

Michael Erler / Luc Brisson (Eds.)

Gorgias – Menon

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GORGIAS – MENON

SELECTED PAPERS FROM THE
SEVENTH SYMPOSIUM PLATONICUM

Edited by

MICHAEL ERLER AND LUC BRISSON

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VORWORT

Dieser Band enthält eine Auswahl der Vorträge, die anlässlich des VII. Symposium Platonium der International Plato Society vom 26. bis 31. Juli 2004 in Würzburg unter den Auspizien der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Mainzer Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur gehalten wurden. Die Tagung wurde von dem Bayerischen Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst, der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, dem Universitätsbund der Universität Würzburg und der Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg unterstützt. Sie fand in den Räumen der von Balthasar Neumann erbauten Würzburger Residenz – eines Unesco Kulturerbes – und der Neubaukirche statt. Das Jahr 2004 hat für die deutsche, aber auch die internationale Platonforschung eine besondere Bedeutung, jährt sich doch zum zweihundertstenmal der Erscheinungsbeginn der epochenmachenden Übersetzung des Platonischen Oeuvres durch Friedrich Schleiermacher (erschienen 1804-1817), welche den engen Zusammenhang von literarischer Gestaltung und philosophischem Gehalt des platonischen Dialoges in den Blickpunkt der künftigen Forschung rückte. Seither hat das Interesse an Platon, dem Philosophen, aber auch an Platon, dem Autor, bis hin in den Fernen Osten stetig zugenommen. Nicht zuletzt für diese Internationalität der Platonforschung legte die Tagung mit zeitweise über 300 Gästen aus mehr als 35 Ländern ein lebendiges Zeugnis ab.

Thema des VII. Symposium Platonium waren die Dialoge *Gorgias* und *Menon*. Die in diesen beiden zentralen Dialogen aufgeworfenen Fragen nach dem richtigen Leben, nach Möglichkeiten der Erkenntnis, nach Überwindung von Werterelativismus, nach angemessener Auseinandersetzung mit den Sophisten – um nur einige zu nennen – boten Gelegenheit zu anregenden Interpretationsansätzen und teilweise kontrovers, aber immer fair geführten Diskussionen, die den internationalen Forschungsstand widerspiegeln und zu einem weiterführenden, fruchtbaren Gedankenaustausch über die Grenzen kultureller Unterschiede hinweg führten. Die hier abgedruckten Aufsätze vermitteln – so hoffen wir – einen Eindruck von der anregenden, und von platonischen *eunoia* geprägten Atmosphäre.

Danken möchte ich als ehemaliger Präsident und Ausrichter der Tagung weiterhin allen denjenigen, deren Beiträge hier gedruckt vorliegen, darüber hinaus aber auch allen Mitgliedern unserer Gesellschaft und allen Gästen, die die Tagung durch Vorträge, durch Diskussionsbeiträge oder durch ihre Anwesenheit bereichert und die von allen als fruchtvoll und anregend empfundene Atmosphäre der Tagung mitgeprägt haben. Bedanken möchte ich mich schließlich auch an dieser Stelle bei meinen Würzburger Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern, die in verschiedenster Weise zur Vorbereitung und zum reibungslosen Ablauf der Tagung entscheidend beigetragen haben. Besonders hervorgehoben sei Herr Dr. Stefan Schorn, der mich in der Zeit der Vorbereitung nie im Stich gelassen hat, sondern mir immer eine wichtige Hilfe war, als ich neben der Präsidentschaft auch Pflichten als Dekan und Senator der Universität zu erfüllen hatte.

Entsprechend der auch in den vorhergehenden Tagungsbänden üblichen Praxis wurde auch in diesem Band kein Versuch unternommen, die unterschiedlichen Zitierweisen, Abkürzungen oder andere technische Eigenheiten der Beiträge einander anzugleichen. Die Unterschiede seien vielmehr Zeugnis für die unterschiedlichen wissenschaftlichen Kulturen und für die Vielfalt und Internationalität, die in unserer Gesellschaft gepflegt wird. Die

Indices sollen helfen, das Buch bei aller Fülle des gebotenen Materials leichter benutzbar zu machen.

Möge das Buch den Teilnehmern der Tagung Erinnerungshilfe an hoffentlich angenehm verbrachte Stunden in Würzburg und allen Lesern Anregung zu eigener Platonlektüre sein.

Verantwortlich für den Band zeichnen Michael Erler und Luc Brisson. In Dankbarkeit gedenken wir am Ende dieses Vorwortes Catherine Joubaud, die die redaktionelle Arbeit an diesem Band übernommen hatte und während dieser Tätigkeit an den Folgen einer langen und schweren Krankheit, gegen die sie mit Mut und Würde gekämpft hatte, verstarb. Der vorliegende Band legt für ihre Kompetenz Zeugnis ab. Ihre Menschlichkeit wird uns fehlen. Sophie Grapotte hat das Manuskript für die Publikation vorbereitet. Annie Larivée hat an der Erstellung der beiden Indices gearbeitet, die Bibliographie korrigiert und das gesamte Manuskript gelesen. Ihnen sei herzlich gedankt.

Michael Erler, Würzburg
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1

**DE VOGEL LECTURE,
SAUDERS MEMORIAL LECTURE**

The Death of the so-called “Socratic Elenchus”

The C.J. de Vogel Lecture

Terry Penner

I am not here tonight to announce the end of an era in Socrates scholarship – though I believe that is a consummation devoutly to be wished. Too much work remains by way of convincing people that the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” should be entirely dropped. (This is not to deny that proponents of the so-called “elenchus” have been some of the major contributors in the history of Socrates scholarship.) I am here tonight simply to press the case for recognizing that the usual sorts of attempts – such as we find in the attribution to Socratic dialectic of the so-called “elenchus” – to unite

(a) the deductive methods of modern logic (which are central to the so-called “elenchus”)

with

(b) the interpretation of what Plato’s characters are saying in his dialogues,

cannot produce viable offspring.

When interpreters formulate what characters in a Platonic dialogue are saying in the course of (what looks like) a particular discrete argument, into the deductive representations characteristic of the so-called method of “elenchus”, they make two crucial assumptions, both of which I shall here reject as inappropriate to the analysis of *any* arguments in *any* of Plato’s dialogues. The first is that

LT we can reduce

what a *speaker* is saying by means of a given sentence

to

what the given sentence says.

This reduction is an instance of the “linguistic turn” so popular amongst a great many analytical philosophers. Once the initial reduction to sentences is accomplished, the interpreter then embodies the sentence in the deductive formulation which is to represent the supposed “elenchus” – with the account of what the *sentence* says being determined by the usual devices of meanings or semantical interpretations assigned to the expressions (referring

expressions, predicates, and so forth) which make up the sentence.¹ (Analytical philosophers working on Plato, who mostly grow out of the great nineteenth century philological tradition, are always – and to a fault – as careful about Plato’s exact words as one might hope from those who have taken the “linguistic turn”.)²

It is in these deductive formulations that the second crucial assumption shows up – what Ryle 1945 speaks of as the “logical powers” doctrine:

LP What a sentence *A* says is the same as what a sentence *B* says just in case both sentences have the same “logical powers”, that is, they both follow logically from the very same sentences, and any sentences that follow logically from the one follow logically from the other.

Thus it is enough to make *A* and *B* say something different – express different “propositions”, as logicians often put it – that one of them does not follow logically from the other; and enough to make *A* and *B* logically independent propositions (and so even more certainly different propositions) that neither follows logically from the other. (I shall use interchangeably “*A* follows logically from *B*”, “*A* is a logical consequence of *B*”, “*A* follows from *B* by logic alone”, and “*B* entails *A*”.)

I shall argue that these two assumptions together are sufficient to show that the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” yields serious misrepresentations of what the speakers in the dialogues are saying. For if I can show that what the *speakers* say by means of given sentences is misrepresented by what the given *sentences* say (as construed in terms of the “logical powers” doctrine), then, since I take it that Socratic dialectic concerns arguments about what *people* – the interlocutors – are saying, we will be forced to conclude that Socratic dialectic is misrepresented by construing it in accordance with the methods of the so-called “Socratic Elenchus”.

There will not be space, in this shortened version of my lecture, to speak at any length about other defects I see in almost all applications of modern methods of logic to Platonic texts. The reader should be aware, however, that my reservations about such applications go well beyond considerations of the “linguistic turn” (LT) and the “logical powers” doctrine (LP). There are a few remarks on this topic in the concluding section and in the appendix below.

Just to help people see where I am going in the present version of the lecture, I can single out how I think the employment of (LT) + (LP) in the so-called “elenchus” leads to the misrepresentation of what the interlocutors in bits of Socratic dialectic are saying, as a result of interpreters simply ignoring three different sorts of context, to each of which we need to look if we are to capture unarticulated parts of what speakers are saying. The first sort of context consists in the personal style, and background beliefs of the speaker, as well as in the speaker’s cultural and social milieu.

Second, there is the literary context that need to be assimilated from the author’s (or reporter’s) methods of representing the dialectic, which itself provides important clues to what the interlocutors are saying. Prominent here is the *plot* of a dialogue. (And make no mistake, Plato’s dialogues are most extraordinarily finely crafted and plotted pieces of work.)

¹ For a slightly fuller account of the process whereby arguments are put into logical form and assessed for soundness and validity, see the Appendix below.

² What is worrying is that they sometimes combine this concern for exact words with something less than care for larger contexts in which the words appear. “Look! Socrates says it right here!” See further the remarks on plot in sec. 4 below, as well as Penner, unpublished.

The third sort of context brings in what, in a wider view, is far the most important way in which the so-called “elenchus” fails to capture what interlocutors are saying in Plato’s dialogues. This is what I shall call here the *real-world context* of what the speakers are saying. This sort of context has been central to much of my own work over the past several decades. It shows up in particular in my account of the Socratic *desire for the real good*, and of the Forms as the *real natures* of things. In the case of desire, it shows up in the following way. I claim that Socrates and Plato rightly hold that the *truth* about what the good is that Barbara, say, desires for herself is part of what (modern philosophers would call) the *content* of what Barbara is speaking of or referring to. That real truth is not only what is there *outside* of Barbara’s psychological state. It is also – in a way which Barbara herself cannot be totally aware of – part of the very *inside* of her psychological state. What Barbara desires – from the *inside* – is not what she *thinks* is the good for herself, nor is it what anyone else might think is the good for her; rather it is what *really is* the good for her, *even if that good is different from what Barbara or any one else thinks it is*. This real (and unknown) good is not only what Barbara desires (recall *Republic* VI.505E-506A), but also what she is *saying* she desires. (The reference to the real good, even if it is different from what Barbara or anyone else *thinks* it is, is quite as much involved when we are considering what Barbara *says* or *believes* she desires as when we are saying what she desires.) It is not her *apparent* good which Barbara desires (*pace* Aristotle), nor is it something she (perhaps mistakenly, and in any case consciously) desires.

In the case of the Forms, when I want to cut, I want to cut, not in accordance with my *beliefs* about cutting, nor in accordance with the conventions of our language about “cutting”, but in accordance with the real nature of cutting (*Cratylus* 387A with 385D-386A), even if that differs from how I think of it, or from what the conventions of my language say about it. So too, to switch to a modern case, cancer researchers want to speak of, and to discover, not what people (even the researchers themselves) *think* is the real nature of cancer, or what some lexicographer or scientist writing a dictionary entry *says* it is, but *what cancer really is* – even if it is different from what anyone has ever supposed it to be. It is these real natures – the good, the real nature of cutting, the Form of Cancer – which people are generally referring to (intend to refer to) when they use such words as “good”, “cutting”, “cancer”. Once more, the real truth, and real natures, are – in the sort of way indicated – part of what interlocutors are speaking of.

I realize, of course, that the views I attribute to Socrates and Plato about the real good and real natures in my characterization of this “real-world context!” are both exegetically and philosophically controversial. By what right do I bring such controversial views into interpretations of Plato? By right of whatever arguments I have found in the dialogues for supposing that these views are there to be found; and by right of whatever arguments I have found for supposing the Socratic/Platonic views I take to be there are truer than the corresponding views of Aristotle and modern interpreters in the analytic tradition. I came to these exegetical and philosophical views at the same time as I was coming to the view that the point of studying Socrates and Plato is not simply to identify their errors from modern philosophical points of view, but to learn from them enough to see how much modern philosophical work could be improved with some deep study of Plato, and of Socrates in Plato. So I do not apologize that some of my work on Socrates and Plato is, inconveniently, only intelligible to those interpreters willing to consider some revision to the philosophical viewpoints they tend initially to bring to their dialectic.

Since there is not space for me to treat of all three sorts of contexts in relation to which the methods of logic employed in the so-called “elenchus” seem to me to fall short, I shall set

the last two aside, for brief treatment in a final section pointing beyond the present paper. (This though the real-world context was quite as central to my argument in Würzburg, as was the first sort.) I choose the first sort of context because it gives us a particularly straightforward way to see both that the whole idea of the so-called “Socratic Elenchus”, as it showed up originally in Robinson 1953, needs to be given up, and also that all three of the interesting attempts to improve that idea associated with what I shall call early Vlastos (1956), later Vlastos (1994 [1983]), and Benson 2000 must also be given up.

In the next section, I introduce an example of how I believe that the “logical powers” doctrine short-changes the first sort of context, and so delivers the wrong answers about what Euthyphro is saying when he uses the sentence “Piety is what is loved by the gods”. In sec.2, I proceed to a characterization of the so-called “Socratic Elenchus”, along with three important developments of the theory of the “elenchus”, each occasioned by difficulties in earlier attempts to preserve the theory. In sec.3, I show how, if I am right in what I say about the example in sec.1, this example refutes the claim that the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” will be able to represent faithfully such Socratic arguments as that directed towards Euthyphro’s claim that piety is what is loved by the gods. The refutation will also apply to all three of the developments of the theory of the “elenchus” just mentioned. Sec.4 introduces briefly the two other sorts of context I have not considered in the earlier parts of the paper, where, once again, the so-called “elenchus” is quite inadequate to account for them; and an appendix adds some brief remarks about other ways in which modern methods of logic seem to be applied to Plato interpretation without due philosophical – or exegetical – circumspection.

1. What Euthyphro is saying when he uses the sentence “Piety is what is loved by the gods”.

What the “logical powers” doctrine gives us is a theory of *what sentences say*. I have already noted that this doctrine, which originates in Frege 1879, 2-3, has it that two sentences say the same thing if and only if they entail and are entailed by all the same sentences. (To such a doctrine, anyone who employs the notion of logical consequence is necessarily committed.)³ To take an example which will be important in the next section, if what Euthyphro is saying by means of a given sentence reduces to what the given sentence says, then what the “logical powers” doctrine forces on an interpreter is the view that if instead of

1 Piety is what is loved by the gods,

Euthyphro had used one of the following sentences:

1a Piety is what is loved by such beings as the gods.

1b Piety is what is loved by such beings as the Greek gods.

1c Piety is what is loved by such beings as Zeus and Cronos,

he would have been saying something different in each case, depending upon which of the three sentences he actually used. For example, (1a) does not entail (1b) without the additional premise that the Greek gods exist, and they are such beings as the gods. Hence (1a) and (1b)

³ Those who know the works of Quine and Davidson will note that those two devotees of holistic approaches to what sentences say are willy-nilly committed to the “logical powers” doctrine in their use of logical consequence, entailment, and so forth – as for example in Davidson (1967), 25-6, or as in the importance Quine associates with such notions as decidability, completeness, incompleteness, and so forth. Once this cat has been let out of the bag, there is no stopping short of the very narrow identity conditions for things people say which are the product of the “logical powers” doctrine.

do not say the same thing. Equally obviously, (1c) is logically independent of (1a), since neither entails the other without some further premise, such as “Zeus and Cronos are gods”.

As against this, I say that if we had asked Euthyphro whether *if he had* used (1b) or (1c) instead of (1a), he would have been saying the same thing, he would have answered, on this occasion “Of course. What do you think?” And if pressed he might well have said,

Look, Socrates, stop quibbling about the exact words with which I am expressing my point. You asked me what I thought. Well, I can tell you what I think using different expressions. Pick whichever of these expressions you want – and there are lots more. *You* know what I am saying here. *I* know what I am saying here. Who gives a damn what exact expression I use?!

Now how do I know this? Or, rather, what makes me suppose that this is the reasonable assumption to make about what Euthyphro is saying? No text shows flat out that I am right. It is an assumption I make on the basis of the kinds of contextual consideration I mention above. For example, it involves the judgment that,

- given what we can gather from the dialogue about the kind of person (and thinker) Euthyphro is;
- given the probable primacy of interest in the *Greek* gods amongst Athenians serious about their own religion – at any rate if their approach to religion is similar to that of the dogmatic Euthyphro (the relevance of this factor we infer from such understanding as we have of 5th century Athens); and
- given Euthyphro’s evident familiarity with such Greek gods as Zeus and Cronos (here the dialogue as a whole gives direct evidence),

he would certainly suppose that he would be referring to the same thing whichever of the three expressions, “such beings as the gods”, “such beings as the Greek gods”, and “such beings as Zeus and Cronos”, he were to use. And since the three sentences (1a), (1b), and (1c) from which we began are otherwise identical, all having “Piety is what is loved by” as a common part, it will presumably follow that Euthyphro would have been saying the same thing whichever of the three sentences he had used. Furthermore, it will be reasonable for us to infer from our judgment of Plato’s reasons for choosing Euthyphro as the interlocutor for an examination of what piety is that Plato himself would have regarded Euthyphro as referring to the same thing whichever of the three expressions Euthyphro had used.

To sum up, I hold it to be intuitively clear that

2 If we attend to what Euthyphro intended to refer to on this occasion, he would have regarded as quite interchangeable the three expressions

such beings as the gods

such beings as the Greek gods

and

such beings as Zeus and Cronos.

And

3 since Euthyphro *attributes* the same thing to each of the beings in the three sentences he uses – namely, that piety is what is loved by these beings – it is arguable that what Euthyphro is saying should be the same in all three cases.⁴

Such is the intuitive basis for considering that what a *speaker* is referring to on a particular occasion by means of a given referring expression might be different from what the *referring expression* refers to on that occasion. Such too is the intuitive basis for considering that what a *speaker* is saying on a particular occasion by means of a given sentence might be different from what the *sentence* says on that occasion.

I grant of course that if we were talking about the use of these three sentences made by *someone else* on *some different occasion* (or even by Euthyphro himself on a different occasion), it might well be the case that, on that other occasion, Euthyphro or that other person *would* be saying something different. (Take, for example, a person who believes in gods, but either does not believe in the Greek gods, or does not think Zeus and Cronos are gods.) This is a way of granting that the *sentences* using these three different ways of saying something about the gods must indeed *say something different about them* – on *all* occasions, even that one with Euthyphro which we are envisaging. For one of the fundamental principles of logic in all of its most rigorous versions has been that in any logical language (or in any natural language interpretable in terms of a logical language), the same name shall always stand for the same object, the same predicate for the same attribute, the same sentence for what the sentence says (= the same proposition the sentence expresses). Put otherwise, this is a way of saying that for an argument entirely lacking context – if there are any such arguments (perhaps mathematical proofs might approximate here, depending on one’s theory of proof in mathematics) – we will be able to identify what the speaker is saying with what the *sentence* says, or, alternatively, to reduce the first to the second.⁵

The issue here is precisely whether or not what a *person* says on a particular occasion by means of a given sentence is given by what the *sentence* says on that occasion. I shall claim that it is *not enough* that what the *sentence* says is different. And I shall argue that an approach that supposes it *is* enough will be inappropriate to the kinds of cases we are considering: cases that occur in Socratic dialogue.

⁴ Those familiar with what John Perry has called “the lasso problem” for “what sentences say” will see that I am here attempting to postpone the settling of the analogous problem for what a *speaker* is saying. I take it to be enough for a *person’s* saying the same thing in this sort of case that the person apply the same attribute to the same object. (The “lasso problem” is the problem that, in Frege, there are overpowering reasons to suppose that the reference of a sentence – a function of the reference of its parts – is its truth value. This conclusion is a variant of Leibniz’s less troubling – if equally arresting – view that the individual concept of Alexander the Great contains the whole history of the world.)

⁵ That what someone is saying, using (1a), (1b), and (1c), would have to be different even for Euthyphro *on this occasion* is a feature of the necessarily largely context-independent character of modern logic (see the appendix below). The point that different speakers’ use of the same non-indexical expressions in different contexts will have to refer to the same thing, is exactly parallel with a key point about Frege’s theory of propositions, first noticed, so far as I know, by Paul Benacerraf (see Evans (1982), 19 n.19). This is that if Lois believes Clark is a wimp, and does not believe Superman is a wimp, then the two beliefs in question, and the two propositions in question, are different. But then that makes the belief different not only for Lois (which is plausible enough) but even for Clark himself. He has to regard the proposition that Clark is a wimp and the proposition that Superman is a wimp as different propositions, and therefore as representing different beliefs of *his!* Now, I say, this is *not* a plausible view. Surely they are *not* different beliefs of Clark’s. But Frege’s logic, in parallel to the present case, *makes* them different beliefs and different propositions. The largely context-independent character of applications of modern logic shows up here too, therefore, in the question of the identity conditions of *things people are saying*.

So if I am right that

(a) proponents of the so-called “elenchus”, as a result of their direct application of modern logic to Socratic arguments (which commits them to the “logical powers” doctrine of *what sentences say*), will be committed to taking what Euthyphro is saying when he uses the expression “such beings as the gods” to be different from what he would be saying when he uses the expression “such beings as Zeus and Cronos”),

and if I am right that

(b) what Euthyphro would be saying on such an occasion would in fact be the same,

and that

(c) it makes an important difference to how we understand Socratic argument whether or not Euthyphro *would* be saying the same thing or not,

then there will be good reason to reject the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” as an account of Socratic argumentation. Such, in a nutshell, is an indication of the basis of my argument.

I turn now to making good on hypothesis (c), that

it does make an important difference to how we understand Socratic argument whether or not Euthyphro *would* be saying the same thing or not,

and to showing, as in hypothesis (a), that

proponents of the “Socratic Elenchus” are indeed committed to the “logical powers” doctrine of *what sentences say*.

2. The so-called “Socratic Elenchus”, its troubles, and three developments of it

Let us review the present situation with the so-called “elenchus”. In the dialectical back-and-forth of question-and-answer which constitutes central parts of Plato’s dialogues – especially such stylometrically early dialogues (with parts of others) as may justly be called “Socratic” – Socrates uses his questions to pit against each other apparently different things he gets his interlocutor to say concerning certain ethical matters. Very frequently, Socrates uses the questions he asks to bring these things his interlocutor says into contradiction with each other (though sometimes what happens is that Socrates leads the interlocutor to see that there are implications of the things which he, the interlocutor, is saying which, while short of formal contradiction, will impel the interlocutor to reject the things first said, so that in either case the interlocutor will no longer wish to say what he first thought he wanted to say).⁶ And so the interlocutor’s position is refuted.

This being the nature of Socratic dialogue, it becomes all too natural for modern philosophers (especially those in the analytic tradition) to follow (i) Robinson 1953, (ii) Vlastos 1956, and (iii) Vlastos 1994 [1983], in construing these dialectical passes as for the most part the *deduction* of formal contradictions from the *propositions* involved in the argument, as premises expressive of the things the interlocutor is saying. The propositions in question are taken to *entail* the *logical inconsistency* which is the immediate conclusion of the

⁶ The contradictions *people* see in their thought – contra-dictions – are not always *formal* contradictions, though logicians will generally suppose that any such cases can be *reduced to* formal contradictions between sentences. Consider, for example, the first refutation of “Piety is what is loved by the gods” at *Euthyphro* 7A-8A by bringing Euthyphro to the conclusion that the same things are both loved and hated by the gods. This hardly engenders a formal contradiction.

“elenchus”.⁷ Thus we have the following characterization in Vlastos 1994 [1983], 11, of Socrates’ supposedly deductive methods of refutation.

[1] The interlocutor asserts a thesis, *p*, which Socrates considers false and targets for refutation.

[2] Socrates secures agreement to further premises, say *q* and *r* (each of which may stand for a conjunct of *propositions*). The agreement is *ad hoc*: Socrates argues from {*q*, *r*} not to them.

[3] Socrates then argues, and the interlocutor agrees that *q* & *r* entail (*sic*) *not-p*.

