against young Socrates' account of the forms here is well known, he nonetheless insists that one needs forms; without them, one has no place to turn his thought and in this way will destroy the power of dialectic.

49 That their conversation fails to yield an answer is no objection to the philosophical worth of using hypotheses. Socrates claims that they will use hypotheses specifically as geometers use them, leaving open the possibility the problem is not with the use of hypotheses but with the geometers themselves who insist on using hypotheses dianoetically. See Benson 2012.

50 See Sebo 2004 for the argument that, methodologically, we might view the elenchus and dialectic as two parts of the same argument procedure. Indeed, too much, I think, has been made of the differences between these procedures so as to ignore not just their similarities but

their interrelation. I agree with Thesleff's general characterization of dialectic (2000, 58) as "dialogic argument conducted by a philosopher, either destructively (elenctically) or constructively, either synthetically ('synoptically') or analytically ('diacritically, 'diharetically')".

51 Cf. n31 above.

52 Cf. *Republic* 484b3-4—the true object of philosophical cognition is self-same—and *Gorgias* 482a7-8—philosophy always says the same thing.

53 Thus Alderman 1973 argues that Euthyphro, for instance, must be delivered *to* his belief before he can be delivered *from* it. Ambury 2011 calls this process 'displacement'.

Refutation thus opens up the possibility of dialectical engagement. Such engagement is, of course, not guaranteed, as Meno himself is perplexed but still impatient. This view of the elenchus is pace Ryle 1966—who argues that the elenchus only refutes the interlocutor but has no constructive result—and also Vlastos 1983—who argues that the elenchus establishes the truth or falsity of individual propositions.

My position on the elenchus is thus consistent with Benson 2000, 17-98, who argues that the elenchus is non-constructivist in the sense that it does not show the truth or falsity of individual answers but instead shows the interlocutor his 'doxastic inconsistency'. It is also consistent with Brickhouse and Smith 1994, 17, who argue that the elenchus achieves a 'destructive' goal: the openness of an interlocutor to reconsider what he thought he already knew.

54 Cf. *Gorgias* 461b5, 482d2 and *Symposium* 216b5-c3 on the elenchus inducing shame.

55 Cf. *Republic* I.350d3—Thrasymachus participates in conversation much more willingly after Socrates defeats him and he blushes. For the view that shame is a necessary prerequisite for the development of philosophy, see Eisenstadt 2001.

56 Cf. n79 above.

57 Hadot 2002, 62-70. This is pace Richard Robinson 1953 and the account of Plato's 'earlier dialectic', which treats dialectic exclusively as logical analysis without attending to it as a lived exercise that heals the soul.

58 In this passage it is the method for Theuth's dividing and subdividing the vowels and letters. Cf. *Philebus* 14d8-e4, 23e3-6, and 48d4-49c5, in which Socrates insists that they continue with their division (διαπετέον) of ignorance.

59 Thus Evans 2003 argues that the notion of dialectic as a method for reaching objective truth can be reconciled with dialectic conceived as an argument procedure constrained by the rational convictions of interlocutors.

60 This does not render Platonic philosophy idealist but rather acknowledges—as Cushman 2002, 272, writes in his characterization of Platonic philosophy as therapeia—that "the Socratic principle of self-knowledge gave recognition to the obvious but easily ignored fact that reality is not known, save as it is apprehended by knowing subjects [...] *man indeed reflects or mirrors reality, but he mirrors an objective Ideal Structure which measures man*". Cushman later characterizes the result of therapeia as "agreement with one's self—by being in accord with the soul that has native kinship with divine reality" (300).

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**1. TRABATTONI'S
 INTERPRETATION OF PLATO'S
 EPISTEMOLOGY**

Essays on Plato's Epistemology is the first book-length publication in English on Plato by Franco Trabattoni (henceforth T.); a renowned Italian Plato scholar. The book collects fourteen essays on Plato's epistemology, written between 2002 and 2013.¹ In the first part of this review I consider the book's arguments, many of which shed new light on some of the most extensively discussed issues in Plato's epistemology, challenging the reader to rethink the assumptions and arguments supporting the traditional interpretations. Then, in the second part, I outline some considerations.

The first significant contribution arises from the way in which T. places his view between two competing interpretations. According to the first group, the unitarians, there is a set of fixed and coherent beliefs that run throughout Plato's dialogues; at the heart of Plato's philosophical project there is a single picture that is explored from different view-points. According to the second group, the developmentalists, Plato's dialogues are filled with twists and turns. Just as it is common to speak of "early" and "late" Heidegger or Wittgenstein, so analogously, these scholars argue, it is natural to speak of different stages in Plato's thought as well: the views expressed in the early dialogues differ from those of the middle dialogues, which in turn differ from those of the late dialogues. One of the most compelling reasons for denying unity in Plato's thought is found in the *Theaetetus*. Although this dialogue comes after the positive results Plato has achieved in the middle dialogues, it has an aporetic nature. What is more, explicit references to the Forms, which are traditionally taken to be at the core of Plato's thought, are entirely lacking in the *Theaetetus*.

In addressing this issue, T. suggests an unorthodox solution. On the one hand, he criticizes Francis Macdonald Cornford (1935) – one of the most influential unitarian scholars – and likeminded scholars who argue that:²

(C1). 'No definition of *epistēmê* may be provided without referring to the Ideas' (p. 65). That is to say, Forms are the only authentic objects of knowledge. Since the *Theaetetus* seeks to extract knowledge from sensible objects, it is doomed to end in an *aporia*.

(C2). It is necessary to exorcise the monstrous presence of skepticism from Plato's thought (p. 101). Plato's philosophical thought has a conclusive character; its aim is to fully grasp the Ideas.

