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# 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 ὅπως] to possess as much

wealth (χρημάτων), reputation (δόξης), and honors (τιμῆς) as possible, while you do not care (οὐκ ἐπιμελῆ) for nor give thought to (φροντίζεις) wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?<sup>1</sup> (*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).<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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).<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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'.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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).<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 (ὁμονοητικῆς δὲ καὶ ἡρμουςμένης) (*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).<sup>12</sup> 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).<sup>13</sup> 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).<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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).<sup>18</sup> He almost always disclaims for himself any sort of technical knowledge about how to care for the soul.<sup>19</sup> 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).<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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).<sup>22</sup> Moderation is the condition that purportedly follows from the proper application of words to a soul in need of healing.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

The relation between intellect and psychic health is more fully developed at the end of the *Timaeus*.<sup>25</sup> Timaeus has just reasserted that there are three distinct types of soul in us that become stronger with exercise (γυμνασίοις) (*Timaeus* 89e3-90b1).<sup>26</sup> Intellect is the most sovereign (τοῦ κυριωτάτου) part of the soul, cultivated (ἡδύκóτι) by love of learning and true wisdom.<sup>27</sup> Exercise of intellect is thus equated with sovereignty or self-rule.<sup>28</sup> 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).<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> 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).<sup>32</sup> 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).<sup>33</sup>

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).<sup>34</sup> 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).<sup>35</sup> 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).<sup>36</sup> 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).<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

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*).<sup>39</sup> 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 (θεραπεύσαντες) 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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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*).<sup>42</sup> 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 (δῆιν 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

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).<sup>45</sup> 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).<sup>46</sup> 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).<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup>

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.<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> Those people who are being examined see this, get angry with themselves (ἐαυτοῖς 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.<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup> The elenchus renders the person less combative to dialectical questioning (*Sophist* 230d1-4).<sup>55</sup> 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).<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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).<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup> The soul that consistently cares for itself becomes thereby the stable ground for the disclosure of intelligible reality.<sup>60</sup> 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 (ἀνθρώπου)—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 παιδῶν 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).