[4] Socrates then claims that he has shown that *not-p* is true, *p* false. (My Italics)

It is true that the words “entail” and “proposition” are the only words in this account which are heavy with modern logical theory. “Entail” is understood as logical consequence – the semantical consequence supposedly underwriting its proof-theoretic cousin, the process of deduction-from-premises, in such a way as to ensure that true premises will never lead to a false conclusion. “Propositions” are understood to introduce what the sentences used as premises severally express – conveying what the person introducing these sentences into the argument is saying (supposing, denying, and so forth). But a glance at the way in which those who attribute the so-called “elenchus” to the early dialogues explain what the use of the so-called “elenchus” shows us will reveal the constant use of words such as “logic”, “deduction”, “logical consequence”, “valid”, “sound”, “logical inconsistency”, along with the already familiar “entail” and “proposition”.⁸ So here we have the attribution to Socrates of methods of argument that brings those methods into close relation with the methods of modern logic, and necessarily impose on analyses of arguments construed in terms of the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” the requirements of modern logic, and, in particular, the “logical powers” doctrine.

So widely has it been accepted that this characterization of Socratic dialectic is along the right lines, that I have simply ceded the name “Socratic Elenchus” to Robinson, Vlastos, and their followers. It is because I do not myself accept that this purely deductive (and semantical) picture gives a correct characterization of Socratic dialectical argument, that I refer to it, when speaking in my own person, as ‘the so-called ‘Socratic Elenchus’’ or ‘the so-called ‘elenchus’’.

Now, as a matter of fact, this purely deductive picture of most Socratic dialectic has caused trouble for its proponents right from the start. Why did this not alert proponents of the so-called “elenchus” to the doubtfulness of this way of construing Socrates? I believe it is because, philosophically, they themselves saw no alternative to employing this way of analyzing an argument in accordance with modern logic. These troubles for the so-called “elenchus” may be detailed in terms of three developments of considerable interest in the picture of the “elenchus” which, beginning with Vlastos (1956), its more important

⁷ The plainly non-deductive steps that often show up in such arguments are taken to be (sub-) arguments from analogy which, following Aristotle, interpreters generally consider to be inductive rather than deductive. Interpreters are undeterred. They take it for granted that with these allegedly untroubling exceptions, if we merely take the conclusions of such inductive sub-arguments as [primitive] premises of the deduction, then the entire argument can still be treated as a pure deduction.

⁸ For the primary premise *p* together with the secondary premisses *q* and *r* entailing an inconsistency, see Robinson (1953²), 7, 15, 22; Vlastos (1994), 11, 20, 21, 23, 25, Brickhouse and Smith (2000), 93, 83, cf. 79-80, Benson (2000), 33, 48, 62-4, 65, nn.26; 95. For *validity* and *soundness*, cf. Robinson (1953²), 15; Santas (1979) 136, 138, 166, 178-9; Vlastos (1994), 20, nn. 40, 41; Irwin (1995), 18, 20 with 40; also Benson (2000), 45-6, 49, 69 n.47. The reference to *propositions* (or whatever one chooses to call those things that are individuated by the “logical powers” doctrine) is of course ubiquitous.

proponents have endorsed in an effort to see the difficulties which arise and to get around them. They are, first,

(A) Vlastos's earlier worry (1956) that, contrary to the conclusion that the primary proposition p of Vlastos's schema of the so-called "elenchus" has been refuted, all that is deductively and semantically justified is that at least one of p , q , and r is false, so that all Socrates could possibly be establishing is the mere inconsistency of the propositions in the interlocutor's entire premise-set $\{p, q, r\}$. The supposed refutation of p was in no way justified. This difficulty Vlastos calls "the problem of the elenchus". The resulting reflection on Socrates' grasp of what he was doing – he didn't see he was committing a gross fallacy – was by no means pleasing to Vlastos. Nor should it please any enthusiast for Plato.

Second, there is

(B) Vlastos's later semi-Davidsonian attempt to overcome what he calls "the problem of the elenchus" by finding a way to rule out the possibility of rejecting the q and the r when it is discovered that $\{p, q, r\}$ is inconsistent. Starting from the reasonable view that Socrates might well, in some of these deductions, have up his sleeve perfectly good [albeit non-deductive] arguments for holding on to these secondary propositions q , r , Vlastos then goes a bit over the edge, suggesting now that in *all* of these deductions Socrates himself believed that *all* of his secondary premises q , r were true, as well as believing that they were justified in one of two ways: either, first, by the long survival of these propositions against various other [for the most part merely] hypothesized exercises of the so-called "elenchus", or, second, by a supposed Socratic confidence, based on his experience with the so-called "elenchus", that such survival of the propositions q , r could in all cases be [inductively] projected on the basis of a range of relevant hypothesized *past* elenchi. From this Vlastos supposed that he could get the result he wished: the refutation of p by the deduction of an inconsistency from $\{p, q, r\}$ would in these circumstances once more be justified. (It's simply that the rejection of *not-q* and *not-r* is again by inductive means.)⁹

Third, there is

(C) Benson's counter-attack on Vlastos's later solution, by pointing to clear counter-examples for this semi-Davidsonian solution to "the problem of the elenchus". Benson draws attention to cases of distinct [and, as logicians would say, logically independent] secondary propositions q , r in so-called "Socratic elenchi" which Socrates could not possibly have believed true, let alone justified by past experience with the so-called "elenchus".

Here is one of Benson's counter-examples to Vlastos's later position (B): In refuting the primary proposition that

1 Piety is what is loved by the gods,

(6E-8B) Socrates uses the secondary premise (7E-8B) that

4 What Zeus loves, Cronos hates.

Remember that both Benson and Vlastos are committed to the position that (1) and (4) are logically independent of each other since neither follows from the other by logic alone, without some such further premise as that Zeus and Cronos are such beings as the gods. Accordingly, the idea is that using the premise about Zeus and Cronos, Socrates can reduce

⁹ The talk of *purely deductive argument* begins to look increasingly threadbare.

this account of piety to contradiction (or at least a near-contradiction). But the secondary premise about Zeus and Cronos is of a type Socrates has already said clearly enough (5E-6B) he cannot be brought to accept. Thus Benson concludes that Vlastos's semi-Davidsonian move of supposing Socrates thought that all secondary premises he used were true, falls to this counter-example (along with a few others),¹⁰ and, as a result, Benson advocates a return to the *status quo ante* – to stage (A), the stage of Vlastos's earlier worry, where all that a so-called "Socratic Elenchus" could show is the inconsistency of the conjunction of the primary proposition *p* and the secondary propositions *q*, *r*. This worry in stage (A) cannot be met, according to Benson. So get used to it! If we wish Socratic argument to be coherent, Benson now proposes, we must take it – at any rate, in all of his [absolutely central] "elenctic" passages – that Socrates was only aiming to show inconsistency in certain whole positions espoused by interlocutors. That is, to save Socrates from the gross fallacy thrown up in position (A), we must apply this suggestion – that Socrates was only attempting to show his interlocutors' opinions inconsistent – to *all* so-called "elenctic" argument. In that case, if Socrates were ever to argue that particular claims are false or true, – and Benson grants he does – then grounds would have to be found *other than* "elenctic" argument for holding that he has established or refuted particular propositions. Without such non-"elenctic" arguments, we would almost certainly be led to infer from the claim that

5 Socrates claims to have no *knowledge* [of the good]

the claim that

6 Socrates never *argues for any beliefs* of his own [about the good].

If adopting Benson's position on the so-called "elenchus" were even to *suggest* that this inference should be accepted, we might well feel some considerable discomfort with Benson's view.¹¹

All of this being said about Benson vs. Vlastos, what I want to draw attention to is not any of the points on which Benson and Vlastos are in disagreement, but a point on which they absolutely *agree*. The point on which Benson and Vlastos, both early and late, agree – and on which they are followed by pretty well everyone else who has taken up the issue – is that Socratic dialectic, with the qualifications noted above about certain inductive steps, is purely deductive in character. The idea of deduction here involves not only the proof-theoretic notion of derivability from premises via antecedently determinate formal rules of inference, but also the kind of semantical underwriting that will ensure, no matter what interpretations

¹⁰ See Benson (2000), 48-52, 40-43.

¹¹ Benson saves himself from this difficulty by *himself* endorsing – for claims Socrates is evidently endorsing (which always occur, according to Benson, *outside* of "elenctic" contexts) – the essentially Vlastosian (and semi-Davidsonian) move to arguing for truth from inductive evidence of [hypothesized] repeated elenchi (91-92). What is more, Benson's complicated notion of Socratic knowledge, as both a propositional state and a *dunamis*, requires of the *dunamis* much the same holistic, Davidsonian conception of knowledge of such things as the good (e.g., Benson (2000), 191-3, 220). Like Davidson, Benson wants to hew both to holism and (n.3 above) to the propositions required by the "logical powers" doctrine, to which, as I have said, any proponent of the notion of logical consequence is committed. (It is of course this propositional element to which I am objecting, both in Davidson and in Benson. But I should note here that, on the other hand, Benson rightly, and generously, notes the affinity of certain *other* parts of what he is doing to earlier material of mine which at any rate lies in a certain proximity to holism.) It may be added to what was said in nn.3, 7, and 9 above, that once the non-deductive appeal to survival of [hypothesized] repeated past elenchi has become central to Benson's explanations of the [perfectly obvious] fact that Socrates very often argues for some claim of his own, the motive for construing so-called "elenctic" passages deductively is correspondingly weakened. Why shouldn't *all* of the arguments in Socratic dialectic involve substantial (non-logical) principles of inference?

are assigned to the non-logical constants, that deductive inferences of the form in question will never lead from truth to falsity, that is, from true premises to a false conclusion.

Now how does the example introduced in the preceding section concerning the three variants (1a), (1b), and (1c) of “Piety is what is loved by the gods” show well-founded my discomfort with the deployment of modern notions of logical consequence and logical inconsistency that are built into the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” by all of (a) Robinson and early Vlastos, (b) later Vlastos, and (c) Benson? As announced earlier, I think it lies in the fact that each position assumes that

what a *speaker* is saying on a particular occasion by means of a given sentence

is given by (and indeed *reduced to*)

what the speaker’s *sentence* says on that occasion.¹²

In the next section, I illustrate this claim of mine by showing how rejection of the identity or reduction in question undercuts both the positions, early and late, of Vlastos, as well as that of Benson in his attack on later Vlastos.

3. Consequences of my argument for the disagreement between Benson and Vlastos

Suppose, just for the moment, that I am right that what Euthpyro would on this occasion be saying would be the same, whether he used “the gods” as in (1), “such beings as the gods”, as in (1a) or “such beings as Zeus and Cronos” as in (1c). Then I put the case that he would also be saying the same thing had he used the sentence

1d Piety is what is loved by such beings as Zeus and Cronos who are such that Zeus castrated Cronos for murdering Zeus’ siblings,

or even the sentence

1e Piety is what is loved by such beings as Zeus and Cronos who are such that what Zeus loves, Cronos hates.

And if this is correct, it seems plain that what Euthpyro is saying in assenting to “What Zeus loves, Cronos hates” – what proponents of the so-called “elenchus” would call “granting the supposed secondary proposition *that what Zeus loves, Cronos hates*” – does *not* advert to a secondary proposition (or a secondary *anything else*) logically independent of what Euthpyro would be saying when he used the original sentence

1 Piety is what is loved by the gods.

¹² I have said above that this identification or reduction of *what the speaker is saying to what the speaker’s sentences say* is characteristic of the so-called “linguistic turn”, which also has the Hume-like (empiricism-like) effect of limiting what *people* can say or think or express to the conceptual resources supplied by language. This is true even of those (often Wittgensteinian) proponents of the “linguistic turn” who don’t have much truck with formal logic, and so need not accept the “logical powers” doctrine. I have questioned this move elsewhere in defense of Plato’s account of what the speakers in the lowest level of the Cave get to speak about. (Penner (2006)) This “linguistic turn”, not only in philosophy generally, but in modern logic, philosophy of logic, philosophy of language, and foundations of mathematics, has come to dominate most of modern philosophy – first among science-minded philosophers but increasingly within the whole field. It originates, in my own non-professional opinion, in the formalism that Hilbert introduced in response to serious problems both with axiomatics and with the effect of the antinomies of set theory on our use of infinities in mathematics. (More on Hilbert in the Appendix below.)

For we can now see that what Euthyphro was saying when he assented to the sentence "What Zeus loves, Cronos hates" is merely part of (an aspect of) what was already included in what he was saying in the original sentence about the gods.

Of course, as before, *others* using the various sentences in question (or Euthyphro using them on *other* occasions) may well be saying something different by means of the two sentences. But does that show that Euthyphro is saying something different on *this* occasion? (See n.5 above.)

To return to Benson and Vlastos, notice that the question at issue here is not whether (theories of *what people are saying* aside) my account of the argument shows Euthyphro's position doesn't add up, while the accounts of Vlastos and Benson fail to show this. For if the theories of myself, Vlastos, and Benson as to *what people are saying* were equally viable, all three accounts of what Euthyphro is saying would show in their different ways the flaws in Euthyphro's position. The question at issue is rather whether the methods of analysis Benson and Vlastos use equally correctly represent what Euthyphro is saying. My position, of course, is that both are fatally connected to the "linguistic turn" together with the "logical powers" doctrine, and so are based on an incorrect account of what Euthyphro is saying.

I am not denying here that Benson's argument against Vlastos is correct *ad hominem*. For if Vlastos accepts what Euthyphro is saying in terms of what his *sentences* say (and the logical powers doctrine of when sentences say the same thing), he will have to grant that this is a clear counter-example to the claim that Socrates himself accepts all [logically independent] secondary premises in so-called "elenchi". At the same time, Benson's own acceptance of the sentential criterion for *what Euthyphro is saying*, along with his acceptance of the logical powers doctrine, both of which he shares with Vlastos, shows his own argument (that all Socrates can be arguing for is the logical inconsistency of Euthyphro's total position) is also incorrect. Socrates' argument against "Piety is what is loved by the gods" is not at all undercut by the assumption common to Vlastos and Benson that Euthyphro was in a position to give up what he is saying when he says "Piety is what is loved by the gods" instead of what he is saying when he says "What Zeus loves, Cronos hates".

I conclude that both Vlastos's later position and Benson's position should be rejected – which is, in effect, to say that the so-called "Socratic Elenchus" should be entirely rejected as an account of Socrates' dialectical methods.

But then, what is so special about *my* account, where

7 what Euthyphro is saying using the sentence "What Zeus loves, Cronos hates" is *part* of what he is saying when he uses the sentence "Piety is what is loved by the gods"?

Is my account not just another Davidsonian holistic account of what people are saying using particular sentences – though now such holistic accounts of what people are saying may appear precisely in so-called "elenctic" passages? And don't later Vlastos and Benson both resort to *something* Davidsonian in arguing either (in Vlastos's case) that a principle of inference (infer the truth of a given proposition from its surviving repeated and varied "elenchi") getting us those secondary premises that happen to be true, or (in Benson's case) getting us, via holistic *dunameis*, those conclusions Socrates thinks true which do not appear in elenchi? Well, to some extent. Benson's *dunameis* do show something of this kind of Davidsonianism, Vlastos's not much. Neither shows signs of the full blown Davidsonian holism, which surely *would* accept my claim (7). How so? The problem is that a full-blown Davidsonian holism may not resort at *any* point to the "logical powers" doctrine, since that would precisely undo (7). (Unfortunately, Davidson himself falls into this trap sometimes: see n.3 above.) We need to give up the logical powers doctrine entirely. And then there can be no

call to represent Socratic dialectic, even in so-called “elenchi” as proceeding by way of deductions backed by logical consequence.

But the question still arises whether I am not giving a Davidsonian holistic analysis of the *Euthyphro* argument, albeit one that entirely eschews such notions as logical consequence, validity, soundness, and the like. On this there is only one thing I feel able to say here: that holistic analyses inevitably end up as (what are, from my point of view, though not Davidson’s) coherence theories, or at least “internal realisms”, thoroughly committed to the “linguistic turn” (see n.12 *init.*). Such features certainly do not characterize any view I myself could endorse, or that I can imagine attributing to Socrates or Plato. Those such as Socrates and Plato who believe in a real good which we all desire, and in real natures independent of anything our language makes available to us, will not be holists – however much they would always choose holism over empiricism if those were our only choices.

4. Conclusions and further remarks.

I have argued here that when arguments in Socratic dialogues are analyzed in terms of the propositions and entailments of modern logic (as happens in the so-called “Socratic Elenchus”, they commit interpreters not only to the “linguistic turn”, in which

what *speakers* are saying by means of given sentences is reduced to what those *sentences* say,

but also to

the “logical powers” doctrine of the identity of what the speakers are saying;

and that

this unfortunate combination gives the wrong identity conditions for *what speakers are saying*.

And I have argued that

the failure here is a failure to account adequately for at least one sort of context – that which consists in the speaker’s background beliefs, personal style, and the cultural milieu from which the speaker springs.

A second sort of context which also tends to be falsified by these modern methods of interpretation is that of the literary form given to the dialogue by the person who writes or reports what the speaker is saying in the relevant conversation. I have argued elsewhere that one of the bad features of the sorts of analyses of Platonic arguments given by proponents of the so-called “elenchus” is that the dialogues tend to get atomized into a sequence of (at best loosely) connected, but quite discrete arguments; and that we see this particularly clearly in how little interpreters have attempted to connect the “longer road” of *Republic* Book IV (concerning, apparently, the parts of the soul) with the account of the “longer road” of *Republic* Book VI (concerning the metaphysics of the Form of the Good). These passages in Books IV and VI tend, in most writing on the *Republic*, to become two isolated series of arguments. If interpreters did not rush so easily to isolate particular arguments or “elenchi”, they might ask whether the plot, for example, did not require some more hard-working effort to say just how Plato could have thought that the arguments concerning the Form of the Good supplied important information about how we should construe the earlier arguments

apparently concerning the parts of the soul. (Where analytical philosophers excuse themselves by saying “Dear Plato, you know, once he gets the metaphysical bit between his teeth, he can’t get back to the subject he was offering to illuminate”, I want to say that it is analytical philosophers who have the bit between their teeth – the bit, namely, of logical analysis of allegedly discrete arguments.) Thus may the too quick application of modern methods of logic lead us to miss one of the truly masterful moves in the plot of the *Republic*, and lead to all sorts of misinterpretations of, for example, the Form of the Good. (See Penner 2005b.)

Last is the third, and, in my view, much the most important sort of context which I think is all too easily missed if we read Socratic arguments by treating them as “elenchi”. This is what I have called above the “real world” context. (My treatment of this sort of context was quite as important as the material presented above to my actual lecture in Würzburg. I chose to cut it out here only in the interests of space. I hope to say a good deal more on it elsewhere.) To emphasize the remarks above just briefly here, when Socrates hears Peter saying that he desires what is best over all, he takes Peter there to be saying that he wants what is *really* best (not just what Peter *thinks* best, not just what is apparently best, and not just something “under the description ‘what is best’.”) Here Socrates takes it that this thing that is best over all, to which Peter is (inwardly) directed, is not what Peter *thinks* is best, but what is really best, even if that is different from what Peter supposes it is. (Peter desires it in ignorance of what it really is – as scientists seeking to know the real nature of cancer seek that real nature even if it is different from what they think it is; or as I seek to speak of my loved ones *as they really are*, even though I do so through a fog of misconceptions of how it really is with them.) The effect of this understanding of what people are referring to, and of what they are saying, is that context involves not only the sorts of considerations (concerning a speaker’s background beliefs and cultural milieu) which I have brought up in my arguments against Vlastos and Benson, and considerations of plot, but also *reality itself*, the *real truth*. (We have to judge what someone is saying in terms of the real truth about the parts of reality to which they intend to refer.)¹³

On this view, surprisingly enough, it makes a difference even to what someone *intends* to refer to, what the truth is about that thing in reality. Hence, in general, people do not know

¹³ Prominent in my lecture also – as indications of the way in which Socrates is committed to treating how things are in the real world as involved in the sorts of *things people say* or *things people believe*, were passages where Socrates makes it clear that the interlocutors *do not know what it is that they are saying* (or *what it is that they believe*). To take just four examples, an astonished Polus is told at *Gorgias* 466D4-5 that he is *denying* that doing whatever seems best is great power. Again, at 474B6-10, he is told that, contrary to what he may *think* he believes and prefers, he actually prefers suffering injustice to doing it. At *Lysis* 205D5-10, an astonished Hippothales is told that (unbeknownst to himself) what he presents as praise of Lysis is actually praise of *himself*. And at *Smp* 202B-C, Socrates presents himself as *thinking* that he believes that *Erôs* is a god, while Diotima assures him that he, like Diotima herself, actually believes that *Erôs* is *not* a god. (It should go without saying that, as one who eschews meanings in any context whatever, I do not here counsel the transparent device of getting out of one’s difficulties by postulating a special sense of “believes” or “says” in the way Vlastos [1983] (1994), 23-4 does.)

It will be clear that on the sort of [Socratic-Platonic] sort of view of what people are saying which I have been presenting here, people will not in general be aware of what it is that they are saying, what it is that they prefer, or what it is that they are praising – except to the extent that they have knowledge of the truth of the matter about the situation. This is the bringing into *context* of what the real truth is (even if what that real truth is should be unknown to any of the interlocutors). This sort of context, as I have remarked at the end of the preceding section, is what torpedoes *any* form of holism, even amongst those who eschew the logical powers doctrine. For, from a Socratic/Platonic point of view, holism is a form of coherence theory, which is hardly what is involved in the ultra-realism of Socratic and Platonic accounts of desire for the real good.

If you want to know what people are saying by means of their sentences, you can’t just work with what their *sentences* say. It is not enough to just run through the application of some meanings or semantical rules to the sentences of Socrates and his interlocutors to get what it is that they are saying. You will have to use your head – and everything you know about people, about societies, about plot, and about the real truth of the matter about the things Socrates and his interlocutors are talking about – if you are to succeed in getting clear about what they are saying.

what it is that they are referring to. (Thus, those we love most, for example, are always in some measure unrevealed to us. But it is *them* to which we intend to refer, not to someone who fits some [mis]conception we have of that person. So it is with the good we wish for those we love – we want it even if it differs from what we think it is. Thus I do not in general know what that good is that I wish for my children and grandchildren. For all that, it is that good which I wish for them. (I wish for them neither what I *think* is the good for them, nor even what *they* think is the good for them.) But then I cannot know what my state of intending to refer to the real good *is* here except to the extent I know what that real good is. Modern logic (and so the so-called “elenchus”) – including, incidentally, the logics of psychological contexts that descend to us from Frege – is quite unequipped to deal with such features of context as Socrates’ intention to refer to the real good. What logic can tell us about is at most *sentences* about the good where everything contextual *not* explicit in the sentences is to be disregarded.¹⁴ But that make it ill-designed for the kind of dialectical coming to grips with the good that we find in Socratic dialectic. (As Antonio Chu has pointed out to me, I really need to add here the consequence I fully embrace that passages where the so-called “elenchus” shows up are actually passages attempting to lead the interlocutor to something Socrates will reasonably suppose is at least *closer* to the real truth. They are *not* about establishing something formal.) It is for this reason too that I think it is time to drop the so-called “Socratic Elenchus”.¹⁵

Appendix: Further problems in applying modern logic to *things people say*.

The difficulties I have raised above for the distinction between *what speakers are saying* and *what sentences say* could have been raised equally against any version of logic that philosophers have used from Aristotle to Hume and Kant. For Aristotle too, logical consequence is a matter of logical form, and logical form is determined by the language of the logic of the syllogism, say. (Thus, contrary to the doctrine of the categories, all names stand for the same type of thing, and all predicate expressions stand for exactly the same type of things and for the same attribute in all contexts. As in modern logic, the language chosen imposes its form on the logic.) But if we choose to use the methods of modern logic instead – the only rational choice for one who would employ logic at all – entirely new problems of the utmost seriousness arise, and make the application of logic to a conversations a much more delicate matter. Few interpreters of Plato have shown any kind of awareness of the hazards that await them here. Let me explain.

Prior to the invention in 1879 of the new symbolic logic of Frege, logic (in the limited form available) was regarded, and with some justice, as (in Ryle’s phrase) a “topic-neutral” discipline which could be used without itself prejudging any questions whatever about “matters of fact and real existence”. Hence logic could be used as a neutral tool for examining questions of metaphysics and ethics without obtruding any metaphysical views of its own on the subject matter. But when logic expanded in the nineteenth century by finally providing for relations and multiple quantification (as needed both for ordinary speech and for such mathematical purposes as the ϵ , δ definitions of limits and continuity), two almost entirely new problems emerged. The first is that it became obvious that all sorts of existence assumptions were necessary to logic. To name just three, we have, first, the existence of *logical forms* (which my 1987 points out is hardly less daring metaphysically than the

¹⁴ See further the appendix below on more shortcomings to the way in which modern interpreters apply methods of modern logic to the interpretation of the dialogues.