T. rejects both claims by arguing that:

(T1). C1 is untenable because while it is true that the first part of the *Theaetetus* refers to *doxa* as the knowledge of sensible reality (what T. calls *doxa*), it is also true that the second and third parts of the dialogue refer to a different type of knowledge, i.e. intellectual knowledge. This later type of knowledge is not the result of sense-perception but rather of the judgment (what T. calls *doxa*_i) that is inwardly stated by the soul itself when it ends the inquiry (p.19). Since Cornford's analysis addresses only sensible knowledge, his interpretation should be rejected.

(T2). C2 is untenable insofar as it wrongly assumes that Plato's philosophical thought is either dogmatic or sceptical, excluding the possibility of a third alternative. More precisely, on the premises that (C2.1) Plato's philosophical thought is dogmatic, i.e. human knowledge fully grasps Forms, which are the only objects of knowledge, and that (C2.2) the *Theaetetus*

denies the possibility of knowledge as it ends with an *aporia*, Cornford reaches the conclusion that (C2.3), in the *Theaetetus*, Plato shows what knowledge is not (*pars destruens*). Since Plato is not a sceptic, the *Theaetetus* clarifies that *epistēmê* is not sensible knowledge but rather knowledge of the Forms.

T. denies Cornford's conclusion (C 2.3) by rejecting (C2.1). He argues that 'Plato believes the achievement of philosophical truth to never be final in character, yet without falling back into skepticism' (p. 159 n. 38). By assuming that knowledge is provisional and that it consists in the intellectual knowledge of the second and third part of the dialogue, T. argues that it is possible to find something that Plato held to be true (*pars construens*) in the *Theaetetus* (p. 26). This, according to T., is the precisely the impossibility of reaching infallible knowledge, since human knowledge is always provisional and contaminated with a doxastic element.

T.'s interpretation appeals to two central arguments: (T2.1) knowledge does not consist in sense-perception (*pars destruens*); (T2.2) intellectual knowledge is not infallible because human thought can never free itself from *doxa*, and thus from the possibility of error (*pars construens*). This does not entail, as the author clarifies, that Plato denies 'that men may have access to genuine truth (as opposed to falsehood); what he denies is that men may be certain to have acquired this in an incontrovertible and absolute fashion' (p. 81).

In order to corroborate this thesis, T. turns firstly to the object of the *Theaetetus*, and argues that the *epistēmê* under enquiry is conceived as final and infallible knowledge; that type of knowledge that in the *Symposium* is said to be the privilege of the Gods (pp. 68-70). Secondly, by focusing on the second conception of *doxa* (*doxa*_i), he argues that there is a constitutive

weakness in our human nature that prevents us from reaching the infallible knowledge that is the object of the *Theaetetus*. The evidence for this second argument comes from the passage on thought as an inner dialogue. T.'s interpretation runs as follows: if thinking (*Theait.* 189 e 4: τὸ διανοεῖσθαι) is a λόγος that the soul has with itself (*Theait.* 189 e 6: αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἢ ψυχή) and if the conclusion that the soul reaches through question and answer is a δόξα, then it is not possible to disentangle λόγος from δόξα. Λόγος and δόξα are intrinsically interwoven with each other and, as a result, a subjective element is introduced into human thought; the final result of thought (*Soph.* 264 b 1: δόξα δὲ διανοίας ἀποτελεῦτησις) is belief, which can be either false or true (*Soph.* 264 a 8). In principle any judgment could eventually turn out to be false, and thus there could be truth but not certainty. This weakness of the λόγος is what impedes human thought from reaching infallible knowledge.

On the other hand, turning to the second group, i.e. the developmentalists, T. agrees with them in holding that there is a *pars construens* in the *Theaetetus* even without mentioning Forms. He nonetheless holds a Unitarian view: the framework of Plato's *Theaetetus* is a recurrent pattern that occurs throughout Plato's dialogues (p. 92). T. detects striking similarities between the theory of knowledge of the *Theaetetus* and that of the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, the *Cratylus* and so forth. The whole book can be conceived as an attempt to show that his interpretation of the *Theaetetus* is consistent with the framework of the other dialogues. For the present, suffice it to refer to the *Phaedo*. T. focuses on the second sailing passage (pp. 42-43) where, as is well known, Socrates is looking for the causes of everything, why it comes-to-be, why it passes away, and why it is (*Phaid.* 96 a 8-10). At first,

Socrates turns to the philosophers of nature but he soon comes to realize that the method they employ is unsatisfactory; it is impossible to attain knowledge of reality through sense-perception. As a result of this shortcoming, he introduces the metaphor of the second sailing (δεύτερος πλοῦς).³ According to T., Plato, by introducing this metaphor, shows that, in line with the epistemology of the *Theaetetus*, (1) knowledge is not a result of sense-perception and (2) although intelligible knowledge is not worse than sensible knowledge, it is incapable of reaching infallibility (*Phaid.* 100 a 1-3). Following the metaphor, the point is that we watch an eclipse of the sun only by looking at its reflection; that is to say we can know intelligible reality only indirectly, investigating the truth of things through λόγοι. Human λόγοι can at most be true but never infallible since this would require the possibility to verify the propositions that describe reality via a direct contact with reality; something that for T. is absolutely out of reach for humans.

The second intriguing idea that runs through this book is T.'s interpretation of the Two Worlds Theory (TW).⁴ Until recent times, it was widely believed that, according to Plato, there is a clear-cut distinction between the sensible world and the intelligible world. The former is the world of opinion: one can have beliefs but not knowledge about sensible objects; i.e. the sensible world is the object of beliefs. The latter is the world of knowledge: one can have knowledge but not beliefs about transcendent Forms; i.e. the intelligible world is the object of knowledge.