¹⁵ I owe thanks to a number of people for very helpful comments or conversations, of whom I single out Jerry Santas, George Anagnostopoulos, Alex Santana, Hugh Benson, and, as often, especially Antonio Chu.

existence of Platonic Forms – thus making *logical* arguments against the existence of the Forms highly questionable). Second, we have the existence of extensions (sets!) for every predicate if (meta)-proofs of soundness, and completeness were to be carried out. And, third, it turns out that we need an infinity of counting numbers (since such meta-proofs require mathematical induction). Logic could now no longer be metaphysically neutral on questions of existence.

The second problem was even more troubling. A series of damaging contradictions were found in the very foundations of logic, especially the “Cantor paradox” and the “Russell paradox” in set theory, and the (ancient) “Liar paradox” for the theory of truth and reference, i.e., formal semantics. These contradictions forced all sorts of restrictions and limitations onto logic. The trouble with most uses of the notions of validity, entailment, and the like, as we see them applied by analytical philosophers interpreting Platonic texts, is that they presuppose all sorts of restrictions and limitations with no philosophical motivation other than the *ad hoc* reason that without *something* from within a wide range of possible restrictions logic will end up self-contradictory. Thus the meta-proofs of soundness and consistency for first-order quantification theory presuppose that there is an extension for every predicate, no matter how complex. (Consider, for example, the range of the schematic predicate-letter A in the rule of universal instantiation: $xA \rightarrow Aa$.) But the objects in the domain ranged over by “everything” *may not include any of those extensions*. Why not? Because if we allowed those extensions into the domain, the theory would immediately become self-contradictory by virtue of the Russell contradiction. So they are excluded by fiat! Not much of a recommendation for the first-order logical theory which many have taken to be “the language of science”, or for an account of what (we think) exists in terms of what our theory quantifies over. And since logic can hardly do without extensions, we must add sets to our ontology – making modern logic no more secure than set theory.

And consider only what is necessary to get a theory of truth and reference for a language of logic (again necessary for the above mentioned meta-proofs) which can be applied to Socratic conversations. (There can be no such natural language, Tarski thought.) Here the anglophone interpreter must use an English containing no predicate “is true” that can be applied to sentences in English. Is it clear that any English speaker, for example, speaks, or could speak, an English which lacks the predicate “... is a true sentence” as applicable to any of its sentences? But such restrictions are necessary if we are to have a logic that is antecedently prepared to deal systematically with any subject whatever. Indeed, we may wonder whether conversation, even philosophical conversation, attempts to proceed within such Gargantuan antecedent systematisation; and even whether that is desirable – especially if it is going to proceed under such strong ontological assumptions and such stringent restrictions and limitations.

Of course it might be said, contrary to what I have been suggesting, throughout, that a proponent of the so-called “Socratic Elenchus” need not inject the full apparatus of axiomatic systems of logic + Tarskian semantics into his or her use of the idea of logical consequence, and that all such a proponent would need is the (“baby logic”) idea of its being the case that when the premises are true, the conclusion *must* be true. But this is a mistake. The modal word “must” needs some explanation, some motivation (for example, in terms of *all possible worlds*, the existence and the non-existence of *possibilities*, and so forth). Such explanations inevitably cause more trouble than the non-modal “true under all (re)-interpretations” which itself requires the full panoply of restrictions.

One final point. It might seem that in protesting against the reduction of what speakers are saying to what sentences say, I am saying that logic deals only in sentences – as if logic

did not allow for the *interpretations* of sentences. But I do allow for such interpretations. My problem here is that (in a kind of analogue to “Meaning determines reference”: see my 2005a) semantical rules determine reference for words and phrases, and with a characteristic insouciance to context (bar a few “indexicals”). For such interpretations (such correlations with reality) occur only in the following way. In a modified version of Hilbert’s unrestricted formalism, one first disinterprets all non-logical constants (though still in accordance with logical types: sentence-symbols for truth-bearers, predicate-symbols for attributes [Aristotelian *such-es*], name-symbols for objects [Aristotelian *this-es*], and so forth); then, second, one decides logical form on the basis of the largely disinterpreted formulas and subformulas; then, third, one systematically (re)interprets the disinterpreted formulas and subformulas, using semantical rules, in terms of the particular things or attributes referred to by the sentences in question.

It is true that in some modern work in philosophy of language, there is an attempt to allow for such contextual matters as are involved with explicitly token-reflexive (or indexical) expressions or grammatical features, such as “I”, “he”, “then”, “here”, tense, and so forth. I am suggesting here, however, that this is far too little concession to context. I myself believe that what a person is referring to in using a given subject or predicate may always be more or less contextual. From a logician’s point of view, of course, *some* things *must* be context-independent, or the very utility of the discipline will be severely limited. What I am suggesting here is that the discipline *is* severely limited for purposes of accounting for *what people say* (as opposed to *what their sentences say*) in the course of their arguments. Indeed I doubt that contextual considerations of the breadth required for analysis of the Socratic arguments now under discussion can be provided for in the only sorts of logic systematically enough developed to be available to us.

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Studying Plato and Platonism Together: *Meno*-related Observations

The Matthias Baltes Memorial Lecture

Harold Tarrant

It has been an honour to offer a lecture in memory of Matthias Baltes, a man of great personal qualities and a genuine Platonist. This paper will try to let Plato inform my reading of later Platonists, and to use their insights to enrich our reading of the dialogues. Matthias achieved this particularly in relation to the influential *Timaeus*, to which his contribution was extensive,¹ while the *Meno* is a more attractive target for one who prefers to write on dialogues less well known in antiquity.

i. Where should we look for doctrine in the *Meno*?

The *Theaetetus*-Commentary, an early Middle Platonist work extant to about *Theaetetus* 158a,² gives the *Meno* special significance for the early pages of the *Theaetetus*. Indeed, the commentator assumes that *Meno* 98a provides the definition of knowledge that the *Theaetetus* looks for in vain (III, XV), and the theme of recollection functions centrally in the understanding of Socratic education (XLVI-XLVIII). Recollection, as usual in Middle Platonism, was explained in relation to the common notions, but the Platonist nature of the theory is not in doubt: such notions depend on a pre-natal vision as suggested by *Meno* itself (81c). A link with *Phaedo* is also prominent, and though the terminology of the Ideas or paradigms is never imported into this discussion (which concerns a dialogue where no Ideas are explicitly mentioned), the commentator assumes that the vision had been Idea-directed.

The commentator did not see *Meno* as an epistemological work rather than an ethical one. It was for him a dialogue of investigation, like *Theaetetus* itself. According to column LIX, it is Socrates' tactic in such investigations (*zêtêseis*) to ask questions without supplying answers. His position is not altogether hidden from those with experience of his techniques, but that does not involve a non-aporetic conclusion – on the main topic of investigation. It is precisely because *Theaetetus* is investigating how individual pieces of knowledge arise that

¹ Baltes (1972), (1976/1978). The index to *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, (band 1-4) contains 3.5 pages of references to *Tim.*, but only one to *Meno* (4.257 n.11).

² The main papyrus to 153d1, with fragments of 157b-8a.

Socrates can give no explanation of them. Instead, it can teach a Middle Platonist a great deal about such key topics as the Socratic learning process and the moral goal itself (VII 14-20, foreshadowing later discussion). On peripheral issues, many of central importance, Socrates is ready to reveal what he believes. This must apply to all dialogues that our author would recognise as *zetetic*,³ but I confine myself here with four:

1. *Theaetetus* can say little definitive about knowledge, but remain the *key text* for the *telos*.
2. *Protagoras* can say nothing definitive about the interrelationship of the virtues, and yet offer Middle Platonists an account of how virtue arises, given in *Protagoras*' great *rhexis*.⁴
3. *Euthydemus* has no solution for dealing with eristic sophistry, but contained scenes depicting the education of Cleinias that had already influenced Socratic ethics.⁵
4. *Meno* finds no final account of the origin or nature of political excellence, being the archetypal dialogue of investigation (*zêtêsis*),⁶ but offers insights about how we arrive at knowledge or correct opinions.

So *Meno* could be given the Thrasyllan subtitle *On Excellence* (D.L. 3.59), and still be most utilised by Middle Platonists for its views on knowledge. Anything said in *Meno* about knowledge could be used in the interpretation of Plato's epistemology in other works, but similarly anything *Protagoras* says about political excellence – the excellence for which adult males become famed in their cities – was liable to be used in reading *Meno*.

However, it cannot be simply assumed that 'Protagoras' became an authority figure for Platonic ethics. There are *competing* views of excellence in *Meno*, the political excellence that 'Meno' himself actively pursues (91a), and a more exacting concept favoured by Socrates – possibly identical with moral knowledge but not achievable without divine help. What 'Meno' wants is virtually what 'Protagoras' offers, an excellence that seemed inappropriate in woman, child, or slave. What Socrates pursues, even as he educates 'Meno', may also be related to *Protagoras*, but to the literary digression. There it had been humanly impossible to be excellent in a complete and continuous fashion (344a); that was within a god's grasp alone (343c), and those who got closest were recipients of divine favour (345c). There the acquisition and subsequent loss of knowledge were the only great blessings and disasters one

³ In the division of Thrasyllus at least, comparable dialogues include *Euthyphr.*, *Alc.* I and II, *Theag.*, *Chrm.*, *La.*, *Lys.*, *Grg.*, *Hi.Ma.*, *Hi.Mi.*, *Ion*. The better known works likely to pose difficulties were *Alc.* I and *Grg.* As a work on rhetoric (D.L. 3.59) and its power, *Grg.* can be seen as *exploring* the principal topic (*Phdr.* was afforded more credibility), but uncompromising on the desirability of justice. When seen as a work about the human being *Alc.* I seems rather didactic, but Platonist tradition regarded the Socrates of the third and final part (on the human being) as a midwife rather than a teacher (Proc. *In Alc.* 12-14; Olymp. *In Alc.* 1), and that of the first part as more elenctic. Only in the second, protreptic part (120e-124b) does Socrates (a) digress, and (b) take a more didactic stance, and that has little to do with the nature of humans.

⁴ 'Protagoras' is here an authority figure, cautious and pious, without the agnosticism of the historical Protagoras. For this speech seen as Platonic doctrine see Tarrant (2000), 113 and 136. Until 324d2 'Protagoras' uses myth, a typical vehicle for inviting in-depth interpretation, only then moving into straightforward reasoned exposition.

⁵ Annas (1999), 31-51, rightly makes much of the *Euthd.*'s ethical digressions in the establishment of some possible stoicising features of Middle Platonic ethics, and indeed it had influenced the Stoics themselves, as Striker (1994) shows (cf. Long (1988)). For the digressions' importance in al-Farabi's arrangement of dialogues see Tarrant (2003).

⁶ See 81d-e and 86b-c, confirming the utility of the recollection argument in making people more *zetetic* (*zêtêtikoi*): found in genuine works only at *Meno* 81e1 and twice in *Rep.* For Aristotle (*Pol.* 1265a12) and the *Axiochus* (366b6) this on-going investigative character is typical of the Platonic Socrates.

could experience (344c-5b). For knowledge would render moral mistakes impossible (345d-e). Such is the uncompromising nature of *this* concept of excellence that there is no excellence other than *real* excellence (343d-e), in defiance of passages in *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic* that mention a popular or political excellence dependent only on habituation. Those able to become excellent *temporarily* are to be praised, but this transient condition is not a part of their nature.

These competing views of excellence were seen as operating within *Meno* too. As I shall soon argue, Cicero *De Legibus* 1.24-32 involves an interpretation of the *Meno*, read in close conjunction with *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*, and above all Protagoras' long *rhexis* from *Protagoras*.⁷ Cicero knows he is dealing with a specifically social or political type of excellence. Arguing for the *natural* origin of law, he emphasises society's natural inclination towards goodness. Society's virtues are thus not remote, though natural gifts must be actively employed under the oversight of law. But *for the individual* there is at least one *further* stage if one is to achieve true virtue, true likeness to god (1.25). This involves a leader (1.30), and requires recognition of our true selves and our celestial origins (1.59, 1.25). The virtues required for society's operations fell short of the wisdom-related excellence to which gifted individuals should aim.

The result of detecting two concepts of excellence within dialogues like *Meno* and *Protagoras* is that Middle Platonism operates with two, and usually three categories of excellence. These are *natural* good qualities, good patterns of behaviour acquired by *practice*, and true excellences involving the acquisition of moral *knowledge*. It is characteristic only of the last that they occur together in one person, while others may often be present individually. A detailed theory of grades of excellence is not what the ancients looked for in *Meno*, given that it is a *zêtêsis* about excellence. Rather, the dialogue could not for them be understood *without* different conceptions of excellence, while its later pages concentrated on so-called 'political excellence'. While such a view deserves our consideration, it must be balanced against the work's strong push for a *single definition* of excellence. If we take Plato's 'Socrates' at face value, then we see that he would not readily accept two or three *genuine* kinds of virtue that resist a unitary definition. But could there be one *real* kind, permitting various shadows and reflections?

So dialogues like the *Meno* were seen as making their most direct and valuable contribution through digressions rather than through the main topic of inquiry. Whereas modern interpretations of the *Meno* may be dismissive of the theme of recollection because it is technically a digression, an ancient theory of interpretation required one to take digressions in this type of dialogue as serious sources of doctrine – for here Plato could reveal doctrine in ways impermissible during the principal inquiry, where only hints might be offered. Where ancient and modern are so opposed I cannot insist that the ancients were right. But what they offer is better than postulating one theory of excellence for each of the dialogues separately, which are then placed in a notional chronological sequence to explain their 'developing' differences.

ii. Myth and religious themes in *Meno*

Another modern reason for devaluing the recollection theme is its appeal to the reader's inner religious intuitions and to alleged statements of unspecified priests, priestesses, and inspired poets, as well as to Pindar (81a-c). The dialogue itself puts all such persons in the class of those whose authority comes from divine inspiration rather than knowledge (99c-d),

⁷ Tarrant (2005), Chapter 5.

so why should we take what they say seriously? Their pronouncements conjure up images from mythology, and so link the origin of recollection with sights on a journey through Hades rather than with the constructs of reason. There are two mistakes here which the ancients rarely made, one which wrongly devalues myth, an essential weapon of Plato's armoury, and another which fails to see how seriously Plato *and his readers* took divine inspiration. Truth uttered by inspired persons is indeed not *their* knowledge, but these people are allegedly *habitually correct* on matters not humanly knowable.

To take the first mistake, the ancients most commonly regarded Platonic myths as particularly intense passages, ultimately revealing the thoughts of their author. This is seen in the way that the Iamblichan curriculum gave prominence to dialogues with mythical material, the twelve including *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and *Timaeus* (anon. *Proleg.* 26). Furthermore, Proclus in the *Platonic Theology* treats as canonical the myths of several dialogues including the *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Statesman*,⁸ while passing over reasoned passages. The conviction that there is hidden truth in myths is already observable in Plutarch, who devises his own myths for similar contexts, and in other Middle Platonists. It continues in Olympiodorus (*in Gorg.* 46-50). Myth in the Greek tradition appealed subtly to those who were culturally 'Greek', and offers a tool for awakening what Plato saw as a reader's inner awareness. If we find it difficult to explain why a rather nervous Meno (81a7-9) is charmed by Socrates into paying attention, it is because we do not have the same cultural response. Plutarch, however, spoke of respected religious rites as aiming to recover as in a dream the pre-natal vision that proper philosophy aims to remind us of rationally (*Mor.* 422c).⁹ Indeed, there is something dreamlike about the way in which the *Meno* introduces recollection, but let us not doubt the author's seriousness. By devaluing the religious machinery of *Meno* – priests, prophets, dreams, and mysteries – we may make it more intelligible to students today, but only at the expense of purifying Plato of what was once *the defining characteristic of Platonism*: the confidence that an inner voice can tell us something about ourselves, about what we are, and what we should strive to be.

iii. How seriously should we take the *theia moira* motif?

So I turn to the comparison between politician and prophet, a comparison prepared at 92c when Socrates calls Anytus a prophet because he operated according to a conviction without empirical foundation. If prophets and inspired were thought to allow an inner voice to speak, then so too was Socrates, who in the *Apology* declares himself the recipient of commands by nearly every form of divine communication (33c). So too were the rhapsode and his audience in *Ion* (535e-6d). More worryingly, so, in the *Meno*, was the politician (99d-e). It is easy for the politician's inner voice to be treated as mere irony, colouring the whole treatment of religious inspiration too. Indeed, we are meant to suspect irony here and ponder what might be meant, but Socrates resumes the theme at e3 with apparent seriousness, and without dissent from a potentially sceptical interlocutor.

When Aristotle considers the means by which we might become *either* excellent *or* happy in *either* the *Nicomachean* *or* the *Eudemian Ethics*, he utilises the same list of candidates as *Meno*. Excellence might be caused by our nature, by teaching and learning, by practice and habit, by luck (cf. 99a), and, most importantly, divine apportionment as at 99e (*theia moira*).¹⁰ When in *Eudemian Ethics* 8.2 Aristotle considers why some people seem to

⁸ See *Theol.* 1.5; he confines himself to the myths of *Prt.* and *Grg.*, and to parts of *Rep.*, one of these being the myth.

⁹ The speaker is Cleombrotus, reporting the words of a prophet who functioned near the Red Sea.

¹⁰ *EN* 1099b9-11 and *EE* 1214a15-25; *EN* 1179b20-23, where 'nature' is also included, though puzzlingly this is rolled together with luck and divine dispensation.

have a quality of luckiness, the terms of the discussion are again reminiscent of *Meno* (whose politician seems good at guesswork). In a textually difficult passage at 1248a29-b7, he notes that some have *repeated* success, which might be explained by some kind of inspiration. He believes that divine influence might explain insights into the future too. So there is a kind of luckiness of divine origin, getting things right in people who seem to act on impulse. So divine dispensation, as something able to account for on-going political success, is taken seriously.

If Aristotle has no reason to rationalise away the divine machinery of *Meno*, what about Plato's other close colleagues? We lack their books, but their views may be reflected in the *dubia*. While some scholars think Plato wrote them, that is hardly a problem in this case. The *Seventh Epistle* speaks of a *theia moira* regularly between 326b and 337e. It combines the ideas of divine allocation and divine piece of luck (*theia tychê*), most noticeably at 337e1-2. The context is political throughout, and the author writes of the exceptional political opportunity that would be offered by the most auspicious circumstances. At 326b he talks of politicians coming to philosophise by some divine allocation, and at 336e2-3 of the divine piece of luck (*theia tychê*) required to give a man even a small share of correct judgement – thus linking divine influence with mere *doxa*.

The link with the *Meno* is obvious too in *Epistle II*,¹¹ where at 313b the author addresses Dionysius on his claim to have grasped esoteric doctrines. Here a public figure comes to philosophise by a *theia moira* that is linked directly with *Meno*'s theme that unbound views are unstable, unlike knowledge (95b-98a). Dionysius' opinions have the same epistemological status as those of excellent politicians in *Meno*. They occur by *theia moira*, they lack a bond without further study, and hence they are unstable. A process that will lead to the required stability is outlined at 313d.¹²

In *Theages*, Socrates' *daimonion* is described at length in this work, and is said to have accompanied him *since childhood* by divine apportionment. Socrates possesses this prophetic gift irrespective of human cognitive powers, and it even rejects some pupils for him (129e) and determines what progress others make (130e). Socrates does not control the outcomes of his education!

Of the *spuria*, the *De Virtute*, which Mark Reuter makes much use of in an article on the end of the *Meno*,¹³ sets out to answer, more directly, the same question that *Meno* poses at the outset, though here it is asked by a didactic Socrates, not his interlocutor. It proceeds directly to empirical material from in and around the Anytus scene,¹⁴ and finally Socrates responds openly to a request for his own view. The excellence of politicians is a divine thing, similar to a prophetic gift, coming neither from nature nor from craft (*technê*), but from divine inspiration. Its power is prophetic, as it involves predicting political outcomes. Divine control is exercised over the city's fortunes by creation or removal of good politicians! This author takes the comparison between prophet and habitually successful politician as doctrine, noticing how much guess-work about *outcomes* is involved – like a gambler's guesses that habitually defy the odds and win.

¹¹ The work is of interest to me however late one places it, and I treat it here in spite of there being an excellent case for placing it *later* than the Old Academy (Keyser, 1998).

¹² This involves repeated messages to Plato about his queries and difficulties until all issues are resolved. This process is not like any learning process in the *Meno*, where educator, not student, asks questions. Rather, the author recalls the need felt by the reader of a book to ask supplementary questions at *Phaedrus* 275d-e, a passage otherwise influential upon the author of a work notoriously suspicious of the written word (312d, 314a-c).

¹³ Reuter (2001).

¹⁴ 89b (cf. 379a-b); 377a6-378c4 relates closely to 93d1-94e2, 376c4-377a5 relates more loosely to 92c3-93d1, and 376b1-c3 is roughly connected with 90b7-91b2.

We must not be as blind to irony at the end of *Meno* as the author of the *De Virtute* was. Nor could the author of *Gorgias* easily have attributed divine gifts (in the normal sense) to Pericles or Themistocles. But *Gorgias* regarded Aristides more favourably for always choosing justice over injustice (526b), and Aristides could not teach his own excellence (94a). So the concept of a political excellence founded on less than knowledge was not one for Plato to dismiss altogether, as seen from *Phaedo* 68c8-69a9 and 82a11-b3 or *Republic* 430b6-c6 and 619c-d. References to senseless *andreia* and senseless *sôphrosynê* at *Meno* 88b (cf. *Euthd.* 281c) suggest a complex theory here too. This is why later Platonism was entirely comfortable with the notion of grades of excellence. These would begin with natural gifts, go on to the practice-induced qualities usually known as ‘political’ excellence, and proceed to the knowledge-related excellence outlined in the *Phaedo*, known in Middle Platonism as ‘complete’ excellence.¹⁵

So signs of irony at 99d-e do not herald a Socratic lie, but warn that he is being provocative, that we should not simplify, and that further reflection is needed. This is again hinted at by the use of Tiresias as the analogue for any politician who genuinely did know. Even as inspired prophets can fall seriously short of the prince of prophets himself, so an Aristides must still fall seriously short of the ideal.

iv. Variations on a Theme of Recollection

That Plato himself took the theme of recollection seriously may be deduced from its use in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. Its reappearance in Cicero¹⁶ and a long line of Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists, none of whom had to apologise for it, testifies to the power of its grip on the Platonist mind. But how far is it the *Meno*’s version of the theory that was of influence? Since we are dealing with unitarians, who recognised no sharp differences between periods of composition, *Meno*’s contribution is difficult to assess. *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, being dialogues that attracted commentaries early and entered the Neoplatonic curriculum, were the best known sources. What the theory meant to later Platonists changed along with their estimation of what was important, so that it becomes associated with the process of reversion (*epistrophê*) in Neoplatonism.¹⁷ An earlier emphasis on its epistemological function, and the Middle Platonist association with the common notions and their explication (*diarthrôsis*), fades by this time.¹⁸

However, I now consider an extract from Olympiodorus *On the Gorgias* attacking the empiricist view that we can progress from acquaintance (*peira*) and experience (*empeiria*) to craft (*technê*). He thinks Polus mistaken in supposing that experience is the creative cause of craft at *Gorgias* 448c:

This happens because we possess the required cognitive principles (*logoi*) and set them in motion. It is like someone exposing glowing embers by removing ashes which have long hidden them: he is not said to have created a fire but to have revealed it. Or it is like someone purging an eye of a sty: he makes a contribution,

¹⁵ See Tarrant (2005), Chapter 7, where I detect a similar three-level theory in Alcinous, Apuleius, and anon. *Th.* The levels of virtue in Neoplatonism are more complicated and involve extra grades; for Plotinus (particularly *Enn.* 1.2) see Dillon (1993) and (1996); for Olympiodorus and late Neoplatonism, see Westerink (1976), 116-18; I have also benefited from a hitherto unpublished paper by Luc Brisson with a focus on Plotinus and Porphyry.

¹⁶ *Tusculan Disputations* 1.57, with allusions at *De Legibus* 1.25 and *De Divinatione* 1.115.

¹⁷ *Plot. Enn.* IV.8.4.28-30, V.3.2.13-16; *Proc. In Rep.* 2.351.15-17 and extract 5 from the *Commentary on the Chaldaean Oracles*, for which see the Budé edition of the Chaldaean Oracles by des Places and Segonds (Paris, 1996), 211.18-20.

¹⁸ But see *Proc. In Alc.* 191, with reference to the *Phaedo* and, interestingly, to *Statesman* 277d.

but does not himself create light. So too the [cognitive] powers in us have need of something to remind us, analogous as we are to a sleeping geometrician.¹⁹

This is the Demaratan interpretation of recollection, made famous by Scott,²⁰ who rejects it, and named after its appearance in a text associated with Plutarch (fr. 215d). Plutarch held the Middle Platonist view that a layer of false doctrine was to be removed before the process of recollection could begin, as in the first of the *Quaestiones Platonicae*.²¹ But let us consider the *origins* of the Demaratan view in antiquity. The sleeping geometrician immediately recalls the examination of the slave in *Meno*, a slave who has done no geometry before, and whose first experience of it is dream-like (85c). Editors note the use of the curious example of a sleeping geometrician in Aristotle's *On Generation of Animals*, 735a10.²² The context there – whether the embryo is a living creature – scarcely explains Olympiodorus' use of this example, for Aristotle had simply been distinguishing between different levels of privation: the waking, but resting, geometrician, differs from the sleeping one as well as from the one solving geometrical problems. Why should Olympiodorus have remembered it, unless perhaps Aristotle's example derives from Academic discussion of the recollection passage itself?

Aristotle knew *Meno* 80d-86e well. At *An.Po.* 71a29-30 he tackles the problem of knowing that a particular *unfamiliar* triangle has angles whose sum is two right-angles. One has universal knowledge required, but no particular knowledge. Without such a distinction, he says, the paradox from the *Meno* (80d) applies. So Aristotle took the opening paradox seriously, and took recollection seriously as an attempted solution. Again, at *An.Pr.* 67a21-26, he mentions the recollection argument, referring to the *Meno*. He ignores details, and does not approach the text over-literally, but he sees the *Meno* as showing something important about how we draw on prior knowledge. Clearly, the passage was the source of lively discussion in the Academy.

How does this concern the sleeping geometrician? What would have been attractive to the Academy is the distinction between two levels of latent mathematical knowledge.²³ There is one level where latent knowledge is unknown to its possessor and in need of *preliminary* actualisation, and another where he is aware of the knowledge available and may resume its employment. Both cases differ from mere *ability* to learn if required, and neither yet exercises the knowledge. The slave in *Meno* at first has subconscious latent knowledge, then becomes aware through diagrams of the knowledge within him, but still falls short of knowledge. He is like one who has just awakened perhaps (85c), but nobody could call him a geometrician.

However Aristotle came by his analogy, it was important in later Platonism that 'recollection' involves two stages of *actualisation*, a mental awakening and a refinement or clarification. The two stages may be described as unfolding and dissection (anon. *Tht.* XLVII 42-45), or nourishing and confirming (Plutarch, *Mor.* 1000e), or awakening and calling forth and refining and clarifying (Albinus, *Prologue* 6). The first process involves nothing especially philosophical, the second does. The two stages are already reflected in the first

¹⁹ *In Grg.* 3.2, trans. Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant (1998), 79. The sleeping geometrician, explicitly linked with Aristotle's 'physical works', occurs again at Elias, *in Cat.* 244.29.

²⁰ See Scott (1987) and (1995).

²¹ 999e-1000c. This view underlies the education program of Albinus *Prolog.* 6, and anon. *Tht.* XLVII 21-24 speaks of the 'common notions' in the young Theaetetus being not too far obscured.

²² For discussion of this passage see Sprague (1977), 236-7.

²³ Examples used in a comparable passage of *Theaetetus* are the arithmetician and grammarian (198e). However, the analogy of the sleeping/waking geometrician is different from the analogy of the doves in the wild and the doves in the aviary in that dialogue (197c-8d). The former represent knowledge that is not known to be available at all (*and not within grasp*), while the latter represent knowledge that is available on demand.

book of Cicero's *De Legibus* (24-30), where the presence within us of natural notions explains firstly why humans share certain universal concepts that cannot derive from sensation, and secondly how these provide the springboard for knowledge and excellence alike (26-27, 30). Cicero requires that this second stage should involve the 'taking apart at the joints' of these notions, *enodatio* in Latin,²⁴ *diarthrōsis* in Greek.²⁵ The second stage, if I read Cicero correctly at the end of 1.30,²⁶ requires guidance (though not teaching). As 1.59 shows, the guiding force is *wisdom*, presumably from outside. So Cicero requires a teacher to step in only for stage two, while Middle Platonism needed him also to cut away layers of false opinion hiding the required notions. First we need the conceptual guidance of natural notions, and then we must spell out in detail what they involved. We see this from the end of 1.24, where, possibly with an allusion to another of *Meno*'s themes, all men know they must acknowledge a god, but few understand *what sort of god* they should acknowledge.

This distinction, between a level at which 'recollection' contributes to the conceptual sorting of experiences (not, of course, to concept *formation*)²⁷ and a level at which one can offer a full account of what had then been dimly 'recollected', is reminiscent of *Phaedo* (74d-76c). But *Meno*, while silent on concepts, is clearly offering a shadowy stage at which latent knowledge contributes to our adoption of the right view, while promising another stage where knowledge will be possible. And *Meno* employs the skills of Socrates to facilitate the first stage as well as the second. The geometrician within the slave is at first sleeping. Socrates awakens it by exposing his original sloppy answers, and once awake it will guide the slave to correct answers. But further questioning can, it is claimed, produce knowledge proper. The challenge now is to turn the newly awakened geometrician into an actual geometrician. It would not surprise me, then, if Aristotle had found the analogy of the geometrician within Academic debate, debate actually prompted by the *Meno*. And it would not surprise me if Olympiodorus had derived his recollection-related use of the analogy from an ancient source more directly related to the *Meno*.

These two stages are mirrored in a puzzling feature of Middle Platonist theology. In Alcinous 'recollection' plays only a small part in the arguments for immortality (25, 177.45-178.12), and a passing one in epistemology (4, 155.32-34). The recovery of the soul's former knowledge is due to tiny sparks of reason (178.9) and made manifest in the natural notions, a gift of nature that is the foundation of scientific reason (155.24-36). But the exercise of these natural notions is the bodily counterpart of disembodied intellection (*noēsis*), so that disembodied minds should experience something analogous to the awakening and enlightenment that belongs to recollection. Accordingly we find that the unmoved first god must first *awaken* the universal soul, or more specifically its intellect, and then *turn it towards itself*. There is agreement between the chapters on theology and on physics, for the same two stages are found both at 10 165.1-3 and 14 169.37-41.²⁸ The deeply slumbering soul²⁹ is roused into action by the unmoved god, and its turning towards that god enables it to receive the ideas from that higher being. So in theology too we have awakening followed by enlightenment. Is that 'recollection'? Well, 169.37-41 explains why Plato speaks as if an

²⁴ The correct reading at 1.26 may be *obscuras ... intellegentias enodavit*, not *enudavit* and certainly not *inchoavit*. This term is guaranteed by parallels such as *Top.* 31, *Off.* 3.76, 81, *Tusc.* 4.53, *Orator* 116. But see also Dyck (2004), 139, whose reading is of interest.

²⁵ Particularly in anon. *Th.* XLVI 44, XLVII 45, LIII 46 (cf. Bastianini-Sedley (1995), 535; Plut. (Sandbach) fr. 215f.)

²⁶ The received text affirms that there is no human being incapable of reaching excellence if they obtain a guide (*ducem nactus*). Some editors insert *<naturam>*, mistakenly. There is no conflict with *nullo docente* (1.27). Guidance is precisely what Socrates offers in the *Meno*, teaching is precisely what it denies.

²⁷ Here Scott (1987) convinces; see now Dimas (2003).

²⁸ This passage appears in Dörrie-Baltes (1996/8), as Baustein 144.1.

²⁹ Whittaker (1990), 114, has a useful note on the key term *karos* here.

ungenerated universe was generated in time, and hence the wakening of the world-soul's intellect and its contemplation of Ideas was an on-going process. A parallel in Plutarch's *De Animae Procreatione*, in which God assists the slumbering world soul to awaken and to return to the Ideas, is indeed closely linked with the cyclic universe of *Statesman*.³⁰ Though *reversion* (*epistrophê*) is more important than recollection here,³¹ such reversion will be connected with recollection in Neoplatonism.³² I conclude, therefore, that there is a strange but interesting analogy between the activation of the world's intellect and the activation of recollection in us, following a standard macrocosm-microcosm pattern.

Some Platonists, then, might hint that, as the sleeping geometrician awakens within Meno's slave, we should be recalling too that once-sleeping mathematician in the sky, of Timaeian ancestry, summoned first to wakefulness and then to active contemplation by an object of love who moves us even more certainly than Socrates. By heeding the Platonists of antiquity we shall not refuse to look even to the *Timaeus* for enlightenment as to how one should read the *Meno* and vice-versa. With this *epistrophê* to his *Timaeus*, I conclude my paper for our sleeping Platonist.

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³⁰ See *Mor.* 1026e-f; there is some discussion of this passage in Dörrie-Baltes (1996/8), 462-3.

³¹ As also at *Mor.* 1026f and 1024c-d.

³² See n. 18.

2

GORGIAS

Erotic Paideia in Plato's *Symposium*

John J. Cleary

Introduction

It is generally accepted that Erôs is a central theme of Plato's *Symposium*, but it is not so obvious that the topic of paideia is equally central to the dialogue, such that one can claim that 'erotic paideia' serves as one of its leitmotifs. Hence textual evidence combined with interpretive argument is required to make the case, and that is what I propose to do in this paper. Among the many functions which the symposium as an institution served within classical Greek society, a central one was the social initiation of young aristocratic males by older men. Pederasty was tolerated and even regulated in the ancient Greek polis because it promoted class solidarity, as well as being conducive to military valour. So it was no accident that the practice of pederasty was widespread within the military barracks in ancient Sparta, which was subsequently outdone by Thebes with its so-called 'Sacred Band'. Thus within ancient Athens a primary locus for pederastic activity was the gymnasium, while another was the symposium as a social institution that provided a traditional kind of civic education.¹

However, Plato was not an uncritical admirer of pederasty, as is clear from the *Republic* and *Laws*, but in the *Symposium* he tries to show how it can serve a higher purpose if it is directed in the right way towards more spiritual goals. I want to argue that describing such redirection is the chief purpose of Socrates's report on the lesson of Diotima, which also involves a dialogue between teacher and student. This educational exchange succeeds because the preliminary refutation of Socrates helps to free him from mistaken assumptions about Erôs and thereby enables him to transcend his attachment to particular erotic objects. By contrast, I claim that the subsequent encounter between Alcibiades and Socrates is designed by Plato to show how erotic paideia can fail in the case of someone who is unable to transcend his erotic attachment to particular persons and his powerful desire for popular success. Just as Callicles in the *Gorgias* is in love with Demos, so also Alcibiades is in love with Socrates but yet is unable to make the ascent to the Good and the Beautiful that is described in the speech of Diotima.

Section 1: Questioning Agathon

After Agathon's 'amazing' (*thaumastos*) speech, Socrates confesses (198b-c) himself to be at a loss. He praises the beautiful language of the speech, but he then exposes its contents

¹ For the Greeks, the symposium served as a milieu for celebrating manly *arête*. For instance, the educational maxims of Theognis (239) were composed to be sung at such banquets, while Xenophanes (Frg. 1 Diehl) says that the symposium is the place for keeping alive the memory of true *arête*.

interlocutor which is induced through question-and-answer should serve in the ideal case as a stimulant for further inquiry, if one has a genuinely philosophical nature. This may be one of the reasons why the description of Erôs that emerges from the genealogy also applies so well to Socrates. Neither of them are conceited beauties like Agathon but rather bereft and hungry lovers who subsist somewhere in between plenty and poverty. It is no accident that this turns out to be the intermediate realm occupied by the genuine philosopher.

Section 3: The process and goal of erotic paideia

Drawing Diotima back into the routine of short question-and-answer, Socrates now (204c6) asks about Erôs and human beings: Why is Erôs always of beautiful things? Diotima speaks of trying to teach (*didaxei*) Socrates about the function of Erôs in human life, which she does by questioning him. Why does the person who loves, love beautiful things? In order to possess them for himself. But what will that person get by possessing them? Socrates is stumped by that question, so Diotima reformulates it in terms of the good: if the person loves good things, why does he love them? The ultimate goal of having the good is to be happy (*eudaimôn*). Those who are happy are so by virtue of having good things, and one need not go on to ask a further question as to why the person wants to be happy. The answer itself seems to be complete, since this desire to possess good things is common to all human beings. In effect, the line of questioning ends with the acceptance of a general axiom.

With reference to the myth of Aristophanes, Diotima declares that love is neither of a half nor of a whole, unless it turns out to be good. In summary (206a11), she claims that love is of the permanent possession of what is good, and this is agreed by Socrates to be most true (*alêthestata*). Given that permanent nature, however, the next question posed by Diotima is about the product (*ergon*) of the activity of love. Socrates confesses himself unable to answer and claims that this is what he seeks to learn from Diotima. She informs him that the activity of love is giving birth in the beautiful in relation both to body and soul. Socrates expresses his puzzlement at this by complaining that only a seer could discern what she means. In her role as seer, Diotima undertakes to reveal the mystery by means of an explanatory account.

According to this account (206c), all human beings are pregnant both in body and in soul, and naturally want to give birth when they come to be of the right age. Yet they cannot give birth in the ugly but only in the beautiful. The intercourse (*sunousia*) of man and woman is a kind of giving birth, which is something divine (*theion*). Despite their mortality, living creatures share in this immortal (*athanaton*) dimension through pregnancy and procreation. The conclusion here (206e) represents a deliberate correction of the previous account of love: Erôs is not simply *of* the beautiful but rather it is of procreation and giving birth *in* the beautiful. The explanation given for this is that procreation is something everlasting (*aeigenes*) and immortal (*athanaton*), in so far as anything mortal can be. And, according to the previous agreement, it is immortality together with the good that must be desired, if love is of the permanent possession of the good (207a1). From this argument it necessarily follows that love is of immortality. As if to underline the theme of paideia, Socrates repeats that Diotima taught (*edidaske*) him all these things when she talked about erotic matters. The clear implication is that erotic paideia itself involves the sort of student-teacher relationship where the one who knows is leading the one who desires to know.

In line with Diotima's dialogical manner of teaching, there follows another question (207a5): What do you think, Socrates, is the cause of this love and this desire? She draws a parallel with the lower animals, which suffer terribly as a result of this desire to procreate. They are stricken with the effects of love, first for intercourse with each other, and then for nurturing their offspring, so that the weakest are prepared to fight the strongest to protect their

Diotima says (210e) that whoever is led by his teacher thus far in relation to love matters (*pros ta erôtika*) and contemplates (*theômenos*) the various beautiful things in order and in the correct way (*orthôs*) will now approach the final goal (*pros telos*) of matters of love, and will suddenly (*exaiiphnes*) catch sight of a beauty that is amazing in its nature (210e4-5); i.e. that very beauty which was the goal of all his previous labours. Its distinguishing characteristics are as follows:(1) First it is a beauty that always exists (*aei on*) and that neither comes into being nor perishes, neither increases nor diminishes. (2) Secondly, it is not beautiful in one respect but ugly in another respect. When someone moves upwards, away from particular beautiful things, through the correct kind of boy-loving (*paiderastein*), and begins to catch sight of that beauty (*ekeino to kalon*), he would practically have the final goal within his reach. For this is what is involved in approaching love matters (*ta erôtika*) or to be led by someone else to them (*hup' allou agesthai*) in the correct way (*orthôs*); i.e. beginning from these beautiful things here, one must always move upwards for the sake of beauty itself, using the other things as steps, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies; from beautiful bodies to beautiful activities, from activities to beautiful sciences and finally from sciences to that science which is the science of nothing other than beauty itself (*autou ekeinou tou kalou mathêma* – 211d), in order that one may finally know what beauty itself is (*he esti kalon*).

By way of summary for this section, allow me to review briefly the implications for erotic paideia of this elaborate parallel with initiation into the traditional Mysteries of Eleusis. This talk of being led by a teacher into the higher Mysteries implies that the leader is already initiated, so that Diotima is a philosopher who is leading Socrates to enlightenment about Erôs through the ascent to Beauty or the Good. The stages of that ascent are set out very schematically yet the method of leading remains unclear, since Diotima merely urges Socrates to follow her as best he can. The first step seems to be based on the natural desire to procreate in a beautiful body, but the basis for the second step is less obvious. Presumably, the lover is led to realize that the same beauty is to be found in all beautiful bodies through Socratic questioning that leads to generalization. Through increasing generalization, the lover ascends to the level of practical wisdom which is concerned with political affairs, dealing with virtues like moderation and justice. Even higher generalizations are involved in the theoretical wisdom of the many different sciences like mathematics, which possess their own kind of beauty. However, the desire for eternal beauty reflected in the sciences draws the lover further beyond that level towards the Good and the Beautiful, which transcend all human goods. But no details are given of the educational procedure by which that goal is finally reached, although the explicit parallel with the Mysteries suggests that the final illumination is gained by the initiate only after quite elaborate preparation in the hands of an experienced guide.

Section 5: Alcibiades as a failure in erotic paideia

The appearance of Alcibiades in a drunken state, accompanied by a flute girl and his head wreathed with ivy and violets, is symbolic of the god Dionysus giving the award first to a poet and then to a philosopher. Alcibiades declares (212e4) that he has come to crown from his own head the wisest (*sophotatou*) and most beautiful (*kallistou*) head. He takes back (213e) some ribbons from Agathon in order to crown Socrates's amazing head, while explaining that Socrates uses words to defeat everyone. It is clear both that Alcibiades sees the Socratic dialectic as being agonistic in character, and that he implicitly espouses the Homeric motto: 'Always to excel (the others)'. Despite being the darling of the Athenian mob, he has been rejected by one of the ugliest men in Athens who has forced him to give up this role as a beloved and to become instead a needy lover. This was a great shock to his

Alcibiades then (222a-b) concludes his praise of Socrates while reminding his audience of the crimes (*hubrisen*) that Socrates has allegedly committed against him. He adds that Socrates has committed hubris against other young noblemen like Charmides and Euthydemus by being deceptive in playing the conventional role of lover (*hōs erastēs*), while becoming more of a beloved (*paidika*) himself rather than a lover. This claim emphasizes the shift in roles within the *Symposium* from that of beloved to that of lover, which is a necessary part of the initial ascent towards Beauty Itself. Thus Alcibiades warns Agathon not to be deceived by Socrates but to learn from the sufferings of others, so as not to have to learn like a fool from his own suffering.

Conclusion

With the exception of two short interludes, the so-called speech of Diotima about Erōs is dominated by question-and-answer exchanges between herself and Socrates, which continue the dialogical exchange between Socrates and Agathon. I have drawn attention to this fact because I think it is a significant feature of erotic paideia that questioning makes the student aware of a lack of knowledge and thereby stimulates a desire for what is lacking. This provides a neat parallel with the character of Erōs as a desire for the Beautiful and the Good, which prompts the lover to generate beautiful things, whether these should be children in a beautiful body or logoi as offspring of a beautiful soul. The ultimate purpose of erotic paideia, however, is to lead the lover to a vision of Beauty or the Good itself, which transcends all particular beauties of body and soul. The steps of such an ascent are outlined schematically by Diotima, who suggests that Socrates will be ready for initiation into the higher Mysteries through her previous lessons about Erōs which took the form of question-and-answer. By contrast, we can see that Agathon has failed to make any progress, even after he has been refuted, presumably because his vanity as a beloved object prevents him from adopting the role of a lover who becomes aware of a lack in himself and thereby is driven to inquire. By comparison with Agathon, however, Alcibiades does progress from the role of beloved (despite his vanity about his beauty) to that of a lover, when he is faced with the mystery of Socrates whose physical ugliness hides the beautiful logoi within. This discovery of the spiritual beauty of Socrates is already a great achievement for Alcibiades, given the ancient Greek aversion to physical ugliness, but yet he fails to progress further up the ladder of beauty. What is the significance of Alcibiades's failure to make that ascent to Beauty Itself? Does it simply reflect a flaw in his character or does it indicate some basic flaw in human erōs as a means for this ascent, as Jonathan Lear (1998) has suggested? My claim is that his failure reveals a character flaw (like the gifted young men in the *Republic* who go badly wrong) and is not to be attributed to some basic deficiency in erotic paideia, which can lead someone to Beauty or the Good if one is willing and able to be led properly by a philosophical guide.

'us' in the question 'what is the good for us'? The answer is not the answer to the question 'what is the good for a human being', that is, the 'composite', if we are not that. And that is, of course, exactly what *Alcibiades* tells us. For it argues that the person is a soul and that the body is an instrument. So, the good for us is the good of a soul, not the good of the body. But the contrast between soul and body is crude and ultimately quite misleading. For if we have put before us a choice between pursuing the good of our soul or the good of our body, it is hardly obvious that we should prefer the former to the latter since in a perfectly natural sense the good of our body is *our* good. I mean that it is a good that *we* experience. So, even if we could understand political virtue as concerned with the good of our bodies and purificatory virtue as concerned with the good of our souls, there is no way of telling why we should regard one as superior to the other rather than just recognizing as the excellences of alternative lifestyles.

The argument in *Phaedo* is, therefore, required to clarify the true person and hence what its virtue is. Only if this is done would we be in a position to show that the virtue of the bodily 'instrument' is inferior. The clarification is made via a proof for the immortality of the soul. This proof, however, must be a proof of the immortality of the person who is at least in some way continuous with the person in the body. This is done by showing that discarnate knowledge is at least available to us in an embodied state, that is, such knowledge enables us to make judgments about the deficiencies of sensibles. The reason why political virtue is an inferior sort of virtue is that it is not the virtue of the ideal person, who is the subject of discarnate knowledge; it is only the virtue of the person who is the subject of the states of the composite.

The question we need to ask now is why we should think that all this heavy duty metaphysical material is relevant much less necessary for interpreting *Gorgias*.

Olympiodorus' answer to this question is straightforward. He argues that the virtue that is the formal cause of political happiness is the virtues of the fourth book of *Republic*.¹⁸ Specifically, citing the passage in *Gorgias* 504D1-3, he notes that temperance is the 'order' (κόσμος) of the parts of the soul and justice the 'arrangement' (τάξις).¹⁹ Olympiodorus assumes that 'ordering of the soul' indicates the virtues as they are described in *Republic* IV. It will perhaps be objected that this supposed indication is question begging. For even if, in the light of *Republic*, we read the account of the virtues in *Gorgias* as the account of the virtues of the embodied person and identify these as constituted by external behavior, there is no requirement that we read *Gorgias* in this light. Even more, there is no requirement that we read that account as pertaining to an *inferior* form of virtue as *Phaedo* would have it. Someone who is confident in having the ability to distinguish Socratic from Platonic ethics and who is also inclined to see *Gorgias* as a reflection of the former will especially object to the view that Socrates' arguments in *Gorgias* do not establish the nature of the best life or of true happiness. What needs to be shown is that the claims made about the ethical principles leading us to political happiness do not stand on their own, that they can only be compelling if political happiness is not the ideal. The life recommended by Socrates in *Gorgias* can only be shown to be superior to the life recommended by Gorgias, Polus, or Callicles, if the life Socrates recommends is *not* the best life. And this cannot be known unless Platonism itself is adduced as the appropriate context.

Naturally, showing this *in extenso* is a formidable task. In the remainder of the paper, let me offer a sketch of how it could be done. Socrates recommends a life of self-control as

¹⁸ See *In Gorg.* 15, 5, 1-4. Cf. 24, 1, 2ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 34, 2, 10-12.

tyrants; rhetoric is, for a democrat, the politically correct way of attaining the *eudaimonia* of the tyrant.

Another aspect of rhetoric's connection with power is to be found in Callicles (481b6 ff.). Initially, Callicles speaks less about rhetoric than about matters concerned with the philosophy of law. In his philosophical considerations, however, power plays a dominating role. In his opinion, might is right and success justifies every act of violence, which he believes is illustrated in literature (484b1 ff.) as well as in political and military history (483d3-e1); the Empire of the Persians in particular (483d6-7) provides him with examples of the subordination of right to might: *hôs hai megalai poleis epi tas smikras kata to phusei dikaion erchontai*, as Socrates summarizes Callicles (488c4-5).

Polus suggested that Socrates is hypocritical if declining tyranny even though it would be possible for him to become a tyrant (469c3). How sincere however is Polus himself?² On the one hand, he is a representative of conventional decency (487b1-2; cf. 482c5-e2), but on the other, he admires the bestial tyrant Archelaus of Macedonia (470d5 f.). Polus' ambivalence is not exceptional: in *Politeia* II, Glaucon and Adimantus attack the hypocrisy present in all traditional education and in the literary and religious tradition of the Greeks (*Resp.* 366e), as the message of this tradition is that you only have to seem just, not to be just, and that a man is most successful in life when he knows how to combine the appearance of justice with the reality of injustice (365b6 f.). In terms of *Politeia*, Polus represents the moral ambivalence of tradition and "normality".