Now, this theory has been the object of two contending interpretations. The supporters of the first group – following the most prominent traditions in the 20th century, i.e. the analytical and the hermeneutic traditions – have freed Plato's philosophical thought from its

metaphysical import and focused instead on language: human beings are within language and it is only in this sphere that being has a meaning. That is to say, according to these scholars, Plato holds that language cannot be transcended, consequently knowledge has a propositional character (Forms are grasped through propositions). T. partially agrees with this thesis and argues that, for Plato, the highest type of (human) knowledge has a linguistic character. However, he disagrees in that propositional knowledge has an intrinsic weakness which prevents it from becoming infallible. Human thought and language cannot be disentangled from *doxa*, and thus infallible knowledge is not expressible in language and thought. *Logos* and *eidōs* intersect one another without being identical. That is to say, there is an ineliminable otherness between the two which cannot be overcome; reality is like a prism that is imperfectly mirrored in thought and language.

The supporters of the second group, on the other hand, claim that knowledge in Plato has an intuitive character, that is to say, Forms are grasped intuitively. Nonetheless they differ on other issues: while some claim that *eidōs* is the object of vision which ultimately coincides with *logos*, others posit a radical difference between *eidōs* and *logos*, making thought and language inadequate for knowledge. T. agrees with these scholars in that infallible knowledge is the result of an intuition, not of human thought (pp. 210-212). However, he disagrees with the claim that men possess the capacity to grasp Forms in their earthly life. Since Forms are not immanent in this world but separated, they cannot be the object of a direct vision.

T. seeks to transcend this debate altogether by rejecting the meeting point between the supporters of the two aforementioned lines of interpretation. T. argues that the supporters of

both of the two groups assume that 'Plato's TW and the notion of the actual transcendence of the ideas compared to sensible reality are not to be taken seriously' (p. 212) because Plato's two worlds can be reduced to one realm. The underlying assumption is that embodied human souls can attain knowledge of the Forms already in their earthly life, and thus that it is not necessary to postulate a second transcendent world. T., on the contrary, denies this and insists on the importance of Plato's TW and the transcendent realm of Forms: the metaphysical distinction between Forms and sensible objects is ineliminable. The core idea of his thesis is that 1) Forms exist in a transcendent world and that 2) this transcendent world becomes the object of human knowledge only when the soul is detached from the body; 'only in a world of purely immaterial souls and forms, completely different from the one we all live in, may the very high standards required by the Platonic true notion of knowledge be fulfilled' (p. 41). This is the perfect world, which in the *Phaedo* is said to be grasped by the soul itself by itself when, separated from the body (*Phaid.* 64 c) and 'using pure thought alone, tries to track down each reality pure and by itself' (*Phaid.* 66 a 1-3).

2. SOME CRITICAL REMARKS ON TRABATTONI'S INTERPRETATION

In what follows, I will outline some considerations on the two points I have stressed in the previous chapter. Let me start from the second point about Plato's TW. T.'s insistence on the transcendence of the world of Forms seems to be persuasive.⁵ This becomes clear, it may be argued, if we turn to Plato's characterization of the realm of Forms. According to Plato, Forms, unlike sensible objects, are not:

- (1) dependent upon spatial-temporal alterations;
- (2) dependent upon the perspectives or circumstances from which they are either perceived or thought.⁶

If Forms are independent from (1) and (2), how do we positively characterize them? One interesting way of looking at them is by focusing on their simplicity.⁷ Forms are absolutely simple (*Phaidr.* 78 d 5; *Symp.* 211 b 1: μονοειδής), that is to say they only possess the property exhibited by their names. This implies that it is not possible to ascribe to them properties other than their own. The form of beauty or the beautiful itself is just beauty, is uniformly beautiful. Thus, contrary to the beautiful things of the sensible realm, the beautiful itself cannot be ‘beautiful in one respect and ugly in another, or beautiful at one time and not at another, or beautiful by one standard and ugly by another, or beautiful in one place and ugly in another because it is beautiful to some people but ugly to others.’⁸ The beautiful itself is just beautiful, period. It is the being that really is, the true being (*Phaidr.* 247 e 2: ὄντως ὄν) that is separated from the mode of being of the sensible realm; this latter is nothing but a sensible image (*Phaidr.* 250 a, *Tim.* 29 a-b) of the former, it is what we now say that is (*Phaedr.* 249 c 3: ἃ νῦν εἶναι φαμεν), not what really is (*Phaidr.* 249 c 4: τὸ ὄν ὄντως). Thus, due to this difference, images cannot reach the simplicity and the mode of being of Forms: besides the Fx property of the Form x, they will also exhibit Fn other properties. In the words of the *Phaedrus*, they will also possess colors and shapes, of which Forms are devoid (*Phaidr.* 247 c 3-7).

Now, this ontological deficiency, besides applying to sensible images, also applies to spoken images or λόγοι:⁹ as Socrates argues, none of our earthly poets has ever sung or ever will sing

the region above the heavens (*Phaidr.* 247 c 3: ὑπερουράνιον τόπον) where Forms exist.¹⁰ Human souls can only feed upon δοξαστή (*Phaidr.* 248 b 5), not ἐπιστήμη (*Phaidr.* 247 d 1); thus, due to this insufficiency, human’s λόγοι will never grasp the true being. Language, just like the sensible realm, is an imitation of true being. At most it resembles the being that really is by saying something true about it, but it will never become identical with it.¹¹

Turning to the first point, T.’s analysis focuses, as I have explained above, on the second conception of *doxa* (*doxa*₂). This type of *doxa* occurs in the third attempt to explain false belief in the *Theaetetus*, i.e. in the other-judging (*alldoxia*) passage (*Theait.* 189 b 10-190 e 4); an obscure passage of the text that is a matter of scholarly controversy. Most notably, it is not clear whether the objects of this passage are general concepts – such as “the beautiful is ugly” or “the just is unjust” – or individual objects – such as “Theaetetus is beautiful” or “Thrasymachus is just”. In the former case, false belief would occur because one wrongly believes that the beautiful is ugly rather than beautiful, in the latter because one wrongly believes that Theaetetus is beautiful rather than ugly.

T. endorses the first reading on the ground that in the *alldoxia* passage the soul is meant to decide on the basis of reasoning, and not on the basis of the evidence at hand. His argument runs as follows:

while it is true that the act of knowing Theaetetus, insofar as it is carried out by the soul, will always lead to a propositional expression (such as: «Yes, the man I now see is Theaetetus»), it is equally true that in this case [of the soul by itself in itself] the soul is not required to decide, based on reasoning, whether the person

it sees is Theaetetus. For behind this cognisance there lies an act of direct apprehension. In this case, no ἀλλοδοξία can arise, since the *doxai* are ensured by the evidence at hand. The problem lies in ascertaining whether the same kind of evidence may also be found for general concepts such as beauty and justice. The answer can only be a negative one – for else it would be impossible to account for the fact that men constantly make mistakes with regard to things of this sort. If this is the case, we have found one way to explain the existence of ἀλλοδοξία, namely by adducing the fact that no direct – and thus infallible – knowledge of the ideas is available to man. Indeed, it can hardly be a coincidence that all the examples Socrates presents in order to explain ἀλλοδοξία refer to general things (such as the beautiful, the just, the odd, the ox, the horse, etc.), i.e. things the only possible knowledge of which is not «by acquaintance» – as in the case of individual objects such as Theaetetus – but «by description» (pp. 8-9).

He consequently argues that *doxa*_i is at issue in the second and third part of the dialogue, replacing the other type of *doxa* which was the object of the first part of the dialogue, namely *doxa*_s. However, one might have some reservations regarding the role of *doxa*_i in the second and third part of the *Theaetetus*, also by taking into account the reading T. offers of the *alldoxia* passage.

For one thing, according to T., *doxa*_i is firstly employed in the aviary passage (p. 57).¹² There Socrates illustrates the occurrence of false beliefs by distinguishing actual and potential knowledge. Learning is remembering the things we once learned or, in the terms

of this analogy, grasping the right item from our aviary (soul). Error, on the other hand, is grasping the wrong item of knowledge. In both cases the soul actualizes an item, i.e. what is potentially known, that is completely and fully possessed, but only latently. T. argues that in this passage Theaetetus and Socrates explain the formation of false beliefs turning to the *doxa*_i of the inner dialogue, and not to sense-perception.

Nevertheless, one might argue that while it is true that in the aviary passage the judgment is not the result of sense-perception, it is also true that Socrates and Theaetetus seem to understand knowledge in an empiricist manner:¹³ the objects are either grasped or not, and when grasped, they are completely known and at the soul's disposal. The underlying assumption is that these objects are monolithic: they can only be either completely known (possessed) or completely ignored (not possessed), and thus it is not possible to have an imprecise knowledge of them. Yet, this does not seem to be the case in the inner dialogue.¹⁴ The soul by itself in itself reflects upon complex objects – such as justice itself or the beautiful itself – that can be thought under different perspectives. Starting from a cognition characterized by a lack of clarity, the soul undergoes a dialogue with itself precisely because of this confusion. This seems also to emerge from the aforementioned quote of T.: *alldoxia* occurs in the cases in which the soul inquires about objects it cannot possess – i.e. of which it does not have the evidence at hand – since, if it could have contact with what is inquired about (general concepts) and possess them, the process of reflection would become obsolete.

T. also argues that *doxa*_i is at issue in the third part of the dialogue insofar as the object of this final section is knowledge in general (p. 57). In so doing, he pays special attention

to the third definition of *logos*, according to which knowledge is true judgment accompanied by the distinguishing mark. T.'s argument runs as follows: Socrates refutes this definition on the ground that the final assent of the reasoning of soul by itself in itself is *doxa*. Although the philosopher seeks to 'pursue a kind of knowledge based on *logos* (through discursive reasoning founded on the act of giving an account), [...] he remains bound to *doxa*' (p. 24) as '*doxa* represents a non-transcendible epistemological level' (p. 22).

At this point some scholars might object that the inner dialogue is not at stake in this passage. What would make them hesitant to accept T.'s interpretation is the fact that the passage alludes to the conceptual apparatus of the wax tablet rather than to that of the inner dialogue.¹⁵ By insisting that the object of the third definition of *logos* is Theaetetus rather than man,¹⁶ and that it is based upon the imprint we have of him in our soul, one might argue that the belief arises from perception and memory, and not from reasoning. Since, in the wax tablet passage, the belief is ultimately an interaction between perception and thought which relies heavily on the content of sense-perception,¹⁷ the passage conveys the idea that the soul decides on the basis of the evidence at hand rather than on the basis of reasoning.¹⁸ So conceived, the belief would not be as much the result of reasoning as of sense-perception and memory. This, it could be maintained, seems also to arise from the aforementioned quote of T.: the act of knowing Theaetetus *qua* person is based on an act of direct apprehension, and not an act of reasoning. On the contrary, the soul undergoes the process of reflection, as envisioned in the soul by itself in itself, when it inquires about general concepts such as justice, beauty, or man.

Yet, it could be argued in turn that the distinguishing mark of the third definition of knowledge does not apply exclusively to

perceptual features or individual things.¹⁹ Ronald Polansky 1992, p. 231 elucidates this point by arguing that:

Socrates makes clear that he is not merely concerned with individual things when he suggests we may have a true opinion and account «concerning whatever of the things that are» (208 e 3). Their present account of account surely allows them to pick out the peculiar features of a genus or a species at least as well as of individuals. Moreover, Socrates' objection to this account of account ignores that his example is of something individual; it works regardless of what the object might be.