This ambivalence can also be found in Callicles, the "lover" of the Athenian demos (481d4-5; 513a2, b5-6) who finds the paradigm for Athenian politics in the history of Persian imperialism. Darius attacking the Scythians and Xerxes attacking Greece illustrate for him that, if one looks at the behavior of states as a whole (483d4; cf. 488c4-5), the "natural *dikaion*" is for the better to rule the worse and for the stronger to rule the weaker (483d1; 492a5-b8). Again *Politeia* offers a useful parallel: injustice performed by a polis as a whole means imperialism, as illustrated in Socrates' question to Thrasymachos: *polin phaiês an adikon einai kai allas poleis epicheirein doulousthai adikôs kai katadedoulôsthai, pollas de kai hup'heautêi echein doulôsamenên?* (*Resp.* 351b1-3; cf. *Gorg.* 456a8).

Callicles appears to be the rhetorical climax of a *trikôlon* about rhetoric and power: a) for Gorgias, command of rhetoric means supreme power within one's democratic polis (452d7; cf. 456a1-3), as illustrated by Themistocles and Pericles (455e2-3); b) for Polus, rhetoric is the second best way of achieving the *eudaimonia* of the tyrant; c) for Callicles, the ideal is the polis of Athens ruling its empire as a tyrant rules his polis. Athenian imperialist thalassocracy forms the background of the dialogue, from the beginning (455b6-7; 455d8-e6) to the end (503c1-6; 514a2-7; 515-519).

In addition to rhetoric being the key to power, Callicles also mentions a further function of rhetoric, which has so far been neglected: rhetoric as an instrument of self-protection (483b1 ff.; 456e2-4). Social and political life is dangerous; even within the polis one is surrounded by enemies *lechthroï*³ whose permanent aim is to do injustice to their enemies and rob them of their possessions (486c1), even of their life (508d2-3). In order to prepare oneself for this dangerous struggle, one has to acquire social and political experience (484c4-e3); expressed in modern terms, one should become a member of relevant social and political "networks" (*hetairotois*, 487d3; *tês huparchousês politeias hetairon einai*, 510a9-10), because without these one is helpless on the "battlefield" of the polis. Whoever fails to

² It is relevant here that both Gorgias and Pôlos are *xenoi* (487a7), as this restricts their freedom of speech.

³ See: 480e5-481b1 (4x); 486c1; cf. 492c2.

Plato's Critique of Gorgias: Power, the Other, and Truth

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1. Rereading Plato's *Gorgias*

Gorgias, the rhetorician and sophist from Leontini of Sicily, was no doubt one of the most influential intellectuals from the late fifth to the early fourth century BCE. After his applauded debut at the Athenian Assembly in 427 BCE., Gorgias' art of rhetoric enchanted many politicians and young citizens in Athens and other Greek cities, including Meno, Antisthenes, Alcidas, and Isocrates, of whom many became powerful rivals of Plato.

Plato has Gorgias converse with Socrates in his eponymous dialogue. In spite of the historical importance, however, the *Gorgias* of Plato's *Gorgias* has not been focused on by its interpreters, mainly because he does not seem to be clever enough to avoid Socrates' refutation or snare. Did Plato belittle this great sophist? Or was Gorgias really a trivial figure, whose thought has little that we need to take seriously?

Here I examine Plato's critique of Gorgias as the basic project of his dialogue *Gorgias* on two points. First, Plato targets the historical Gorgias¹, and criticizes his dangerous idea that rhetoric provides the absolute power to rule others. This idea can be detected in his extant works, especially in the *Encomium of Helen*. Second, Gorgias' notion of truth, implied in that work, is radically different from that of philosophers, so that the argument between him and Socrates in the first part of the *Gorgias* turns out to be systematically ambiguous. Contrary to the appearance and traditional interpretation, Gorgias is *not* refuted by Socrates.

2. Rhetorical power in the *Encomium of Helen*

Gorgias wrote an encomium (or a defense) of the mythical beauty, Helen (DK 82 B11). His real aim is to demonstrate the power of his art of rhetoric and thereby to recruit pupils. Plato grasps the essence of his art and fights against it in the *Gorgias*.

In the preface of the *Encomium*, Gorgias proclaims that by giving reasoning (*logismos*) to the speech (*logos*), he exhibits the truth (§2; cf. §13). Truth (*alêtheia*) is first declared "the *kosmos* of a speech" (§1). However, the word "*kosmos*" has a double meaning: order and ornament². In the former sense, truth means the speech representing good order, but in the latter, truth is only decoration of speech. Gorgias must be exploiting this ambiguity, or fuses them in speaking of truth as *kosmos*³.

¹ The anecdote that Gorgias praised Plato's talent of satire when he listened to the *Gorgias* (Athenaeus XI 505D = DK 82 A15a) is not entirely imaginary, since he was probably alive until the 380s (ca. 490-380BCE.).

² I agree with Wardy (1996), 30, 156 n.8, against MacDowell (1982), 28.

³ For the convergence of beauty and truth, see Verdenius (1981), 122.

knowledge. In a word, the power of persuasion constitutes truth. Their arguments miss each other on the two fundamentally different bases.

When Socrates, based on the sharp distinction between knowing and believing, proposes that a rhetorician without knowing is persuasive and only appears (*phainesthai, dokein*) to know to the ignorant (459B-E), Gorgias looks happy with this description of his magical power of rhetoric (459C). On the other hand, he professes that the pupils who lack knowledge can learn justice from the rhetoric teacher (S2). By this Gorgias must mean that, since the rhetorician wields the power of persuasion and in this sense *knows* how to bring about truth in an audience's mind, the same power and knowledge can be given to anyone who wants to learn. Here his audience play a double role, as pupils to be made powerful rhetoricians and as the object of his persuasion, when he performs a speech in front of his potential pupils (cf. 455C-D).

With this distinction accepted, the argument in the first part remains systematically ambiguous. Socrates, based on absolute truth and knowledge, sees a crucial contradiction in Gorgias' statements, between S1 and S2, whereas Gorgias, based on rhetorical truth, sees the same argument differently, as representing the magical power of his art of rhetoric. Gorgias would not admit that he was refuted, while his followers, Polus and Callicles, accept Socrates' refutation and thereby stand on the same (absolutist) basis of knowledge; in order to defend their master by means of *logos*, they take S1 as the essence of rhetoric, and reject S2. Therefore, the fundamental gap is left unbridged in the first part between Socrates and Gorgias, and the gap is passed to the subsequent exchanges with Polus and Callicles, where a true refutation becomes possible¹⁰. This reading may suggest how deep Plato sees the root of rivalry between rhetoric and philosophy lies¹¹.

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¹⁰ Therefore, this understanding of the strategy in the three parts is different from the traditional one (e.g. Irwin (1979), 9).

¹¹ I'd like to thank Tatsumi Nijjima and Christopher Gill for valuable comments on the earlier versions.

By the same token, they are themes which have *not* formed part of the dialectical discussion on which Socrates, allegedly, bases his statement of agreed conclusions and the confident truth-claims associated with these.

These points add up to a single overall impression, I think, which is that Socrates' summary of the conclusions of the argument has a strongly *rhetorical* character. The summary is assertive in an uncharacteristically unqualified way and it also goes beyond what the preceding discussion (or its monologic continuation in 505e-509c) justifies as an account of agreed conclusions of shared enquiry. Socrates himself admits later that his style of argument becomes more rhetorical in the course of the discussion, when he says to Callicles 'you have made me become a real 'mob-orator', *aléthôs dêmêgorein*', 519d5-7). This style is also evident in the passages noted earlier, which make strong truth-claims about the outcome of the preceding argument.¹¹ Socrates' adoption of a rhetorical style emerges in (what he himself characterises as) a 'rather crude' (*agroikoteron*) characterisation of the force of his argument. He claims that the conclusions of his argument are bound 'by chains of iron and argument' and virtually dismisses the idea that Callicles or 'anyone more headstrong' (*neanikôteros*) will be able to unloose these chains (509a1-4). Indeed, these passages in the *Gorgias*, which so strongly shaped Vlastos's interpretation of the function of elenchus, express what one might call 'the *rhetoric* of truth-claims', rather than the dialectical analysis of them; they are formulated in an unqualified way and are not securely based in the agreed outcomes of 'shared search'.

But, if we accept this characterisation of Socrates' style of discourse here, what follows for our interpretation of the passage and for the larger question of whether this passage, and the dialogue as a whole, should be read – to put it simply – as didactic or protreptic in approach? In its immediate context, the rhetorically assertive summary of alleged conclusions seems designed to provoke Callicles into re-entering the argument, as he actually does in 509c-e (though also lured by some ambiguous comments by Socrates).¹² More broadly, however, this feature of the passage underlines what one might call the 'embedded' character of Platonic dialectic; that is, the localisation of arguments and conclusions within a specific dialectical encounter with its own cast of characters and mode of discourse.¹³ Also, the rhetorical character of Socrates' assertions might act as a signal – particularly to someone who knows any other early Platonic dialogues – that Socrates is assertive and confident about the truth-claims of the outcome of his dialectical shared search dialectic in a way that he tends not to be elsewhere – and in a way that we might want to endorse. This signal is, certainly, less overt than the explicitly protreptic comments in the *Charmides* (175b-c), *Protagoras* (361a-d) and elsewhere. There is also less evidence that the arguments of the *Gorgias* have served as a catalyst for new theories than in the case of the final argument of the *Protagoras*.¹⁴ But this signal should be enough, I believe, to make us think twice – or more – before assuming that Plato intends to show Socrates offering an authoritative summary of his doctrines in this passage. We should also be cautious about supposing that the passage suggests that the representation of Socratic dialectic is designed to communicate unqualified knowledge of truth, and that this is the intended learning outcome of an early Platonic dialogue.

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¹¹ 507b8-d6, especially c8-9, 508b3-c3, 508e6-509b1.

¹² Socrates raises the question of how to secure a 'power' (*dunamis*) to avoid suffering - and also doing - injustice (508d-e).

¹³ On this feature, see further Gill (2002), 153-61.

¹⁴ Long (2002), 70-4, highlights the influence on Epictetus of Plato's *Gorgias*, but as an exemplar of dialectical method and moral seriousness rather than as a source of arguments to be re-examined.

Gewalt ausschliesst. Für Hesiod nämlich besteht der Unterschied von Mensch und Tier gerade darin, dass allein der Mensch seine Konflikte nicht durch Gewalt ($\beta\acute{\iota}\alpha$), sondern das Recht ($\delta\acute{\iota}\kappa\eta$) zu regeln imstande ist (Hesiod, *Erga* 276-285). In dieser Tradition stehen nicht nur Aischylos' *Eumeniden*, sondern die gesamte Konstruktion der attischen *Isonomia* mit ihrer komplexen Organisation der Gerichtsbarkeit und Rechtsfindung.¹⁵ Das von Kallikles beanspruchte Naturrecht auf Gewalt ist also bereits im griechischen Sinne überhaupt kein Recht : es ist ein Trugbild, besser die Perversion des Rechts. Es usurpiert jedoch den Namen des Rechts mit der Folge, dass sich die Negation des Rechts Recht nennt. Es ist nun evident, dass mit der von Kallikles vertretenen Negation des Rechts kein Denken begründet wird, das, wie das Denken der europäischen Naturrechtstradition, die Garantie der Gewaltlosigkeit im Recht sucht und seine Suche darauf konzentriert, ein solches Recht zu finden, das sich auf eine massgeblichere Ordnung als die blosse menschliche Konvention beziehen kann, nämlich die Ordnung der Natur.

Der Ursprung des europäischen Naturrechtsdenkens kann somit keinesfalls im sogenannten « Naturrecht » des Kallikles festgemacht werden.

2.2. Ist Kallikles ein Sophist ?

Die Auffassung, Kallikles sei ein Sophist, kann sich auf zwei Argumente stützen :

- Kallikles ist ein Schüler des Sophisten Gorgias.
- Plato selber stellt ihn als Vertreter der Sophistik dar.

In welchem Sinn sprechen wir heute von Sophistik, nennen wir z.B. Gorgias einen Sophisten ? Wir verwenden dabei den seit Kerferd und Guthrie allgemein akzeptierten historiographischen Term, die ambulanten Wanderlehrer der Rhetorik Sophisten zu nennen.¹⁶ Kallikles dagegen ist ein athenischer Politiker von der Partei der Oligarchen, der sich bei Gorgias seine Ausbildung erwirbt. Er ist im historiographischen Sinn kein Sophist, da er nicht selber die Rhetorik lehrt.

Nun stellt aber Plato Kallikles als Sophisten vor und dies auf Grund der raffinierten Konstruktion seines Dialogs *Gorgias* : in diesem Dialog verkörpern die Gesprächspartner Ideen, $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\delta\eta$, d.h. Formen des Wissens, die der platonische Sokrates in einer Begriffsdihärese differenziert. Der Dialog fragt ausdrücklich nach der Idee der Rhetorik : $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma \eta \rho\eta\tau\omicron\rho\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$ (*Gorgias* 448 e6-449 a2)? Diese Frage wird, ohne Entwicklung kurzerhand durch Sokrates dahin gehend beantwortet, dass er die Rhetorik als blosse Routine ($\acute{\epsilon}\mu\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$) vom wirklichen Wissen ($\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\mu\eta$, $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\chi\eta\eta$) abgrenzt (*Gorgias* 461 b10-c5). Erst nach der Begründung gefragt, entwickelt er ein dihäretisches Schema, das seine abrupte Behauptung erläutert (*Gorgias* 464 b2-466 a4). Erinnern wir kurz die sokratische Dihärese.¹⁷

Das Wissen, um das es geht, ist das politische Wissen ; sein Ziel besteht darin, das Gute zu verwirklichen, indem es die Menschen besser macht. Dazu tragen seine zwei Disziplinen bei : die Kunst des Richters ($\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$), die die Fehler des Menschen durch Strafe ausmerzt, und die Gesetzgebung ($\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\theta\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\eta}$), die die Normen aufstellt, deren Befolgung den Menschen gut macht. Im *Gorgias* wird von diesem Wissen nur die Rechtssprechung in einer Dialogfigur personifiziert : es ist der platonische Sokrates, der sie in seinem Elenchus gegenüber Kallikles ausübt, indem er diesen « straft » (*Gorgias* 505 c3). Daher bedeutet sein Tun *politisches* Handeln und er kann als der einzige wahre Politiker Athens bezeichnet

¹⁵ Vgl. Bleicken (1995⁴), 203-228.

¹⁶ Guthrie (1971), 27-54.

¹⁷ Vgl. Schema der Begriffe im *Gorgias* in Neschke-Hentschke (1995), 110.

nell'indagine dalla valutazione complessiva che Platone offre della poesia. Ma la maschera di Callicle? A tal punto riesce a condizionare questa sezione del *Gorgia*?

In realtà la prospettiva politica di Callicle non è lontanissima da Platone. L'attrito fra νόμος e φύσις che ne costituisce la sostanza trova una conferma nel *Critone* (50 a-54 d) con la prosopopea delle leggi e anima nel *Menesseno* (244 d-246 a) la lode di Atene⁴. Per non dire dell'immagine con la quale prende forza, il δοῦλος che solleva il capo e riesce ben presto a rompere le catene, molto simile al padrone che l'ospite di Atene indica nelle *Leggi* (874 e-875 d)⁵. Certo, il tempo impedisce una riflessione complessiva. Ma è utile descrivere alcuni dettagli, di grande rilievo proprio perché Platone li sistema fra le parole che ricava dall'*Antiope*.

- Callicle sostiene che anche l'uomo ben dotato deve arginare la pratica della filosofia. In particolare l'uomo ben dotato per natura. Nella *Repubblica* (484 a-502 c) e nella *VII Lettera* (342 a-344 d) la forza intellettuale che offre la natura è un requisito indispensabile per l'uomo che decide di progredire sul campo del sapere, forza intellettuale di spessore concreto, εὐμάθεια e μνήμη⁶.

- L'ignoranza del variegato intreccio di ἡδοναί ο ἐπιθυμίαι che dirige il destinatario è per Callicle un pericolo nel discorso, sia privato sia in assemblea. Un pericolo che Platone riconosce nel *Fedro* (259 e-274 b): dalla definizione della retorica nuova quale ψυχαγωγία deriva l'esigenza di capire il destinatario. Questa esigenza giunge al culmine con la celebre sezione della *Retorica* di Aristotele su ἦθος e πάθος (1377 b 16-1391 b 6)⁷.

- Callicle sostiene che la pratica della filosofia impedisce di risolvere un problema concreto e rende l'uomo ridicolo quanto ridicolo è l'uomo che, dopo lunga militanza politica, vuole frequentare le διατριβαί della filosofia. Non manca una conferma: il timore del ridicolo che circonda l'uomo preso dalla ricerca emerge nel *Teeteto* (172 c-177 c) con l'aneddoto su Talete nel pozzo e la *VII Epistola* (342 a-344 d) non tace del ridicolo che tronca subito il cammino della ricerca⁸.

E' possibile ripetere che nel *Gorgia* per capire la prospettiva di Platone basta rovesciare di segno il discorso di Callicle? Offre solo sarcasmo la sezione del *Gorgia* su felicità e scelta di vita? Ben altro suggerisce questa indagine: la maschera di Callicle nasconde il volto di Platone⁹.

Tragedia che la critica per lo più attribuisce al periodo fra il 411 e il 408, prima della partenza di Euripide, ma su base metrica riconducibile forse al periodo semisevero, fra il 427 e il 419, l'*Antiope* suscitò senza dubbio grande impressione ad Atene per l'intreccio affascinante, per la forza drammatica, per la riflessione sull'etica, per la sostanza politica, esito del rapporto conflittuale di Tebe con Sicione, per il problema religioso di Dirce, già vittima del furore che travolge Agave¹⁰. Il testo divenne senza dubbio celebre. Ne offre una prova l'iconografia che per il mito di Antiope, dal cratere di Berlino (B SMPK F 3296), dipinto in Sicilia subito dopo il 400, al toro Farnese (N MAN 6002), plasmato in originale a

⁴ Cf. Deleva Caizzi (1986), 291-310.

⁵ Cf. Vegetti (2003), 86-103. L'ospite di Atene ha una prospettiva pessimistica: il δοῦλος che solleva il capo manca. Da qui l'inevitabile codice penale. Cf. Schöpsdau (2004), 51-72.

⁶ Cf. Dixsaut (1985), 241-294.

⁷ Cf. Wisse (1989), 9-76.

⁸ Cf. Mader (1977), 29-42.

⁹ Un "Selbst", un io, sepolto nella trama della politica ideale: classica la sezione che offre Jaeger (1944), 188-227, trad. it., 211-272.

¹⁰ Cf. Matthiessen (2002), 253-256. Lo scolio alle *Rane* di Aristofane (53), con l'*Ipsipile*, le *Fenicie*, l'*Antiope* fra il 411 e il 408, dopo l'*Andromeda*, confonde l'*Antiope* con l'*Antigone*, per Cropp-Fick (1985), 74-76. E' forse Dirce la menade che, nel Papiro di Ossirinco 3317, giunge dal paese degli uccelli con la νεβρίς: una sequenza dell'*Antiope*? Cf. Luppe (1989), 13-17.

quanto esteriore, perché nella *Repubblica* (473 b-474 c) o nella *VII Epistola* (324 b-326 b) tende a risolvere la politica nella filosofia³¹.

Certo, Aristotele scopre sempre più l'esigenza della vita d'azione. Ad esempio nell'*Etica Nicomachea* (1140 a 24-1145 a 5) riconosce, in base a una riflessione che procede con Dicearco (33-52 Mirhady), l'ἀρετή per eccellenza utile nella trama del particolare, la φρόνησις³². Polemone, dopo la morte di Senocrate, indica un' ἀρετή che ha un concreto scopo nella vita d'azione. Da qui, per Diogene Laerzio (IV 18), un rifiuto del dialogo in funzione speculativa per un'etica da esercitare sul campo. Ma in questa indagine, fra l'Accademia e il Peripato, cosa rimane del rapporto fra filosofia e poesia? Cosa rimane della lira di Anfione? Ben poco. Il sogno nel carcere di Atene, il sogno di Socrate, svanisce, perché svanisce la forza letteraria che di per sé colloca Platone al culmine della produzione greca.

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³¹ Per un'élite sempre a distanza dalla vita d'azione, dalla vita di Siracusa e di Atene? Respinge questa prospettiva Vegetti (2000), 107-147.

³² Cf. Kenny (1992), 103-112.

Socrates speak as Plato, confronting himself with a new and contemporary audience, yet preserving the illusion of dialogue, he had to drop the *metaxu tôn logôn* (the inserenda) as far as possible, and address, as a new Socrates,¹³ his audience directly – and to update his interlocutor, as we have seen.

It has often been seen and said that the *Gorgias* reflects some kind of crisis. If one is, like me, sceptical about fundamental changes in Plato's philosophical outlook and his methods, it is natural in the first place to look for external circumstances as causing the change in approach and dialogue form of *Gorgias*. The first part, including the Polus chapter, fits in well with the general situation in Athens in the 390s and with the pressure of public rhetoric upon the Socratics, notably with the attack of Polycrates.¹⁴ It presents the somewhat ambivalent triumph of Socratic dialectic in an historical context.

But then we have Plato's self-testimony in the *Seventh Letter* which I regard as a very important document. Here Plato tells us in so many words (325a-326b) that, after the trial of Socrates, he went on trying to take part in Athenian political life. More and more frustrated, however, but convinced about the semi-utopia of Philosophers' Rule as the only stable solution, he left for his first voyage to the West. I venture to suggest that this crisis of political frustration and slight desperation is reflected particularly in the second part of the *Gorgias*, the Callicles chapter.¹⁵

Though I am trying, in this paper, to avoid chronological speculation, I want to intimate that I am inclined (in partial agreement with Charles Kahn and some others) to think that both versions of *Gorgias* were written before the voyage, before Plato had met Dion, and certainly before he had happily settled in the Akademeia park to discuss and teach philosophy to philosophically inclined audiences. The emphasis on teaching in *Meno* (and *Protagoras*, *Laches*, *Alcibiades I*, etc.) appears to reflect a somewhat later stage. The ambience of the *Gorgias* is Athenian political life.¹⁶

All in all, the second version appears to be an appeal by Plato to a select audience in Athens. It is (again interestingly) not a plea for a philosophical life. It is basically a Socratic exhortation (*parainesis*) to taking care of the soul. But this care is seen as a condition of statesmanship, with an eye for the positions of both an Amphion and a Zethus. The *Gorgias* has often been characterized as a protreptic writing, but in fact it is protreptic in a very narrow sense. The supposed listeners were (politically) influential Athenians – not potential philosophers nor, alas, Corinthian farmers! The rhetoric of the dialogue is directed to a non-philosophical social élite who are very aware of Socrates' shortcomings.

The generally serious tone, the lack of thought experiments, the scarcity of irony and play or 'sophistry' in the Callicles chapter, in spite of various allusions, and the climactic structure, are all important clues to the interpretation. The core of the message of the dialogue, as we have it, is contained in Socrates' last set of speeches. The *logos* must continue, but not as an instrument of power or life-saving, as the rhetoricians want to have it. The aim of the leading *logos* that Plato calls for at the very end (527e) is to refine one's own moral excellence. And the ethics of the dialogue focusses on true leadership.

¹³ I and others missed this special aspect of the *Gorgias* in our contributions to Press (ed. 2000).

¹⁴ Plato's much-discussed relations with Isocrates are probably less relevant here than Polycrates; cf. Dodds (1959), 270-272; Thesleff (1982), 32-34. Could the choice of Polus as the supporter of Gorgias contain a pun on Polycrates?

¹⁵ Though the idea of Philosophers' Rule had occurred to Plato before 392: see Thesleff (1997).

¹⁶ Among the alleged reminiscences of the West, including geometry (see e.g. Guthrie (1975), 284 f.), there is nothing that Plato could not have picked up in Athens. But perhaps he read the *Gorgias* to Dion (note *Seventh Letter* 334c-335c). If Plato's birth can be dated as late as ca. 424 (Nails (2002), 243-247), the *Menexenus* can be interpreted as another farewell to Athens.