This broadening of the range of things to which the distinguishing mark refers would imply that the object of the passage is *all the things that are*; i.e., particular and general things. Nonetheless, someone could still object that so interpreted the passage refers to a broader conception of belief than that of the *allogoxia* passage: in the latter case Socrates refers exclusively to the general concepts that are grasped through a process of reflection – the *dialogue* of the soul by itself in itself. In the former case, however, Socrates remains vaguer and refers both to particular things and general concepts without assuming that the belief is the result of rational reflection. Consequently, the upshot would be that *doxa*, as interpreted by T., would be too narrow to explain the refusal of the last attempt to understand *logos* in the third part of the *Theaetetus*.

All things considered, T.'s book is a stimulating study that offers new perspectives on Plato's epistemology. By engaging in a fascinating and heated debate with contemporary scholars, it provides a lucid analysis of philosophical problems that are far from being irrelevant

for any scholar working in this field. One may agree or disagree with T.'s views; yet, there can be hardly doubt that this is a fruitful intellectual journey that is worth taking.

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NOTES

1 The first six essays discuss the problem of knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, while the final eight essays discuss the problem of knowledge in other dialogues, such as the *Cratylus*, the *Republic*, the *Protagoras*, the *Parmenides*, and the reception of the so called 'theory of ideas' in Aristotle.

2 T. analyses Franco Ferrari's and David Sedley's interpretations in chapters 5 and 6 respectively. See Sedley 2004 and Ferrari 2011. T. argues that both of them follow, to some extent, Cornford's interpretation of the *Theaetetus*.

3 Cfr. Trabattoni 2011, LXVIII-LXXII.

4 See especially pp. 38-43 and 210-212.

5 See also Vogt 2012. She argues that belief and knowledge are two different cognitive powers related to two different objects. Nevertheless, this does not exclude the possibility of deficiently directing the power of belief towards intelligible objects, producing what Vogt calls "beliefs with knowledge". She describes these states as follows: 'they provide belief, but they do not seem to be bare of understanding (*aneu nou*), and they are not ugly and blind [...] such belief with knowledge is belief about the Good (rather than belief about the good), but it self-consciously is not knowledge of the Good' (pp. 22; 24). Because of this, although she agrees that we can have belief about objects of knowledge, she nonetheless holds that there is an ontological distinction between the objects of belief and the objects of knowledge.

6 Cfr. Cherniss 1936, 445-456 and White 1992, 227-310.

7 Cfr. Leszl 2001, 123-127.

8 *Symp.* 211 a 2-5.

9 See *Soph.* 234 c 6.

10 See Werner 2010, 35.

11 Another piece of evidence for the transcendence of the being that really is ($\delta\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma\ \delta\upsilon\upsilon$) comes from Plato's *Sophist*. In line with the second navigation of the *Phaedo*, $\lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\iota$ are said to be spoken images (*Soph.* 234 c 6: $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\alpha\ \lambda\epsilon\gamma\acute{o}\mu\epsilon\nu\alpha$). Our reference to the being that really is is not direct but is rather mediated through images. An image (*Soph.* 240 a 7: $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\nu$) is not (a) the being that really is (*Soph.* 240 b 7: $\delta\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma\ \delta\upsilon\upsilon$) but rather (b) what resembles it (*Soph.* 240 b 2: $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda'\ \epsilon\theta\omicron\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma$); it is that in which that which is not is woven together with that which is. This is the

only way we could refer to the ὄντως ὄν: not directly but through the imperfect representations of images. That is to say, there is an ontological difference between real beings and images that cannot be overcome no matter how much we revise our images. In this regard, see the analogous remarks of T. in Plato's *Cratylus* (chapter 7): 'But even in the case in which an image were fashioned as it ought to, so as to contain all the elements necessary for it to be a good imitation of the thing in question, it would still be something other than the thing itself. If a god were to fashion a Cratylus not by copying him as a painter would do but by perfectly reproducing all his characteristics, the outcome would not be an image of Cratylus, but a second Cratylus (432 b 4-c5). Indeed, the correctness of an image is not to be found in the reproduction of an identical copy, for else the image would lose its nature *qua* image (432 d 1-3),' p.125. See also Casertano, 1996. 12 *Theait.* 196 d 1-200 d 4.

13 Cfr. Chappell 2004, 184-192.

14 According to Francisco Gonzalez 'with the definition of knowledge as true judgment and the models of the wax tablet and the aviary that accompany it, this more fundamental power the soul has of examining and striving for being and truth by means of engaging in dialogue with itself is lost from view.' Cfr. Gonzalez 2007, 288.

15 Cfr. Burnyeat 1990, 220-221; 227-9 and Bostock 1988, 225-236

16 The distinguishing mark of Theaetetus is having "a snub nose and prominent eyes" (*Theait.* 209 c). Cfr. Sedley 2004, 174-175.

17 See Sedley 2004, 136-137.

18 As David Bostock put it: 'if I can refer to something without describing it when I am perceiving it, it is plausible to suppose that this is because my perception of it gives me some kind of « casual contact» with the thing. This is the main idea behind the so called « casual theory of perception», according to which to perceive a thing is –very roughly – to have experiences that are caused by that thing [...] the example that he uses (my remembering Theaetetus) is much more plausibly regarded as one in which it is my casual contact with the thing, and not my ability to describe it, that explains why it is that thing that I am thinking of.' Bostock 1988, 230; 233.

19 Cfr. Shields 1999, 116-118; Giannopoulou 2013, 176-177. See also Chappell 2004, 221.

Socrates and Self-Knowledge by Christopher Moore

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I must begin by thanking Christopher Moore for writing this stimulating book. I look forward to conversation about it that may bring us closer to self-knowledge. If it does not, I hope it will be pleasant. However, if Moore is right, I think perhaps we can't have one without the other.

Moore sums up the theses of his book this way:

Socratic self-knowledge means working on oneself, with others, to become the sort of person who could know himself, and thus be responsible to the world, to others, and to oneself, intellectually, morally, and practically. (6)

I think these claims about self-knowledge are not only important for readers of Plato's dialogues to consider, they are worthy of consideration for those of us who are seriously interested in the nature and *difficulty* of education, more generally speaking. I am quite sympathetic with Moore on a number of points: his approach to reading Plato; his emphasis on the value that self-knowledge has in Socratic inquiry and conversations; his point that the Delphic Oracle is an extremely important image throughout the Platonic dialogues. Moore's synthesis of these images especially in the *Charmides*, *Alcibiades*, *Philebus*, *Phaedrus*, yields a study of self-knowledge that is original and provocative that should prompt and guide continued further conversations about this important topic.

There are two features of self-knowledge Moore emphasizes that I find particularly interesting. The first is that *selfhood is aspirational*:

Something properly considered a "self" may not fully preexist any effort to know

it. The “self” may need to be completed, not just found... Selfhood would be aspirational, an accomplishment, where creative success would be determined by linguistic or moral convention, not by the already-established order of the world. (36)

Self-knowledge will have as its object the self that is constituted. The charge to “know yourself” will necessitate simultaneously constituting yourself. (40)

To know oneself is really to *become what one is*, or better, what one ought to be. It is also consistent with Moore’s claim that self-knowledge goes hand in hand with intellectual and moral maturation (57). In this connection, Moore gives us an illuminating explanation for Plato’s choice to title the dialogue *Charmides* for example, rather than, say, “*On Sôphrosunê*”. It is finally the coming into being of Charmides *as Charmides*, — it is the maturation of his character, intellect, and thereby his self-knowledge — that is of utmost importance and ultimately connected to the virtue under discussion.

A second interesting feature emphasizes this: Moore argues that the Socratic reading of “Know yourself” should be understood as “*Acknowledge yourself*” (35, 42). There is indeed an important difference between an act of knowing and an act of acknowledging. Most obviously, I can certainly know if someone near me is in pain, without acknowledging it. At least in this case and perhaps for most others (if not all), *acknowledgment requires an assent*. Self-acknowledgment therefore places one in the space of practical reasons. That is, it seems that reading self-knowledge this way shifts the kind of question one might ask about oneself. Rather than “What kind of thing am I?,” the

more apt question appears to be “What *ought* I to do?” or “Who ought I to become?”. The aspirational quality of selfhood and the notion that *self-knowledge is really self-acknowledgment* complement each other. In fact, these two notions are tied together via their ethical, practical, normative component.

But a question emerges here that, in various permutations, seems to run through the dialogues Moore discusses and the accounts he gives of these dialogues. I think the reason the question keeps re-emerging is that the thread that seems to tie the dialogues together concerns the *use or uselessness of self-knowledge* (cf. 187). I would therefore put the question, most simply, as: if selfhood is aspirational, towards what is it aspiring? (Would Moore agree with me that his book could be seen as *working out Socrates’ attempt to answer this question?*)

I think that both Moore and I are inclined to say that selfhood is aspirational toward the good, towards what is best for me as a human being. Moore himself says, “the Delphic injunction encourages recognizing oneself as (personally) responsive to the (impersonal) claims of truth and goodness. (42)” But I am less optimistic than he that the account he gives can resolve what might be an irreconcilable tension between what he calls our “personally responsive self” and “the impersonal claims of truth and goodness”. Put another way, I am not sure what the bridge is that Moore is offering between *the soul and the good*. I hope this will become clear in what follows. Let me first return to Moore’s explanation of the aspirational quality of selfhood.

Moore suggests that “selfhood would be aspirational, an accomplishment, where creative success would be determined by linguistic or moral convention, not by the already-established order of the world. (36)” It is the word convention that I find striking. How far does

Moore want to push the claim that creative success in the accomplishment of selfhood is *determined* by moral convention? If I am reading Moore correctly here, it is not immediately obvious that moral convention has the robustness, universality, or justificatory power to be the kind of *good* that motivates the aspiration of Socratic self-knowledge. Would it not be fair to ask which linguistic or moral conventions *ought to determine my creative success in achieving selfhood*? I assume the answer to that question can't be *determined* by further linguistic or moral conventions, or we will be exposed to a vicious regress. Moore has suggested to me in conversation about this that we must not look to the world, but to the things we say we are responsible for in order to determine whether we have a self. But if that is true, how do I *evaluate these claims themselves*? Might we need knowledge of the good itself, which transcends all conventions, including all normative claims embedded in language-usage and moral instruction, in order to understand that towards which selfhood aspires?

A similar difficulty emerges when Moore claims that a key aspect of Socratic understanding of "Know Yourself" is that:

One should acknowledge others and oneself as persons worthy of conversational engagement. The recognition of personhood and one's suitability for dialectical exchange is a principal move in knowing oneself as an authoritative epistemic agent – that is, as a knower, and a self. (58)

Moore is suggesting here that the command to Know Yourself would have us endeavor to deem ourselves and others worthy of conversation. But is it again not fair to ask what makes one *worthy of conversational engagement*? And would that knowledge be essential to

self-knowledge? If so, there seems to be a judgment about good/bad conversation and good/bad conversation partners that is prior to the conversation itself. Or is it through conversation that one learns what a good/bad conversation or conversation partner is? If it isn't through conversation, Moore's thesis might be open to the objection that self-knowledge is obtained by some method outside of conversation and, if anything, only confirmed or strengthened by good conversations (whose goodness is not, in any case, known on the basis of conversation).