Type d'art agissant par la parole	Moyen d'action spécifique	Effet sur l'âme
Poésie	Discours en mesure (λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον) ⁹ par lequel on représente « les bonheurs et des revers que rencontrent les actions des autres »	Affection qui lui est propre (ἴδιόν τι πάθημα) – en l'occurrence épouvante, pitié, regret
Magie	Incantations inspirées des dieux au moyen de discours (αἱ γὰρ ἔνθεοι διὰ λόγων ἐπωδαί) ¹⁰	Modification de l'opinion de l'âme
Discours sur les choses célestes	Faire apparaître des choses incroyables et invisibles	Modification de l'opinion de l'âme (évacuation d'une opinion, production d'une autre opposée)
Plaidoyers judiciaires	« l'art avec lequel le discours est écrit, non la vérité selon laquelle il est dit »	Modification de l'opinion en charmant une foule nombreuse
Discussions philosophiques	Vitesse de la pensée	Modification de l'opinion

Les effets sont les mêmes : quelque chose est produit dans l'âme et/ou évacué de l'âme, à savoir un *pathos* qui lui est propre, qu'il s'agisse de plaisir, de peine ou d'une opinion, évacués ou produits. Ainsi Gorgias peut-il affirmer que la persuasion, lorsqu'elle s'adjoint au discours (προσιούσα τῷ λόγῳ) va jusqu'à marquer l'âme de son empreinte, à la manière dont elle veut (καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐτυπώσατο ὅπως ἐβούλετο)¹¹. Le § 14 permet d'explicitement de manière générale le modèle d'action à l'œuvre dans chacun de ces arts, et, surtout, de préciser la nature de la chose qui est affectée.

Pour ce faire, une analogie est proposée avec un art, la médecine, art qui fait exception par rapport à tous les autres énumérés jusqu'ici en cela qu'il n'est pas décrit comme un art agissant par le discours.

[14] Il y a le même rapport (τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχει) entre la puissance du discours et l'ordre de l'âme (ἢ τε τοῦ λόγου δύναμις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς τάξιν) qu'entre l'ordonnance¹² des remèdes et la nature du corps (ἢ τε τῶν φαρμάκων τάξις πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν) : de même en effet que certains remèdes évacuent hors du corps certaines humeurs et d'autres remèdes d'autres humeurs, et que certains font cesser la maladie et d'autres la vie, de la même façon parmi les discours, il y a ceux qui affligent, ceux qui réjouissent, ceux

⁹ Sur la façon dont Gorgias, par les expressions qu'il emploie pour définir la poésie et de la magie, insiste sur la présence du discours en elles, cf. Noël (1989), 150. On peut aussi y voir une façon de transférer au discours la puissance attribuée à la musique, cf. Kroll (1911), 168-169.

¹⁰ Voir note précédente.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, § 13.

¹² Nous entendons par « ordonnance » le fait, pour le médecin, de prescrire le remède, et choisissons ce sens au risque donc d'atténuer l'effet voulu par Gorgias avec la répétition de *taxis*. Nous donnons ici à ce terme le sens de *suntaxis*, prescription, comme en *Lois*, XI, 925 b 7-8 : κατὰ τὴν τάξιν τοῦ νόμου. Il s'agit du fait de prescrire un loi, de l'instituer, sens actif qu'il faut distinguer de celui d'ordre, que l'on retrouve dans l'occurrence précédente, ou dans l'expression τάξις τε καὶ νόμος, l'ordre et la loi (*Lois*, 780d ou 875d). On retrouve significativement le même jeu de mots entre l'ordre et la prescription médicale en *Gorgias* 504 a 2-4.

débarrasser de l'injustice (ἀδικία δὲ ἀπαλλάττηται), y faire naître la tempérance et les débarrasser de l'incontinence, et d'y faire naître toutes les autres vertus et de faire qu'en disparaissent les vices.²⁹

La détermination de l'effet de l'action du discours compétent sur l'âme apparaît donc comme production des vertus. C'est que, dans les lignes précédentes (504 b6-d3), l'ordre produit par le discours *dans la chose* a pu être qualifié comme *cause* des qualités qui y sont présentes, comme « ce à partir de quoi en elle... naît » (ἐξ οὗ ἐν αὐτῷ... γίγνεται)³⁰ la qualité. On peut en extraire le tableau suivant :

Lieu de la causalité	Nom du type d'ordre produit	Nom de l'effet de l'ordre (τῷ ἐκ τῆς τάξεώς τε καὶ τοῦ κόσμου γιγνομένῳ, b7-9)
Dans le corps (ἐν τῷ σώματι, b7)	« sain » (ὑγιεινόν, c9)	La santé et toutes les autres qualités physiques (ἡ ὑγίεια γίγνεται καὶ ἡ ἄλλη ἀρετὴ τοῦ σώματος, c9-d1)
Dans l'âme (τῇ ψυχῇ, c1)	« discipline et loi » (νόμιμόν τε καὶ νόμος, d2-3)	Justice et tempérance (c9-d1)

Platon tire ici de l'analogie gorgianique un résultat d'une grande importance pour la philosophie des dialogues : la *taxis* héritée de Gorgias, cet ordre interne à la chose, devient, dans ces pages du *Gorgias*, ce qui précisément la rend telle ou telle, ce à partir de quoi, par exemple, les hommes deviennent policés et ordonnés (ὄθεν καὶ νόμιμοι γίγνονται καὶ κόσμιοι, d2-3) – or, ajoute Socrate, *c'est cela*, la justice et la tempérance (ταῦτα δ' ἔστιν δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ σωφροσύνη, d4). L'ordre est la cause des qualités tout simplement parce qu'il n'est autre que le mode de présence de ces mêmes qualités dans la chose³¹. Un élément séminal de la théorie de la participation est posé.

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²⁹ 504 d5-e3.

³⁰ 504 c9.

³¹ On comprend ainsi pourquoi ce texte a pu apparaître à Stenzel (1931², chapitre 2) comme le fondement d'une « doctrine de l'*arête-eidos* », thèse reprise et développée par Krämer ((1959), 120, n. 174), ou à Kühn (1960) comme le fondement d'une métaphysique possible.

together with whatever beliefs we have about what will in fact contribute to our real good. Hence the label ‘intellectualist’: we only ever do what we *think* will be good for us. So ‘virtue [or ‘excellence’] is knowledge’, or would be if it could ever be realised, and also ‘is one’ – because, if the theory is correct, and is nevertheless to make room for virtues/excellences like justice, courage, and the rest, then they must all be a matter of making the right calculations in relation to good and bad. (‘Virtue is knowledge’, then, in that it is a matter of knowledge of what is truly good and truly bad; and it is one for the same reason.) And given all of this, it will simply be impossible for anyone to do, or (as I prefer to put it) go, wrong willingly; one can only go wrong through ignorance.

This is what the Socrates of the *Republic* then famously denies: that is, when he argues in Book IV for the existence of two irrational parts of the soul, which can – and this is the crucial point – actually overcome reason, perhaps even knowledge. The argument in *Republic* may indeed be taken as going out of its way to underline the conflict between its conclusion and the ‘intellectualist’ position.¹⁹ And the difference is quite fundamental. For if we all possess irrational elements or parts that are capable of causing us to act independently of, or even in direct contravention of, what our reason tells us to do, then it will plainly be insufficient merely to *talk* to people, in the way that the Socrates of the dialogues seems to do, in order to change their behaviour; we shall need to deal with their irrational parts as well – which will require irrational, i.e. *political*, and *rhetorical*, means. It is no accident, I propose, that a large part of the rest of the *Republic* is occupied with talk about political institutions, including a state-run education system involving what is in many respects a kind of conditioning.²⁰ How different *this* Socrates is from the essentially a-political, or un-political, Socrates of the *Apology*, or the *Crito*, or ... That other Socrates claimed that what was needed was philosophy, dialectic; thinking things through. But now that is no longer enough: one may think as much as one likes, and yet if we pay them no heed, our irrational elements may still ambush us, by night if not by day.²¹

2. The problem of the *Gorgias*

So the proposal is that the so-called ‘early’ and ‘middle’ dialogues (that is, again, all apart from the late dialogues) would be better divided – roughly speaking – into pre-*Republic* and post-*Republic*. That will, evidently, give us a new ‘early’ and a new ‘middle’, but it seems better to avoid that terminology, insofar as ‘middle’ tends to be so heavily associated with the move to the new metaphysics (‘separated’ forms, etc.). In any case, my claim is that some of the relevant dialogues feature the ‘Socratic’, intellectualist, theory of action, and

¹⁹ At *Republic* 438A-439B Socrates argues specifically that there are desires (‘appetites’) that are not good-directed: ‘Therefore, let no one catch us unprepared or disturb us by claiming that no one has an appetite for drink but rather good drink, nor food but good food, on the grounds that everyone after all has appetite for [‘desires’: *epithumai*] good things, so that if thirst is an appetite, it will be an appetite for good drink ...’ (Socrates at 438A1-5, in Grube-Reeve translation (1997)).

²⁰ Again, see Rowe (2003).

²¹ See *Republic* IX, 571B4-572A1 (cited, in the Grube/Reeve translation, with omissions): ‘“Some of our unnecessary pleasures and desires seem to me to be lawless. They are probably [are likely to be: *kinduneuouisi*] present in everyone, but they are held in check by the laws and by the better desires in alliance with reason. In a few people, they have been eliminated entirely or only a few weak ones remain, while in others they are stronger and more numerous.” “What desires do you mean?” “Those that are awakened in sleep, when the rest of the soul – the rational, gentle, and ruling part – slumbers. Then the beastly and savage part, full of drink, casts off sleep and seeks to find a way to gratify itself ... On the other hand, I suppose that someone who is healthy and moderate with himself goes to sleep only after having done the following: First, he rouses his rational part and feasts it on fine arguments and speculations; second, he neither starves nor feasts his appetites, so that they will slumber and not disturb his best part with either their pleasure or their pain ...’.

Gorgias is in fact Socratic through and through. And Cooper too wholeheartedly advocates the need to distinguish between Socrates' perspective and that of his interlocutors: they may appear to be saying the same things, but that may hide very different views of the matter. '... Socrates does indeed argue that it is better for anyone to be "temperate, master of himself (*enkratês heautou*), ruling the pleasures and appetites within him" (491D10-E1), than it is to be, as Callicles urges, unrestrained, full of varied appetites and skilled at fulfilling them. But whatever Callicles may be understanding about the psychological processes and conditions that govern these two kinds of person, Socrates can and should be understood as conceiving them from the perspective of his own Socratic theory. The crucial point is that the argument he mounts does not depend upon *which* view of these matters, Callicles' or Socrates', one adopts; in either case Callicles' praise of intemperance is shown to be unjustified.'³⁵

However Cooper's view of the 'Socratic theory' in question is radically different from the one I proposed in §§1 and 2 above. Here is how he sums up Socrates' position: 'First, [Socrates] maintains that whenever a human being does any action he does it with the idea, and because he thinks, that it is the best thing overall for him to do in the circumstances.' This is agreed ground. However the next part is not. '[Socrates] maintains, secondly, a thesis about desire, apparently counting hunger, thirst, and sexual appetite for these purposes as desires: every desire is for its possessor's overall good (perhaps, of course, on a mistaken conception of what that good consists in) ...'³⁶. But of course Socrates is not saying that all the desires we experience conform to and derive from ("depend upon") our *considered view* of where our good lies. In fact the dependence runs in the other direction: *whatever* desire we have, in having it we judge that whatever it is the desire for will contribute to our overall good ...'³⁷ Each desire I have, then (on this account) involves – Cooper describes the relation as 'entailing'³⁸ – a judgement about my overall good, i.e., 'that whatever it is that the desire is for will contribute to [my] overall good', and there are no 'good-independent' desires.³⁹ But my 'considered view', which is presumably not 'entailed' by a desire, may, or – if it 'rests on knowledge'⁴⁰ – will, trump my desire-entailed judgements about my overall good.

In this picture each desire comes as a package, as it were, with a judgement, so that any clashes will be between judgements and not desires, and since these are all judgements about the agent's overall good, they can and will be resolved in a peaceful manner.⁴¹ Anything that Socrates commits himself to with Callicles, Cooper claims, will fit this picture without remainder. 'Self-control [on the Socratic theory] depends upon whether or not one lets one's appetites grow to the point where they imply a false view of one's good and thereby how one acts. The text at 491D-E [where Socrates asks Callicles whether people won't need to rule/control themselves before they rule others] contains nothing incompatible with the natural assumption that Socrates means by self-mastery precisely this, as his own theory allows: he is asking Callicles whether his "superior men" will master themselves and their pleasures in this way, i.e., by preventing large appetites from arising, with their implications for where the agent's overall good lies.'⁴² Again, '... the notion of "psychic order" Socrates ... argues for [at 503D-505B, with 506E-507A] is perfectly compatible with his usual theory

³⁵ Cooper (1982), 581. The whole passage cited resonates closely with my discussions of other aspects of the *Gorgias* in 'A Problem in the *Gorgias*' and 'The Good and the Just in Plato's *Gorgias*' (n.1 above).

³⁶ The sentence omitted here is: 'Irwin calls this second thesis a thesis about the "good-dependence" of all desires'.

³⁷ Cooper (1982), 582-3.

³⁸ Cooper (1982), 583.

³⁹ Cf. Irwin (commentary), 191, ad 491D4.

⁴⁰ Cooper (1982), 583.

⁴¹ 'When [potential] conflicts [between desires] threaten to arise they must be immediately settled, by the disappearance of one or other of the competing judgments, and so of the (incipient) desire that entails it' (*ibid.*).

⁴² *Ibid.*

desires', and Callicles will applaud him for not restraining them.⁶¹ And these are the terms in which Socrates chooses to frame his argument. But he does not *endorse* those terms. Those people who have souls in bad condition do not, on Socrates' account, desire what they say they desire; what they really desire they don't know at all. They just need to become better, i.e., wiser, people (though it will still be true that they should be stopped, or should stop themselves, from going for what they presently go for, in ignorance).

The moral psychology of the *Gorgias*, then, I claim, is Socratic, and fully intellectualist. The Socrates of this dialogue is the same Socrates who inhabits the *Lysis*, the *Charmides* – a work that examines what *sôphrosunê* is without once introducing the idea of mental conflict into the discussion – or the *Symposium*.⁶² I do not pretend that all the work necessary to show this has been done in the present paper, or indeed in the whole series of three papers of which it forms a part. Nevertheless I hope to have made a beginning.

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⁶¹ Though as a matter of fact Callicles claims that this is the courageous *and intelligent* choice (492A2-3, etc.).

⁶² On the *Symposium* as a Socratic dialogue, see §1 above.

orden y la proporción (τάξεως ἄρα ἄρα καὶ κόσμου²⁹). Es, pues, natural que el alma misma sea lo que es “gracias a cierto orden y a ciertas proporciones”³⁰. Ahora bien, “en el alma, el orden y la armonía se llaman disciplina y ley”, que son los constitutivos de la “justicia y la sabiduría”³¹. Es por eso que el artista y el virtuoso tienden a realizar “cierto plan” (εἶδος τι), buscando en los elementos que manejan un “orden riguroso”³² y aspirando a “la belleza de las justas proporciones”³³. Es obvio que este proyecto no puede ser cumplido por quienquiera y menos por un hombre desordenado, sino por quien posee “una competencia particular para cada cosa”³⁴. Ante estas reflexiones del *Gorgias*, es imposible no pensar en la μετρητική del *Protágoras*. Sólo quien la posee es capaz de decidir: (1) cuál es el placer real y cuál sólo aparente; (2) cuál se identifica y cuál no se identifica con el bien. Recordemos, por otra parte, la insistencia con que el *Gorgias* opone el arte (τέχνη) a la mera experiencia (ἐμπειρία)³⁵. Τέχνη tiene, en este diálogo, para la determinación del placer verdadero, el mismo papel que la μετρητική en el *Protágoras*. Así como en éste, sólo quien posee la μετρητική puede determinar, mediante el cálculo, la cualidad y la cantidad de placer que lo hace verdadero y lo identifica con el bien, así, en el *Gorgias*, el τεχνικός es el único que, tras determinar la naturaleza del placer (τὴν φύσιν τῆς ἡδονῆς) y establecer su causa (τὴν αἰτίαν)³⁶, sabe distinguir cuál es bueno y cuál malo³⁷, y, por tanto, cuál es un placer real y cuál sólo un simulacro. Calicles, por ejemplo, no es el τεχνικός requerido, sino un empírico ávido de placeres: (1) puramente somáticos³⁸; (2) desmesurados, llenándose de ellos “lo más posible”³⁹; (3) insaciables, cual toneles agujereados que se llenan con una criba⁴⁰. Para Sócrates, éstos no son placeres reales; hay, pues, que verlos como “otra cosa que el bien” (ὥστε ἕτερον γίγνεται τὸ ἡδὺ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ), y su cultivo como otra cosa que el hedonismo ilustrado del *Gorgias* y el *Protágoras*.

Así, el hedonismo sibarita de Calicles en el *Gorgias* es rechazado y corregido por el ilustrado de Sócrates en el *Protágoras*. Para corregirlo, Sócrates no distingue entre placeres a corto y largo plazo (Gosling-Taylor), ni entre cantidades reales y aparentes de placer (Rudebusch), sino entre placeres reales y aparentes. Los primeros, inseparables del orden, se alcanzan con ayuda de la μετρητική. Uno de los propósitos de Sócrates en el *Gorgias* es lograr que Calicles “prefiera a una vida no saciada y desenfrenada (ἀπλήστως καὶ ἀκολάστως), otra bien ordenada (τὸν κοσμίως)”⁴¹; que vea que “se es más feliz en el orden que en el desorden”⁴². No es claro que lo consiga, pero obtiene al menos que su interlocutor, yendo en contra de lo que ha sostenido hasta ahora⁴³, pretenda que nadie olvida distinguir “entre placeres mejores y peores”⁴⁴.

²⁹ *Gorg.* 504a7.

³⁰ *Gorg.* 504 b 5.

³¹ *Gorg.* 504 d 1-3.

³² *Gorg.* 503 e 2 y 4-5.

³³ *Gorg.* 504 a.

³⁴ *Gorg.* 500 a 8-9.

³⁵ Cf. *Gorg.* 463 a - 466 a, 500 a, 501 a - e.

³⁶ *Gorg.* 501 a 5-6.

³⁷ Cf. *Gorg.* 500 a.

³⁸ Cf. *Gorg.* 494 b-c; 499 d.

³⁹ *Gorg.* 494 b 2.

⁴⁰ *Gorg.* 493 a-c.

⁴¹ *Gorg.* 493 c 6-7.

⁴² *Gorg.* 493 d 1-2.

⁴³ Cf. *Gorg.* 495 a-b.

⁴⁴ *Gorg.* 499 b 7-8.

– What notion of desire do we have here and what kind of knowledge (power, *techne*) is involved in virtue?

– What role if any is played by other Socratic paradoxes?

There is no agreement among scholars on the validity and soundness of the power argument and its relevance for the paradox that no one does wrong willingly. Hence, there is no agreement either on the derivation of that paradox. As for the ‘prudential paradox’ (universal desire for the good), its import and status are controversial and so is the argument for it. There also seem to be different opinions about the role of other paradoxes. I shall have to comment on these problems in the sequel.

II. The Problem

Preliminary overview

In the conversation with Callicles Socrates, referring to his earlier conversation with Polus, suggests that to ward off doing wrong (*adikein*) one must **not only wish** not to do wrong, but also have some **power and technical knowledge** to be studied and practised (G. 509de). Moreover, the conclusion of the conversation with Polus is claimed to be that nobody does wrong (*adikein*) **willingly** (*boulomenos*), but all who do wrong do it **unwillingly** (*akontas*)³ (=‘moral paradox’). If anything, this formulation of the paradox makes it absolutely clear that wrongdoing is unwanted.⁴ It is implied to be due to ignorance (i.e. unknowingly).⁵ But what knowledge is required?

Now, if we have to point to some specific passage in the Polus conversation, it may be suggested that Socrates is referring to the statement of the ‘power argument’ which runs like this: ‘If someone kills somebody **supposing** it will benefit himself but where in fact it is worse for himself (*kakion*), he may be doing what he likes, but **not what he wants**’ (for we don’t want to harm ourselves).⁶ This amounts to saying that doing such things is not wanted *in case* it is obviously harmful for oneself. It is not equivalent to saying that wrongdoing is involuntary. Nevertheless it does seem to be the only explicit reference to a thesis about involuntary action in the Polus conversation.

What we can infer from the argument then is that no one does self-harmful things voluntarily. Premises (9) and (6), and the power argument in general do not seem to be about morals except by accident. So, if Socrates at G. 509de really means to refer to this argument he must either misremember the exact wording of the argument or illegitimately generalize the result to cover moral action or simply mix up the prudential and moral senses of *kakon* or perhaps, most likely, he does not intend to distinguish them.⁷ Alternatively, he is not thinking exclusively of this argument but of the whole conversation with Polus. In an attempt to clarify this issue let us take a closer look at

The Power Argument (G. 466b-468e):

Refutandum: orators have power (466b4-5), because they do what they like (466b11-c2) (i.e. power is to do what you like 466e1-5)

³ Socrates thinks that he and Polus have proved the ‘moral paradox’. As I shall show, in the ‘power argument’ alone he strictly speaking has only demonstrated the ‘prudential paradox’ (I borrow Santas’ terminology).

⁴ Against Weiss (1985).

⁵ Cf. McTighe (1984) and Santas (1964).

⁶ Cf. premises (9) and implicitly (6) of the argument, set out below.

⁷ Cf. nn. 20-21 below. According to *M.* 87e1-3 the good is useful. Thus virtue being good is useful.

a proof that injustice is harmful to the agent, then we also get the needed premise for the paradox that no one does wrong voluntarily:

- we all want the good for ourselves
- we know/believe that injustice is harmful (extra premise)
- no one wants injustice or does wrong voluntarily

Desire

In the *Gorgias* the argument for the paradox of the involuntariness of bad (i.e. harmful) action involves the (here unargued) claim that we all always **wish** for our own true good but may be **mistaken** as to what that good really and in the long run is.²³ Thus, I may be misguided as to what is good for me in the end, i.e. my over-all good, or I may be confused about the means to that end, even if it is rightly identified. We may think that our end is a life of power and influence or a life of pleasure. Or we may think that sweets are contributing to our real good although in fact they are bad, or we may expel immigrants from our country under the impression that this is good for us, whereas it is in fact bad or harmful (for us too).

Hence, in general, even desire for the good is not sufficient for obtaining it, if the agent, as is generally the case, be mistaken about what that good is. Knowledge (i.e., power and *techne*) is required as well.

Power and expertise

The power and technical knowledge of the final conclusion (*G.* 509e) are what is needed to avoid mistakes in one's choices of presumed advantageous strategies. The required knowledge is learnt (*mathesis*)²⁴ and trained (*askesis*). Hence it may be assumed that both theoretical and practical knowledge is meant.

What Plato has in mind by 'power' (*dunamis*) at *G.* 509d ff. should preferably be gathered from the *Gorgias* itself. In the 'power argument' 'power' is understood by Socrates as good for the possessor (466b6-7), an **ability to do**, not as you like but rather, **as you want** (implied at 466d6-e2)²⁵, and it is implied (466e9-11) that while unintelligent desire is powerless and harmful (467a4-5), intelligent (*meta nou*) desire is, we understand, powerful. Hence it may be suggested that what is not enough to save us from wrongdoing is misinformed desire (*boulesis* 509d7) and that 'power' at *G.* 509d-e may be the **insight into the personal good** that informs desire correctly.

The Paradox that Virtue Is Knowledge

In the early dialogues we find the dictum that **virtue is knowledge**²⁶ (the moral paradox) and that the man who has learnt what is just is a just man (*G.* 460b-d). He always behaves justly and does not even desire to do otherwise. What does this tell us about the required knowledge? And how is this 'moral paradox' related to the power argument?

if just (470c2-3), bad and disadvantageous if unjust. For him the criterial goods are justice and other virtues. Justice has become a value and good. But we need to be convinced that he is right.

²³ 'Good' or 'bad' means, for Socrates, 'having good consequences for us,' or 'having bad consequences for us'. Cf. *G.* 468c3-4, *Meno* 87e2, cf. also Xen. *Mem.* iv.6.8ff.

²⁴ *Apol.* 26a: *ean mathō pausomai ho ge akōn poiō.*

²⁵ 'Ability' is defined in *HMin* 366b as 'doing what you want when you want (*bouletai*)'. Cf. *Ly.* 207: happiness implies freedom and possibility of doing what one wants (*epithymia*, or *boulesis* 208a1).

²⁶ E.g. *Meno* 88c-89a, *Prot.* 357ab, *La.* 199cd, *Ch.* 174cd, *Euthyd.* 279d, 280a, *HMin* 375d, *G.* 460b-d.

itself³ He can say this because he locates democracy in ‘a Habermasian ideal of communicative reasoning in which dialogue and deliberation are governed by ideas of frankness, mutuality, consensus and rational argument’ (338). In his view, Gorgias, Polus and Callicles all offer distorted views of politics as domination. Socrates’ talk of a political *techné* may seem like a recipe for authoritarianism, but, as Euben reads him, Socrates does not endorse even this kind of *techné*. The ultimate source of authority in the *Gorgias* is dialectic or dialogue itself. Socrates believes that dialectic can be taught or practised by anyone. He hopes to create ‘a citizenry capable of thinking for itself and thus immune to rhetorical manipulation, a citizenry moreover, that is willing or even anxious to accept the responsibilities of power which democracy requires’ (341).

One may ask here whether Euben’s concept of democracy has anything to do with the political institutions of cities like Athens. The assembly took major decisions by a majority vote after relatively short discussion, and the popular courts, relied on large juries and provided little opportunity for discussion and compromise. These institutions gave little scope for the ‘fragile negotiations’, driven by the desire for compromise and consensus which, characterise Euben’s conception of democracy. Neither do these ideals figure in contemporary accounts of democracy. There was, of course, plenty of emphasis on the importance of free discussion. But this was not, so far as I can see, taken to require negotiation and compromise. Demosthenes (20. 108) even claims that competition rather than agreement is the essence of democracy. So even if the *Gorgias* did show a sympathy for democracy as some theorists now understand that term, it could not be seen as friendly to democracy as understood by the Greeks.

A second difficulty with Euben’s account concerns his understanding of Socrates as presented in the *Gorgias*. There are indeed passages where he seems to emphasise the importance of free and open discussion (457c-458b, 471d-472d, 486d-488b)⁴. Famously he also insists that he needs only one witness, the person with whom he is discussing (472b-c). But as several scholars have pointed out Socrates is not, in practice, particularly concerned to elucidate and understand the real views of his interlocutors. His main aim is apparently to reduce them to inconsistency and some of the tactics he uses seem downright unfair. He is satisfied to secure the verbal agreement of those he talks with, however grudgingly that may be given. He makes no real attempt to understand his interlocutors’ point of view, and certainly does not look for compromise or consensus.⁵

These questions about Socrates’ method raise more fundamental philosophical issues which are well brought out by Benjamin Barber⁶ In replying to Euben he argues that Socrates in the *Gorgias* cannot be seen as democratic because he assumes a ‘foundationalist’ epistemology’. As Barber uses this term, to adopt a foundationalist view of political theory is, it seems, to claim that there are principles of politics which are true and can be known as such. He holds that, in political theory at least, foundationalism is thoroughly mistaken. Because there is no truth in political matters political deliberation must be seen as ‘a matter of reconciling adversarial interests, of forging common values, of deciding what to do in common at the very moment we cannot agree on the “truth” or even whether there is such a thing.’ In Barber’s view this anti-foundationalism underpins democracy. If there is no truth all we can seek is a consensus about how to conduct our affairs. As Barber puts it elsewhere, democratic politics ‘is precisely not a cognitive system concerned with what we know and

³ Euben (1996), 327-359.

⁴ Monoson (2000), 161-5 argues that these passages implicitly appeal to democratic values.

⁵ On this point see Beversluis (2000), chs 14-16.

⁶ Barber (1996), 361-375.

of individual citizens. The *Laws* thus assumes that there are objectively true principles of politics but, because these principles are enshrined in law it does not require those who hold office to have knowledge in the strong sense envisaged in the *Gorgias*.

The *Laws* systematically develops the other major theme we noted in the *Gorgias*, the internal conception of the good. This lies at the heart of all the institutions and legislative proposals described in the dialogue. They are explicitly aimed at developing in the souls of the citizens a harmony between the passions and desires on the one hand and true judgements about the good on the other (631b-632d, 653b-c, 659d-e). The penal code is based on the idea that, since crime is symptomatic of disease in the soul, the primary aim of the legislator, who establishes the legal code, and of the courts which put it into practice, is to cure the criminal of his wickedness (854c-855a, 862d-863c, 933e-934c).

The *Laws* describes a regime that is genuinely political in the sense that one could conceive of it coming into being in the world as we actually know it, and which is also directed to the goal identified in the *Gorgias* – maintaining the health of the citizens' souls. But, because it is governed by law it does not require expert rulers. Ordinary people who have been brought up to obey the law and have internalised its values will be able to conduct the business of government. Seen in this light, the *Laws* answers the problems raised in the *Gorgias*, but it does not abandon the central principles that gave rise to those problems. It still insists that the city must be governed in accordance with objective truths about human good. It also retains and, indeed, greatly develops the idea that the primary concern of government is the welfare of the citizens' souls. But because knowledge is enshrined in law rather than in the souls of the rulers, the state it describes looks capable of being realised in the real world.

The city of the *Laws* contains features which to us, if not to Plato's contemporaries, may appear democratic: all citizens take part in government, officials are mostly elected and there is even an assembly, though its powers are unclear. There is also an insistence that decisions should be taken only after prolonged and careful discussion. This may appeal to modern theorists of democracy, but the constitution is not democratic in either the ancient or the modern sense. This is because it is based on a code of law that cannot be readily changed. That code embodies principles of right and wrong which are not the result of human choices but are the product of reason and are implicit in the nature of the universe as a whole. The fundamental principles by which the city is governed are thus beyond debate. The task of government is to follow these principles and thus to make the citizens good. It does not allow them to choose their own way of life. In the *Gorgias*'s terms it gives them what they really want not what pleases them.

(c) There is a causal link between the two pseudo-opposites as these functions in our lives. (To make this work we also need the “leaky jar” hypothesis.)

Given the Platonic view of life in nature, these are negatives. The impurity of pleasure must be contrasted with the achievability of purity of wisdom. We need not keep filling ourselves with new and new bits of wisdom in order to remain wise.

Perhaps the most difficult of these aspects to swallow for a modern audience is (b) incompleteness. A sympathetic reading will point out that Plato’s conception is couched in an overall teleological conception of reality. The perfect is the complete, that which does not lack anything. Plato’s example would be – and in the dialogues often is – mathematics-geometry. With something like pleasure there is a need for constant replenishment. This is not the case with goodness or wisdom. There is a kind of self-sufficiency that Platonic goodness and wisdom can attain that is not possible for earthly pleasures.

As we survey the first presentation we see that it claims only the thesis that goodness and pleasure are not identical. This leaves us options; e.g., why not place pleasure above goodness? Our difficulty is that, as we saw, the mere elenctic structure will not give us sufficient ammunition. We need to turn to the second presentation to see how goodness can triumph even in the face of these obstacles.

II. Beyond the Elenchus

Pleasure and pain do not behave as genuine opposites. Those, like good-bad, health and illness, cannot co-exist, while in the case of pleasure and pain in certain contexts at least they must co-exist. (As an obvious example we see hunger and eating.)

We see here arguments relying on everyday concepts and everyday connections as well as separations. The arguments might strike us strange, because these are basically not ethical arguments. One cannot help but have some sympathy with Callicles who feels that these arguments involving eating and drinking are not really ethical arguments. But what Socrates wants to achieve is precisely the understanding that purely conceptual issues can have important bearings on ethical judgments.

What does the conclusion reached so far have to do with ethics? Our answer must be to some extent speculative. One can draw a number of consequences, but it is not clear how many of these Plato had in mind. Certainly, the presentation shows that apart from direct ethical impact, an examination of the ontological structure of pleasure that reveals we find characteristics in pleasure and other impressions do help to see preoccupation with pleasure wrong-headed. As we pointed out, pleasure and other impressions are passive. But we tend to construe goodness as tied to the acting agent. (We mean here by “acting” something very wide that includes also what is questionably translated at times as contemplation. As examples from *MENO* etc. show this is not mere staring at equations but also mathematical activity and thus the analogue for interaction with the Forms.) It is tempting to name the “goods” of Callicles “consumer goods”. And indeed many of the goods fit that label (food, drink). But we cannot talk in a straightforward manner about pleasure as something which we consume. Still, there are many similarities. The pleasures are temporary, they do not “lead” somewhere. Above all, mere hedonistic enjoyment does not constitute the notion of an action and of an agent. Something can be a “pleasure-machine” without having the characteristics that constitute agency. This is the gist of the first presentation. The second leads us to the notion of action. As we shall see, the material after these two presentations leads us to the notion of a good agent and what that requires. The second presentation is not required by the logic of the first. Rather, it leads the discussion to a higher level.

provide good reasons for counting anything we find in that myth as less likely to be genuinely Socratic than anything we find in any of Plato's supposedly more reliable dialogues.

II. Death and the Afterlife

In the *Apology*, Socrates says he regards it as “the most shameful ignorance” to fear death as if they knew it were the greatest of evils, when for all they know it might in fact be the greatest of blessings (29a4-b6). At the end of the *Apology*, Socrates says that death might be one of two things, and makes no claim to find either of the two accounts more plausible than the other. This apparent “agnosticism” about death cannot be squared with the sort of conviction we find in the *Gorgias*, we are told,¹ and so we should not count the myth in the *Gorgias* as reflecting genuinely Socratic views.

As we forecast in the introduction to this paper, we are not persuaded by this position. First, it is worth noting that what Socrates says he regards as the “most shameful ignorance” in the *Apology* is the *fear of death* as if it were the greatest of evils. Plainly, this is not only compatible with what Socrates tells Callicles in the *Gorgias*; in fact, we can see that the “moral of the story,” as it were, in both cases, is exactly the same: One should fear vice more than death, since vice – and not death – poses the greatest threat to one's well-being. In the *Apology*, Socrates says that, for all anyone knows, death might even be the greatest of blessings. The same would seem to be true in the *Gorgias* account of those who die with souls unstained by vice.

But what about Socrates' final speech in the *Apology*, in which he declares that death might either be total annihilation or else a migration to some other place? Mark McPherran offers five arguments as to why this passage in the *Apology* cannot be squared with what Plato has Socrates say about the afterlife in the *Gorgias* myth. First, McPherran claims,

Socrates presents his two competing postmortem alternatives in the *Apology* free of any assessment of their relative likelihood, and in context this has the rhetorical effect of suggesting that in his view both are accorded equal probability. After all, were Socrates to have judged the probabilities to be *unequal*...we would expect to hear something about the matter, given that at least most of the jurors he wishes to console would find greater comfort than his actual argument provides were he to reveal that in his judgment (and for whatever reasons he may have) his account of migration is the more likely alternative of the two he presents. (McPherran (1996), 266-267)

McPherran's argument is plainly based upon two important claims:

(C1) The way in which Socrates identifies the two possibilities in the *Apology* has the “rhetorical effect of suggesting that in his view both are accorded equal probability.”

(C2) If Socrates did *not* think the two possibilities were equiprobable he would do a better job of consoling the jurors to whom he is speaking (those who voted in his favor) to tell them of his belief in the migration option.

We do not accept either of these claims. Consider the following case: Mary is planning to work late some night, but confronts her nervous spouse, John, who expresses concern that Mary's staying out so late might not be safe. Mary responds by saying, “Look...don't worry. One of two things can happen: Either there won't be any murderers, rapists, or other bad guys lurking about when I leave the office and drive home, or there will be. If there are none, then neither of us has anything to worry about, do we? But if there is one, then you know that my

¹ McPherran (1996), 264.

one's desire for benefit.³ This "new" moral psychology is explained as Plato's first step towards the more complicated moral psychology of the tripartite soul that is later fully developed in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*.

This claim is familiar enough in the literature that we will not bother repeating yet again the common features of the arguments typically given for this view. Nor will we here discuss yet again the familiar worry scholars express about this view – that it imputes to Socrates two distinct and contradictory accounts of motivation within a single dialogue, without plainly signaling that there has been such a shift in Socrates' view.⁴ But it will be worthwhile to see how and why the myth of the afterlife in the *Gorgias* is supposed to be "infected" with Platonic (but non-Socratic) psychological elements. The "problem" with the myth, we are told, is its conception of the proper uses of punishment.

Here is what Socrates has to say in the myth that convinces so many scholars it must express nascent Platonic, rather than the familiar Socratic, view of moral psychology:

Punishment makes anyone, when he has been punished rightly by another, become better and profit from it, or be made an example to the others, in order that when others see the sufferings which he endures will, in fear, become better. Those who have committed remediable wrongs are the ones benefitted and pay the penalty by gods and men. Nevertheless, it is through pain and suffering that they achieve their benefit, both here and in Hades. For there is no other way to be rid of injustice.

The "problem" with this account, from the Socratic point of view, is most clearly stated by Terry Penner, who explains the conflict this way:

There is in Plato's early dialogues [...] a certain "intellectualism" that is quite foreign to the middle and later dialogues [...]. Indeed, that intellectualism, with its implication that *only philosophical dialogue* can improve one's fellow citizens, is decisively rejected by Plato in the parts of the soul doctrine in the *Republic*. [...] For Socrates, when people act badly or viciously or even just out of moral weakness, that will be merely a result of an intellectual mistake. (Penner (2000), 164-5; emphasis in original).

The reason Socrates' appeal to the uses of fear and pain in punishment, in the *Gorgias* myth, cannot be a genuinely Socratic point of view, we are told, is that we have too much reliable evidence for attributing to Socrates the view that everyone always and only acts in such a way as to pursue what they take to be their own benefit. That is why wrongdoing is always "merely a result of an intellectual mistake," as Penner puts it, and of course, the only method for "correction" of intellectual mistakes Socrates appears to recognize is philosophical dialogue. And because we all aim for what is beneficial to us, when we go wrong, our wrongdoing is involuntary. This is why Socrates chastises Meletus, in the *Apology*:

Come then. Are you putting me on trial here on the ground that I corrupt the youth and make them worse voluntarily or involuntarily?

³ For an excellent discussion of Socrates' intellectualism, as it is traditionally conceived, see Nehamas (1999), 27-58. See also Irwin (1977), 76-96; Irwin (1995), 75-76. Various expressions of the view that there is such a shift in the depiction of Socrates' moral psychology within the *Gorgias* may be found in Cornford (1933), 306-307; Irwin (1979), note on 507b, 222, and Irwin (1977), 123-124; Penner (2000); Cooper (1999), 29-75. Although Charles Kahn thinks it makes good sense to see the *Gorgias* as having been written before the *Protagoras*, he thinks that the moral psychology implicit in the *Gorgias* leaves open the possibility of acting for the sake of pleasure, contrary to one's conception of the good. See Kahn (1988), 89 and Kahn (1996), 42-48, 125-128.

⁴ See, e.g., Irwin (1979), notes on 468ab and 507b; Brickhouse-Smith (1994) section 3.5.5; McPherran (1996), 268-269 n. 72. A very different explanation of this supposed shift is offered in Cooper (1999), 29-75.

think that one is much improved by fearing the right things, and not fearing the wrong things (see *Apology* 28b6-c1, d5-9), and so if he can get Callicles to fear wrongdoing by telling this myth, his doing so would seem to be entirely in keeping with his own characterization of his mission in Athens.

It is true, of course, that the *Gorgias* is the only dialogue in the group ordinarily regarded as early or Socratic in which Socrates employs a full-blown myth in his attempt to persuade an interlocutor. Such myths, admittedly, are rather more common in the later dialogues. But non-rational appeals and extra-logical rhetorical devices of various sorts are nonetheless abundant in the relevant group of dialogues. Is it, for example, “Socrates’ dedication to rational justification” (McPherran (1996), 267) that makes him decide to present the arguments for staying in prison by imagining them posed by the personified laws of Athens? And what is the purely “rational justification” of Socrates’ pretense, in the *Hippias Major* of having to confront a “close relative” (304d3), whom Hippias would not know if Socrates were to name him (290e2), who lives in Socrates’ own house (304d3-4) and who insults and abuses him whenever he acts as if he has some wisdom that he lacks (286c3 ff. and *passim*)? If Socrates were exclusively dedicated to rational justification, then why does he go along with Critias’ suggestion that he pretend to have magical healing powers, as he does with an elaborate tale of having a special leaf and charm in the beginning of the *Charmides* (155b5 ff.)? Socrates brags about shaming and reproaching people into changing their ways in several passages in the *Apology* (29d7-e3, 30a1, 30e3-31a2), and acknowledges the risk he faces that his jurors might vote against him, not just because they have false beliefs about him, but because of *anger* (*Apology* 31a3-5, 34b7-d1), and he also recognizes that anger (*Apology* 23c8-9), ambition (23e1) and a propensity to violence (23e1) in his slanderers have played a role in his coming to have such a bad reputation in Athens.

Moreover, Socrates frequently seems willing, if not to relate whole myths, to employ references and quotes from well-known myths and mythological tales in his own persuasive attempts. We began, in fact, by discussing Socrates’ discussion of myths of the afterlife, as one of the possibilities for what death might be, in the *Apology* (40e4-41c7). But earlier in that same work, as he was completing his defense speech, “Socrates’ dedication to rational justification” certainly allowed him to compare himself to Achilles (28c1-d4), to quote Homer at 34d5, to lend authority to his defense by calling the god at Delphi as a witness (20e7-8), and to scoff at Anaxagoras for rejecting the myths that say the sun and moon are gods (26d1-e3) and use beliefs about the relationships between gods and demi-gods, certainly obtained from mythical accounts, in his refutation of Meletus (27c5-d10). In fact, Socrates is often quite willing to recruit some myth or popular tale in order to boost his arguments, and if we are right about his moral psychology, his willingness to do this is entirely consistent with his “dedication to rational justification.” Accordingly, we find nothing strange in the idea that he might choose to complete one of his persuasions – especially one with a particularly recalcitrant interlocutor such as Callicles, with a final appeal to a chastening myth. It may be that the myth at the end of the *Gorgias* is something that Plato concocted out of whole cloth – a tale that was never in fact told by Socrates. Our argument in this paper, however, has been that there is no good reason for thinking that Socrates could not or would not have resorted to such a tactic, or that he could not or would not have believed what he says he believes in that myth.

not allow himself to be persuaded by Socratic reasoning (494a-b), a discourse suited to his soul must be constructed (cf. *Phaedrus* 271a1-b5), and myth here, as in the *Phaedo* (114d), is conceived to fight against a *páthos* and act on sensitivity¹². In the myth, regardless of whatever true doctrine lies within it, there are elements of discourse that are directed at the irrational, because Plato in the *Gorgias* is now especially concerned with this part of the soul in which the passions reside (493b1), precisely for being easy to manipulate and persuade (493a6-7). Despite that Plato believes in the essential truth of eschatological myth, he would have no objection in accepting, as we know (*Republic* 377a5-6), that myth is a mixture of truth and fantasy and in which there is, therefore, broad space to design a discourse that speaks with images appropriate to this part of the soul. Plato indeed resorts to images capable of evoking pleasure and above all pain (525b7, 525c5-6), not only in the *Gorgias*, but also in the other eschatological myths of the *Phaedo* (114a-b) and the *Republic* (614e6-615a4), precisely to act on this irrational part of the soul, which does not allow itself to be exorcised by the logical reasoning of argumentation.

In this sense, it could be stated that myth constitutes a reversal of the rhetorical situation, with which it has many elements in common. First of all, as we see, it does not address reason, but rather that part of the soul where the passions reside (*Gorgias* 493b1) or to that frightened “child” in each of us (*Phaedo* 77d-e)¹³, whom we must try to persuade and even dissuade from false beliefs (77e4-6) with the charming discourse of myth. Pleasure and pain are the basic psychological mechanisms by which persuasion occurs in this part of the soul. Both are instruments of sensitivity and by means of them the soul is “nailed” to the body, which forces it to believe that whatever the body states is true (*Phaedo* 83c5 and d6). Persuasion results when the soul feels “obligated to believe” (83c5) and the most effective psychological mechanism to achieve this consists, in short, of using pain and pleasure, because these move it to consider truer whatever is associated with its most intense emotional experiences¹⁴. Secondly, however, Socrates appears as a *conjurer* (ἐπιφθόσος 78a1) of the evils and fears that assail the soul, because his eschatological rhetoric pursued the same end as should guide true rhetoric (*Gorgias* 504d-e), which consists of transforming those passions (517b5) in order to reestablish the health of the soul and do everything necessary in favour of justice (527c3-4). Thirdly, Socrates knows that the persuasive potential of rhetoric, and consequently the power that this places within reach is determined by whether the orator respects the beliefs of the audience being addressed (513b8-c2). Therefore, even when Plato can operate with great liberty in adapting his mythic tales to the moralizing purposes that he pursues, he must make use of the mythic tradition to “give an air of orthodoxy”¹⁵ to the tale that makes it consistent with the beliefs of the listener. Let us recall that this is not only Callicles but also the reader addressed by the *Gorgias*, and therefore its mythic eschatology invokes Homer from the very beginning in order to connect with *the endoxa* of the community, which provide the frame of reference by which the persuasive verisimilitude of the word must abide.

Fourthly, we might ask ourselves about the epistemic framework on which myth is based. Gorgias said in the *Encomium* (82DKB11) that the word is a “great sovereign” that

that are not easily persuaded (63a, 77e, 84d-e, etc.); *cf. Republic* 621c, where myth can save us “if we allow ourselves to be persuaded by it.”

¹² See Boyancé (1937), 156-7; Edelstein (1949), 472 sq.; Smith (1986), 23; Brisson (1982), 93 and 144, Vallejo (1993), 172-3, etc. On the relationship between myth and incantation in Plato, see Boyancé (1937), 155-165; Laín (1958), 298-333; Dodds (1980), 199; Morrow (1953), 238 sq.; and Brisson (1982), 96 sq.

¹³ *Cfr. Republic* 330d7-8.

¹⁴ *Cfr. Phaedo* 83c6-7.

¹⁵ Dodds (1959), 373; see also Segal (1978), 326; Ward (2002), 14 sq.; Most (2002), 11-13.

alla scienza che all'opinione. Allora dobbiamo stabilire (cfr. 454e3) *due specie di persuasione* (454e3): una che produce «credenza senza il sapere» (454e3-4), l'altra che produce il sapere (454e8). La persuasione che produce il sapere è sempre legittima, perché non può esistere una scienza ora vera ora falsa, mentre quella che produce la credenza a volte lo è e a volte non lo è. La persuasione dunque non è prerogativa solo della retorica, ma anche della scienza.

7. La credenza (πίστις) è l'opinione (δόξα): è ampiamente attestato nell'orizzonte platonico, nel quale può esistere appunto un'opinione vera ed un'opinione falsa. E se la persuasione appartiene sia all'opinione che alla scienza, in questo ambito sia alla retorica che alla giustizia, o alla filosofia, è chiaro che tutta l'opposizione a questo punto si gioca su di un altro parametro. Che è quello fondamentale della verità. Ma sarà proprio l'introduzione del parametro della "verità", coniugato a quello della persuasione, a rendere estremamente problematico tutto il discorso platonico, al di là delle apparentemente chiare e nette distinzioni e contrapposizioni.

8. La contrapposizione tra retorica e giustizia, o tra retorica e filosofia, si mostra anche nei metodi che ciascuna mette in opera: ἐπίδειξις e διαλέγεσθαι sono le due procedure che, sempre ad apertura di dialogo (447a6, b2, b8, c1, 448d10-11), segnano subito il contrasto tra Socrate e i suoi interlocutori. Il metodo dialettico comporta l'esercizio della confutazione reciproca dei dialoganti, non a scopo di semplice "vittoria" sull'interlocutore, ma proprio allo scopo di giungere a buon fine nella propria ricerca (457c-458c). Nell'orizzonte della verità.

9. Se ti confuto, dice Socrate, lo faccio non perché mi batto contro di te, ma perché mi batto per l'argomento stesso (457e5): io mi lascio confutare volentieri (458a2) se dico qualcosa di non vero (458a3), e confuto volentieri se qualcuno dice qualcosa di non vero. E' proprio a questo punto che si dischiude *l'orizzonte di un'ambiguità*: cercare, indagare con le parole il senso di altre parole, confutare e venire confutati nella convinzione di "essere nella verità", oltre che nel tentativo di "trovare una verità", non è un fatto tanto semplice. Perché, infatti, l'espressione "se dico qualcosa di non vero" indica il fatto che io possiedo una certa opinione che considero vera ma che non lo è più nel momento in cui tu mi confuti, ed io riconosco le ragioni del tuo confutarmi: acquisisco così un'altra opinione, che questa volta considero vera in rapporto alla precedente non più vera. E se confuto te, lo stesso processo può avvenire in te (cfr. 453a-c).