On the other hand, if conversations *are THE* method by which we come to deem ourselves conversation-worthy and thereby acknowledge ourselves, then it seems that we are saddled with some version of Meno's skeptical paradox. I still must know what the good is prior to recognizing (*acknowledging*) it, in which case, the conversation was either unnecessary or, at best, mere confirmation. In sum, it seems there is a troubling gap between 1) the activity of our souls engaging in conversation with each other in order to know themselves and 2) the *goodness of that activity*. It seems to me that closing that gap (or understanding why it can't be closed?) is essential to understanding Socratic self-knowledge.

It is surely related here that Moore claims that unless we understand our beliefs, they are not really ours (80). What are we committing to if we agree with this claim? What is it that makes our beliefs intelligible to us? It cannot be that we simply compare them to the moral and linguistic conventions earlier mentioned. For why is it *better* to abide by these conventions than my previously held beliefs? An alternative is that we are able to put them in the context of the knowledge of the good itself, if we have such knowledge. If this is right, beliefs can only be said to be ours after we have attained knowl-

edge of the good and have examined individual beliefs in the context of that knowledge. Does self-knowledge and ownership of one's own beliefs therefore require the practice of dialectic described in Books 6 and 7 of the *Republic*. Especially related here: Socrates' claims that the good would be an unhypothetical first principle [511b-c] beyond being [508b] that the battle-testing of dialectic separates out from other things [534c]? Moore seems to imply throughout that this is not necessary, or perhaps even desirable. But perhaps according to me, the gap between conversation and dialectic is as difficult to close as that between soul and goodness.

It is interesting to look at Moore's treatment of Critias with these questions in mind. Critias' interpretation of the Delphic Oracle has puzzled many readers of the *Charmides*, myself included. Moore's innovation is to read Critias' claim (that "know yourself" must be taken as a greeting) as an acknowledgment of personhood and as an introduction to conversation (65, 66). At first glance, some readers will think this is an odd message to put in the mouth of Critias, whose political history and relation to Socrates is unsettling, to say the least. Indeed, Moore seems to avoid bringing in Critias's political background into this pronouncement about the Delphic Oracle. Christopher is indeed cognizant of the abundant literature that takes Critias' reading of the Oracle with this political background as its starting point. But he argues that his view of the oracle is not unfamiliar or unfair. But Moore's own reading of this Critian reading of the Oracle *still* prompts us to ask: from whom does this acknowledgment/invitation come and to whom is it directed? Between whom is this conversation meant to occur?

It is odd, and perhaps noteworthy, that Critias seems to be claiming himself to know the purposes of a divine meaning and intention of the Oracle when his own conceptions of self-knowledge and *sôphrosunê* are shown to be deficient. It is noteworthy that Socrates in the *Apology*, in talking about another pronouncement of the Oracle (about Socrates' own wisdom), does this as well, but in a more paradoxical way. He tests the Oracle. He also says it is riddling, because it couldn't be lying. The Oracle thus speaks ambiguously – it praises Socrates at the same time that it belittles him. At the same time, Socrates is suggesting that the Oracle is subject to Socratic examination. I would suggest that no such paradox is evident in Critias's views, and on the contrary, that Socratic self-knowledge might be built around the very *embracing of such ambiguity*.

Moore, indeed, goes on to quote the passage in the *Alcibiades* in which Socrates explicitly contradicts Critias's reading of the oracle. Critias's view of the Oracle depends on his contrast between a greeting and advice. But Socrates clearly suggests to Alcibiades that "Know Yourself" is both exhortation and advice (132d). If Moore is aiming for consistency across these pronouncements about the Oracle, how do we reconcile the different emphases here? Indeed, to remain consistent, Socrates might also be implying that the advice from the Oracle to "Know Yourself" could indeed be a riddle and one that needs to be examined.

I cannot help but wonder if we are not meant to see Critias as more like Typhon, whom Moore discusses at length in his elaboration of the Delphic image in the *Phaedrus*.

Typhon is hundred-headed and morphologically complicated, with human and animal qualities. He speaks in animal and human voices. He fathered Gorgon and

Chimera...We might conclude from the traits given to Typhon by Greek mythology that being like him preempt the transformative possibility of self-knowledge. Typhon would get no benefit from the Delphic inscription's charge. He is too hubristic, too complex, and too stubborn to improve himself. (148)

I conjecture a connection in the Athenian mind between Typhon and the *gnôthi sauton*. The temple of Apollo at Delphi included a Gigantomachy...These battles could have included or implied the battle between Typhon and Zeus... the "Know yourself," the Typhon painting battle scene, and the saying could have become linked. (150 n23)

Given what Moore says here, it is hard for me to disentangle the notion of avoiding *hubris* from the exhortation to know oneself. It seems to suggest that Socrates is talking about the Oracle to say that the self I ought to become is guided by and even constrained by *a certain kind of moderation of a deep inner ambition for tyranny*. Socrates's image of Typhon and his question to himself about being like him could then be tantamount to the question "Do I have the courageous humility to acknowledge my limitations, or do I want to be master of my own fate and overthrow the gods?"

If this were the question, and if *Critias* could perhaps be seen as (in a sense) Socrates gone "Typhonic", one might then "look again" at Moore's account of looking into others to see ourselves in the *Alcibiades*. I think Moore is right that the *Alcibiades* seems to be offering an avenue towards self-knowledge. I would add that Socrates puts it forth as, hopefully, a corrective antidote to the failures of both *Critias* and *Alcibiades*, whose hubris (or at the very least, whose *pride*

and ambition) prevents their coming to know themselves. Moore himself seems to be suggesting that overcoming such hubris, if it exists, is essential in engaging in what we might call a good conversation. (118-119, 150)

Given this, why are *Alcibiades* and *Critias* such failures? Moore wishes to argue that this has something to do with the ongoing, arduous process required of self-constitution that can be seen in the *Phaedrus*. (But it would be interesting to know who Moore would count among the good conversation partners of Socrates and why. Most importantly, do they help Socrates achieve self-knowledge in the way described by the *Alcibiades*? What is the evidence that Socrates himself seeks the self-constitution that Moore describes?) But is self-constitution via Socratic conversation not only arduous? Is it even possible for *Critias* and *Alcibiades*?

I very much agree with Moore's emphasis throughout that Socrates is concerned with the particularity of self-knowledge for particular individuals in their uniquely relevant, particular circumstances. But I am, once again, more pessimistic than he regarding the tension between the particularity of selfhood and the universal, eternal, permanence of goodness itself.

For instance, Moore claims that the *Alcibiades* discussion reveals a divine element to self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge might have two conjoined aspects, a knowing of oneself *qua divine matters* and a knowing of oneself *qua human stuff*; the two sorts of mirrors are individually necessary and only together sufficient for self-knowledge. (125)

Moore is prompted to make this "theological speculation" (which Moore says is foreign to the

dialogue) by the puzzling claim made by Socrates that “looking to the god we would make use of that finest reflecting surface, and of human matters, to the virtue of the soul and in such a way we would most see and know ourselves” (133c).

I would suggest that such speculation is not wholly out of place, if one recalls that it is in the context of asking Alcibiades how we could make ourselves better that Socrates invokes the Delphic Oracle and investigates what the *self* is (128e-129b). This discussion of the self determines that the nature of man is *soul* (130c). And it is in this very context, after Socrates realizes that they have to go back and *re-examine* the Delphic oracle, that the tension between soul and good is again adumbrated. (132c) What finally does it mean to take care of the soul – to make the soul better? It seems to come about through a dialogic activity on the particular, human, relational plane. But why is that good? Because it seems to be mirrored by another dialogic activity between the particular and the universal, divine plane at the same time. But what is not how such conversation between the divine and the human is possible. Nor is it explained why is it good. Perhaps then it is not accidental or a manuscript error that Socrates praises *moderation* right after this discussion of this divine mirroring. Perhaps we must recognize our limits as *seeking*, but not knowing ourselves, and others, and our good the way that a god does.

In discussing the *Phaedrus*, Moore presents an illuminating account of myth rectification that is meant to stand in as an analogy for Socratic inquiry into self-knowledge. I would again raise the issue here that has emerged before. By what standard(s) external to myth rectification itself, am I judging that my process of myth rectification constitutes improvement? (cf. 177, 186)

To this question and its various permutations that I have already brought forth, I believe Moore finally proposes what looks to be a *pragmatic* solution, relying on the notion of what is *plausible*.

The myth-rectifiers bring their beliefs in line with the plausible (*kata to eikos*). On the analogy proposed here, so do those seeking self-knowledge... The person seeking self-knowledge wants to bring his beliefs in line with what is actual and true. Unfortunately, he can rely only on himself and himself and his conversational partners, and even then he must rely on himself when deciding what to accept from his conversational partners. So he must rely on what appears to himself so. The plausible – what appears so to him – is his only standard of judgment. (179)

If Moore intends this conclusion to apply to Socratic inquiry into self-knowledge, then I must ask why self-knowledge is really knowledge at all, and whether it is really a knowledge of the object of we would call a self. If the only standard we are left with is what appears so to myself, then how can I know that I have ever made any progress at all? Why is my claim about myself any more *real* than another *apparent* claim, which I myself must also decide on, not on the basis of truth but again, on what *appears to me be so*? It seems here that the self-knowledge finally has no footing.

Perhaps in responding to this, Moore might say more about on the role that “knowing what one does not know” (cf. 80) plays in Socratic self-knowledge seen as self-constitution. For while I agree from the outset (as I have said) that Socratic conversations bring us to self-knowledge, I wonder if Moore and I see Socratic conversations differently. I would propose that

Socratic conversations operate on these three assumptions:

- 1) We act based on our beliefs.
- 2) Our beliefs are not transparent to us.
- 3) We don't know, much less own, our beliefs until we engage in conversation.

I think Moore must agree with 1 and 2. I also suspect he might claim that assumption 3 is not an assumption but something that is demonstrable in the action of conversation. (About that I would agree, but I would still call it an assumption.)

But I would be hesitant to add more assumptions than these. Given these three assumptions, and only these, the purpose of Socratic conversation would seem not unlike *making the unconscious conscious* (though not wholly like it either). As they stand, the three assumptions are neutral on the subject about whether it is good to know oneself. In other words, though it may seem that self-knowledge is aspirational towards knowledge of the good, it may very well be that the assumptions that underlie the very activity of Socratic conversation are *neutral about the ethical status of self-knowledge*. One can imagine at least three responses to this:

- 1) The goodness of self-knowledge/self-constitution/Socratic conversation needs to be assumed, externally to the activity of such conversation/self-constitution.
- 2) The goodness of self-knowledge/self-constitution/Socratic conversation is demonstrable, either in speech or in deed, after one takes the courageous leap of faith into such conversation/self-constitution.
- 3) There is finally a tension or a gap between knowing oneself and knowing the

good, that Socratic conversation neither assumes nor demonstrates but continually recognizes as a problem.

I myself incline towards the third response, and see in it not only a potential connection between Socratic self-knowledge and “knowing what one does not know”, but also connected to the failures of Alcibiades and Critias to come to self-knowledge. In my view, Socratic conversations and Socratic self-knowledge appear, importantly, to do with the recognition of our *epistemic* limitations and acknowledge ourselves (perhaps importantly) as seekers of knowledge, rather than knowers. I expect Moore can give reasons for inclining towards another reading of Socratic conversations, if his view is different from mine.

Let me emphasize that I have dwelt only on a part of what is a comprehensive, meticulous, and illuminating work of scholarship. Although I have raised questions about Moore's conclusions, I have no doubt that his book will be a supremely important reference point for future discussions of Socratic Self-knowledge and the Delphic Oracle, in particular.

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