10. Contrapposizioni di opinioni, dunque: il *Gorgia*, in effetti, è un importante esempio, tra l'altro, proprio dell'esistenza di questa possibilità (che può darsi comunque nella maggioranza delle discussioni, filosofiche e non) di discutere senza comunicare, di un discutere cioè in cui ciascuno espone le proprie opinioni e le contrappone a quelle dell'altro, sottintende sensi, ed impone sensi, alle parole dell'altro senza curarsi della loro reale presenza, ed andando avanti nelle proprie dimostrazioni in una condizione di totale "estraneità" al mondo dell'altro.

11. Ma comunque in una presunzione di verità: Socrate dice la verità se il suo discorso (che, nel confrontarsi con quello degli altri, esprime la sua opinione) riesce a far apparire conseguente la sua tesi con le premesse poste in comune e concordate tra gli interlocutori: fatto che in genere, nella drammaturgia platonica, gli riesce quasi sempre. Ma allo stesso tempo Socrate è convinto che il suo discorso, nonostante la dichiarazione di non sapere ma di cercare, corrisponde alla verità, e sulla base di questa presunzione di verità confuta il discorso dell'altro (cioè ritiene che il discorso dell'altro vada confutato in quanto non vero); oppure è disposto a lasciarsi confutare in quanto riconosce che il discorso dell'altro sia vero (cioè ritiene che il proprio discorso vada confutato in quanto non vero). Nell'un caso come nell'altro, c'è una convinzione di verità presupposta alla confutazione, e quindi al discorso dimostrativo-confutatorio vero e proprio; in altri termini, la situazione di partenza di un

Analogien und Antistropfen. Zur Bestimmung der Rhetorik in Platons *Gorgias*

Walter Mesch

Platons *Gorgias* enthält eine Bestimmung der Rhetorik, die häufig zu Verwunderung, Befremdung und Ablehnung geführt hat. Die Rhetorik ist demnach überhaupt keine Kunst (*techne*), sondern wie das Kochen nur eine „Erfahrung (*empeiria*) in der Bewirkung eines gewissen Wohlgefallens und von Lust“ (462e). Als eine bloße Erfahrung bzw. Fertigkeit (*tribe*) gehöre sie mit dem Kochen, dem Herausputzen und der Sophistik zu den Schmeicheleien (*kolakeiai*), die eine natürliche Treffsicherheit ohne Technik besäßen (463a-c). Die besondere Schmeichelei der Rhetorik liege darin, daß sie „von einem Teile der Staatskunst das Schattenbild“ sei (463c). – Um diese schwer verständliche Bestimmung zu erläutern, verweist Sokrates zunächst auf die Differenz von Leib und Seele, wobei er betont, daß in beiden Fällen ein scheinbares von einem wahrhaften Wohlbefinden unterschieden werden müsse (464a). Dann setzt er zu einer etwas längeren Rede an, die jene vier Schmeicheleien durch vier antistrophische Künste ergänzt (464b/c), Schmeicheleien als Verkleidungen von Künsten bestimmt (464c-465b) und ihre Verhältnisse durch Analogien verdeutlicht (465c). Als Ergebnis hält er schließlich fest, die Rhetorik sei Antistrophe des Kochens, „für die Seele, was jenes für den Leib“ (465e).

Es ist schwer, diese Passage angemessen zu verstehen. Einerseits nimmt sie im Gesprächsverlauf eine zentrale Stellung ein, weil sie systematisierende Konsequenzen aus dem Vorangegangenen zieht, an denen Sokrates auch im folgenden festhält. Andererseits gelangt sie zu ihrem radikalen Ergebnis, indem sie von weitreichenden Voraussetzungen ausgeht, die sie nur äußerst knapp erläutert. Wie nicht anders zu erwarten, sind diese Voraussetzungen deshalb häufig kritisiert worden. Man hat bezweifelt, daß Erfahrung und Kunst bzw. scheinbares und wahres Wohlbefinden strikt differenziert werden könnten, daß sich jene Schmeicheleien tatsächlich in die angeführten Künste verkleiden würden und daß Gesetzgebung und Gerechtigkeit als Antistropfen von Gymnastik und Medizin zu betrachten wären.¹ Blickt man auf das radikale Ergebnis, das aus diesen Voraussetzungen gewonnen wird, muß seine auffällige Einseitigkeit irritieren. Der systematische Aufwand zielt scheinbar nur auf eine Widerlegung der falschen Rhetorik. Von der wahren Rhetorik, die auf dialektischer Grundlage vom Guten überzeugt und deshalb als *techne* zu gelten vermag, ist

¹ Irwin (1979) verweist z.B. darauf, daß es nicht klar sei, wie weit sich Sokrates auf irgendeine akzeptierte Unterscheidung von *empeiria* und *techne* beziehe und wie weit er eine eigene Unterscheidung herausarbeite (130). Noch deutlicher ist seine Kritik am Verkleidungsdenken: „But surely Socrates is wrong to say that cookery pretends to offer healthy food“ (134). Dodds (1959) bezweifelt die Triftigkeit der Antistropfen, weil den individuellen Leibeskünsten keine politischen Seelenkünste entsprechen könnten. Das wahre Gegenstück zu Gymnastik und Medizin könne allenfalls die Erziehung sein. Im Hintergrund stehe jedoch Platons Überzeugung, daß Politik wesentlich auf Erziehung ziele (227).

eine Reihe von Analogien, „nämlich daß (1) wie das Herausputzen zur Gymnastik, so das Kochen zur Medizin, oder vielmehr (2) wie das Herausputzen zur Gymnastik, so die Sophistik zur Gesetzgebung, und (3) wie das Kochen zur Medizin, so die Rhetorik zur Gerechtigkeit.“ (465c) Die erste Analogie ist nur deshalb bedeutsam, weil sich das Herausputzen etwas leichter als Verkleidung verstehen läßt als das für die Rhetorik wichtigere Kochen. Von zentraler Bedeutung sind dagegen die zweite und die dritte Analogie, die auch Sophistik und Rhetorik als Verkleidungen erläutern.

Was mit diesen Schritten gewonnen sein soll, liegt auf der Hand. Offenkundig versuchen die Analogien (im dritten Schritt), das Verständnis der Verkleidung (aus dem zweiten Schritt) auf Sophistik und Rhetorik zu beziehen. Sophistik und Rhetorik verhalten sich demnach so zu Gesetzgebung und Gerechtigkeit, wie Herausputzen und Kochen zu Gymnastik und Medizin, nämlich wie bloße Verkleidungen zum Verkleideten bzw. Schattenbilder zu ihren Vorbildern. Nimmt man dies mit dem antistrophischen Verhältnis von Seelentechnai zu Leibestechnai (aus dem ersten Schritt) zusammen, läßt sich auch ein antistrophisches Verhältnis von bloßen Seelenfertigkeiten zu Leibesfertigkeiten behaupten, wie es für die Rhetorik explizit geschieht und für die Sophistik leicht zu ergänzen wäre. Die Rhetorik ist Antistrophe des Kochens und die Sophistik Antistrophe des Herausputzens (465e). Sie sind Antistropfen, weil ihre technischen Vorbilder Antistropfen sind. Denn Abbilder, die nichts anderes sind als Verkleidungen ihrer Vorbilder, müssen zueinander im selben Verhältnis stehen wie diese. Geht man von den Analogien aus, die auch Sophistik und Rhetorik als bloße Verkleidungen technischer Vorbilder bestimmen, ist das Ergebnis der Argumentation also unschwer nachvollziehbar. Doch was erlaubt es den Analogien eigentlich, Sophistik und Rhetorik als Verkleidungen von Gesetzgebung und Gerechtigkeit zu bestimmen? Wodurch wird es für Sokrates möglich, auf der Seite der Seele dasselbe Verhältnis auszumachen, wie es auf der Seite des Leibes bereits erläutert wurde?

Es ist keineswegs leicht, diese Fragen zu beantworten, und zwar aus gutem Grund. Denn die Analogien werden ja gerade als Abkürzungen eingeführt, die eine allzu lange Rede verhindern sollen (465b). Eine ausführliche Erläuterung sophistischer und rhetorischer Verkleidung liefern sie deshalb nicht. Gleichwohl wird man sie kaum als bloße Behauptungen betrachten dürfen, wenn sie irgendeinen Beitrag zur Argumentation leisten sollen. Und daß sie als ein solcher Beitrag intendiert sind, zeigt nicht nur der Vergleich mit dem Vorgehen der Geometer, sondern auch der zweite Schritt der Argumentation, der ja schon behauptet hatte, *alle* Schmeicheleien seien Verkleidungen von Künsten, obwohl dies nur für die Seite des Leibes ausgeführt wurde. Sogar schon vor seiner eigentlichen Rede hatte Sokrates gesagt, die Rhetorik sei das Schattenbild von einem Teile der Staatskunst. In den Analogien soll also sicher mehr geliefert werden als eine bloße Wiederholung dieser These oder ihrer späteren Konkretisierung, die das Schattenbild als Verkleidung erläutert. Es geht darum, verständlich zu machen, als was sich die Rhetorik verkleidet, weil nur damit wirklich verständlich werden kann, inwiefern sie überhaupt eine Verkleidung ist. Dabei geht es klarerweise darum, sie von ähnlichen Phänomenen zu unterscheiden und eine möglichst trennscharfe Bestimmung zu finden. Daß die Sophistik mit in den Blick kommt, kann vor dem Hintergrund des bisherigen Gesprächsverlaufs also kaum überraschen. Und damit sind wir wieder bei der Frage angekommen, was es eigentlich erlaubt, die Sophistik als Verkleidung der Gesetzgebung und die Rhetorik als Verkleidung der Gerechtigkeit zu erläutern.

Meines Erachtens läßt sich nur dann eine Antwort finden, wenn man den zweiten Schritt mit dem ersten Schritt der sokratischen Argumentation verbindet. Sophistik und Rhetorik sind Verkleidungen von Gesetzgebung und Gerechtigkeit, weil Herausputzen und Kochen Verkleidungen von Gymnastik und Medizin sind und Gesetzgebung und Gerechtigkeit

Andererseits bringt er damit in den Blick, daß Rhetorik mehr zu sein vermag, als ihre zeitgenössische Realisierung zeigt. Auf diese Weise gleicht Platon die Einseitigkeit seiner Rhetorikkritik aus und vermittelt die systematische Anlage seiner Argumentation mit ihrem polemischen Ergebnis. Die Widerlegung der falschen Rhetorik durch die wahre Rhetorik hat nicht nur eine humoristische Pointe, sondern auch eine sachliche. Sie paßt nicht nur zur spöttischen Behandlung des Polos, indem sie dessen dialektisches Versagen durch einen rhetorischen Sieg des Sokrates ergänzt, sondern dient auch dem Verständnis der umstrittenen Disziplin, indem sie die Vermittlung von Differenzen vorführt, die sich in der agonalen Atmosphäre des Dialogs kaum thematisieren lassen. Folgt man der sokratischen Argumentation, ist die übliche Rhetorik eigentlich nicht die Antistrophe des Kochens, sondern das Schattenbild einer Gerechtigkeit, in die sie sich zum Zweck der Täuschung verkleidet. Was dies für ihr Verhältnis zur Dialektik bedeutet, wird zwar nicht *erläutert*, wohl aber *gezeigt*. Letztlich geht es darum, das täuschende Schattenbild durch ein Verständnis förderndes Abbild zu ersetzen. Die wahre Rhetorik muß an die Stelle der falschen treten. Indem diese bereits vorgeführt wird, ist die Passage ein herausragendes Beispiel für Platons Kunst, gleichzeitig auf verschiedenen Ebenen zu agieren, ohne die Deutlichkeit der Darstellung zu beeinträchtigen.

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science, explanations for what it does. Art thus strikes a mean between science and experience. It is like the former in its aetiological character; but it is like the latter in treating things by nature changeable and unstable. It combines the strengths of a certain exactness with an ability to meet uncertain challenges. Olympiodorus finally elevates even experience above mere flattery, concluding that Socrates in the *Gorgias* is attacking popular, not philosophical rhetoric (72.20-73.4). This political solution was rejected by Aristides, who, like Gorgias himself, means to defend a well-intentioned ordinary rhetoric as an art as well (Aristides, *op. cit.* 446ff.).

In this controversy an ambiguity about the status of rhetoric persists, for, not only is it something commonly used as often for ill as for well (here the argument from ambivalence can come into play), but, depending on the side one stresses, scientific or empirical, it can appear to be, or to fall short of, an art (here the argument from competence enters). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates both assimilates rhetoric to flattery and insists on its empirical nature to the extent that he virtually collapses art together with science: rhetoric's empirical character becomes evidence that it is no art at all. His gambit is depicted dramatically by Plato as a quasi-medical corrective extreme for another party's having driven the matter to the opposite, empirical pole (cf. *Gorgias* 478d1-479c4 with *Phaedo* 86b5-c2, Aristotle, *EN* 1104b13-18, and Celsus, *De Medicina* 3.9.2). Plato himself thus points to a compromise by which rhetoric is an art in the sense explained by Olympiodorus, rather than a science simply. This interpretation is corroborated when he makes the Socrates of *Republic* 1 compare justice not only with medicine, but also with an art of cookery so conceived.

Plato sketches also the larger relation dramatically in the *Gorgias*. Socrates introduces the question of competence (455a8ff.) but Gorgias completes it (455d6ff.) and himself adds that of ambivalence as a corollary (456c7ff.). Moreover, the implications of the two arguments, as Gorgias understands these, were fundamental for the subsequent technical tradition, recurring, e.g., at the very opening of Aristotle's own *Ars Rhetorica*. Gorgias, like Aristotle, claims an unspecialized political field of application for the rhetorical art and stresses the crucial distinction between its proper and improper use – which Aristotle sees as analogous to the distinction between the sophist and the dialectician, who share the same capacity but exercise differing choices (cf. Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* 1355b8-10, 1354a1-3 and 1355 a21f. with Proclus, *In Cratyl.* 4). Gorgias speaks in terms of responsibility rather than motivation, but the affinity is clear. So the argumentative and dramatic outcome of the two arguments as they occur in the *Gorgias* prospectively combines the Socratic idea of an unspecialized governing art with a Gorgian conception of moral responsibility. One reads forward in the *Gorgias* expecting Plato to make Socrates hold Gorgias' pupils responsible for their misuse of his rhetorical teaching.

2. Il testo prosegue parlando dei beni dell'anima, come temperanza, coraggio, memoria; si chiarisce che, *senza intelligenza* (ἀνευ νοῦ, 88 B 5, B 8) provocano danno, *con intelligenza* (σὺν νῶ, 88 B 5, μετὰ νοῦ, B 7) vantaggi.

3. Socrate ne ricava un insegnamento di carattere generale:

Dunque, tutte le cose che l'anima intraprende e compie sotto la guida del pensiero (φρονήσεως) raggiungono la felicità, sotto una guida della dissennatezza (ἀφροσύνης) il contrario (*Menone*, 88 C 1-3).

Qui interviene non il *nous* ma la *fronesis*, che diventa il termine base di questa trattazione e che può significare sia conoscenza, sia pensiero, cioè indicare sia un contenuto sia una funzione conoscitiva. In questa seconda accezione è più facile attribuirgli il senso di "guida", opponendola ad ἀφροσύνη (che altrimenti dovrebbe essere intesa come "ignoranza").

Se, dunque, la virtù è qualcosa insito nell'anima e le è necessariamente utile, deve essere pensiero (φρόνησιν), poiché tutte le cose relative all'anima in sé e per sé non sono né utili né dannose, mentre, accompagnate da pensiero o dissennatezza (φρονήσεως ἢ ἀφροσύνης) diventano sia dannose sia utili. Secondo questo ragionamento la virtù, essendo utile, deve essere *una qualche forma di pensiero* (φρόνησιν τίνα) (*Menone*, 88 C 4 - D 3).

Come si vede, il testo continuamente oscilla tra "aggiunta" e identità (sia pure in una forma molto attenuata) di virtù con *fronesis*.

1. Il ruolo di guida attribuito al pensiero viene subito dopo confermato, stabilendo anche una sorta di processualità: la *fronesis* agisce sull'anima e questa sulle scelte della vita umana (*Menone*, 88 D-E).

2. La cosa è tanto importante che Platone sente il bisogno di schematizzarla: per l'essere umano tutte le altre cose dipendono dall'anima, quelle dell'anima stessa, per essere buone, dipendono dalla *fronesis*; quindi, il pensiero è ciò che è utile (*Menone*, 88 E - 89 A). Lo schema risulta chiaro sulla base della distinzione essere umano – anima: l'anima decide la vita buona dell'essere umano, la *fronesis* organizza l'anima e quindi è alla base dell'utilità di tutte le cose.

3. Non resta che trarne una conclusione:

Diciamo che la virtù è utile?... Dunque, diciamo che la virtù è *fronesis* o in tutto o in qualche parte (*Menone*, 89 A 2-4).

Dopo tanti sforzi, Platone presenta non per l'*episteme*, quella che è insegnabile, ma per la *fronesis* ancora due ipotesi di relazione: una forte identità o un nesso di inerenza. Ma alla luce di quanto abbiamo visto e soprattutto del duplice rapporto: *fronesis* – anima, anima – essere umano, il pensiero risulta essere un elemento necessario, la guida senza la quale la virtù non esiste, con un nesso forte, ma che non dà identità.

3. La pretesa aporetizzazione del nesso *fronesis* - virtù

Ci sono varie ragioni per sostenere che questa tesi non viene affatto smentita:

1. l'argomento successivo dimostra solo che *di fatto* nessuno possiede la virtù con scienza, il che non prova che nessuno *possa* averla;

2. il testo *esplicitamente* presenta l'ipotesi che ci sia un uomo capace di avere tale scienza e lo fa con estrema enfasi: come per Omero solo Tiresia fra le ombre è saggio,

Menone, 81a10-e2: un mito dell'al di là?

Graziano Arrighetti

Nel complesso dei problemi che il *Menone* presenta, quelli del brano 81a 10-e 2, che comunemente – anche se non da tutti – viene definito mito, si presentano come di particolare complessità e importanza, da molti punti di vista: per prima cosa per la collocazione nel contesto del dialogo, e poi per i contenuti dottrinali, per come sono proposti e formulati in stringate enunciazioni – a ben guardare non sempre coerenti fra loro – che introducono principi fondamentali dell'etica e della gnoseologia platoniche seguendo modalità inconsuete. La presente esposizione non presume né di dare soluzioni nuove ai problemi né di indicare vie per superare le difficoltà ma, sugli uni e sulle altre, intende proporre una riflessione condotta alla luce di alcuni tentativi che sono stati esperiti in un passato più o meno lontano.

Com'è noto, nel contesto delle argomentazioni del dialogo questa sezione segna un punto di profonda articolazione: i tentativi di Menone di formulare una definizione della virtù, che del dialogo avevano occupato la prima parte, sono approdati ad un assoluto insuccesso, e la ricerca, almeno sulla strada seguita sinora, viene a trovarsi bloccata nell'impossibilità di procedere, e ciò per riconoscimento comune sia di Menone che di Socrate: il primo perché, dopo le confutazioni che i suoi tentativi hanno subito, viene a trovarsi in una situazione di paralisi metaforicamente analoga a quella provocata dal contatto con la torpedine marina (80a 4-8), Socrate perché finora ha insistito nella sua abituale professione di ignoranza (80d 1). Così la ricerca sembra sia arrivata ad un punto in cui gli interlocutori sono fermi in una situazione che nella definizione datane sia da Menone stesso – con il così detto paradosso (80e 1-5) – che da Socrate (81e 1-5), suona come impossibilità per l'uomo di ricercare alcunché, sia ciò che conosce sia ciò che non conosce, perché nel primo caso non ha alcuna necessità di ricercare ciò che già conosce, nel secondo non sa che cosa ricercare.

E' stato ripetutamente notato che questa situazione rivela forti somiglianze con altre che si incontrano nei dialoghi aporetici, in particolare, in questo caso, nell'*Eutidemo*¹; ma nell'*Eutidemo* la ricerca non subisce battute d'arresto e i sofismi di Eutidemo e di Dionisodoro relativi a chi impara, se impara chi sa o chi non sa (275d 2-276c 7), e a che cosa impara, se impara ciò che sa o ciò che non sa (276d 1-277c 7) – sofismi che pongono in difficoltà il giovane Clinia – Socrate li smaschera serenamente dimostrando che si tratta di semplici trucchi verbali (277d 1-278e 2). Però qui nel *Menone* la reazione di Socrate è completamente diversa: con un inatteso mutamento di tono, che si fa brusco e deciso, quasi apodittico, rifiuta di affrontare in un modo qualunque la difficoltà propostagli da Menone col suo paradosso, negando a questa ogni reale validità col definirla un ἐριστικὸν λόγον

¹ Cfr., per es., Bluck (1961), 8-9, 271-272; Guthrie (1975), 238; Nehamas (1985), 1-30, in part. 5-9. Le componenti del *Menone* che si connettono ai dialoghi aporetici sono state sistematicamente analizzate da Erler (1991), *Indice dei passi di Platone, s. v. Menone*.

Menone è per lo più ignorata¹⁴; e non sono nemmeno mancate sporadiche ma decise prese di posizione contrarie all'ipotesi di considerare questo brano come un mito. Per fare un solo esempio, è stato osservato da parte di Hackforth nella sua traduzione commentata del *Fedone* che, nel contesto generale del dialogo, Socrate lascia chiaramente capire che, come prova della dottrina della reminiscenza, nutre piena fiducia nella dimostrazione geometrica condotta con lo schiavo, ma non altrettanto nella dottrina dell'immortalità e della reincarnazione dell'anima proclamate da sacerdoti e da poeti; così, la credenza religiosa si rivela bisognosa del supporto della ragione¹⁵. E' da dire che questa obiezione, così formulata, appare un po' troppo improntata al presupposto di una incompatibilità fra *mythos* e *logos*, ma è anche da aggiungere che, rifiutando a questo brano lo statuto di mito o negandone la funzione nel contesto del dialogo, non si risolve il problema del perché della sua presenza. Quello che appare certo è che l'obiezione, come minimo, rivela un non infondato disagio, come vedremo meglio oltre.

Per il momento esaminiamo alcune caratteristiche che questo brano presenta, perché non è difficile constatare che ne richiamano altre, queste abitualmente ricorrenti in altri luoghi di Platone incontrovertibilmente mitici¹⁶; quelle più significative sono probabilmente le seguenti:

– in 81a 5-6 Socrate si rifà a fonti orali rappresentate da personaggi sapienti¹⁷, ἀκήκοα γὰρ ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν παρὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα, così come da tradizione orale derivano in genere i miti platonici; un caso esemplare, data anche la sua complessità, è ovviamente quello del *Timeo-Crizia*; per di più, al pari di questi due dialoghi, anche nel *Menone* il discorso di Socrate attinge a fonti sacerdotali. Inoltre, fonti orali sono addotte in *Politico* 268e 8-269b 4 e 271a 4-b 3; talora possono essere rammentate con più precisione persone che sono state le remote fonti del mito, come Er con il suo racconto in *Repubblica* 614b 2-4, gli antenati in *Politico* 271a 5-8; altre volte ci si rifà genericamente alla tradizione, come in *Fedone* 107d 4-5, *Gorgia* 523a 1, 524a 8; ma riguardo al *Menone* è da aggiungere che, come fonti, sono rammentati non solo sacerdoti e sacerdotesse sapienti, ma anche i poeti, ὄσοι θεῶν εἶσι, e fra questi è citato espressamente Pindaro¹⁸;

¹⁴ A puro titolo di esempio, cfr. Reinhardt (1960), 219-295, in part. 252-270; Annas (1982), 119-143; Brisson (1982); importanti eccezioni sono rappresentate da due lavori pubblicati in Janka & Schäfer (edd.): Most (2002), 7-19 e Dalfen (2002).

¹⁵ Hackforth prendeva posizione nei confronti dell'opinione di Frutiger (1930), 75, che aveva definito con decisione il carattere del brano come mitico: cfr. Hackforth (1955), 74: «It seems fair to say that Plato, while not repudiating the earlier argument (*scil.* il mito) for recollection and immortality, regards that now to be expounded as far superior [...] it is of course introduced as a religion doctrine supported by poets, or rather perhaps as a corollary of such doctrine; *but the argument for it is completely rationalist*» (corsivo mio); con Hackforth consente Huber (1964), 314. Confesso che per me restano poco comprensibili le motivazioni addotte da Zaslavsky (1981), 15, per negare i caratteri di mito a questo brano: si tratterebbe di «a descriptive account of the experience of learning as experienced»; questo a prescindere dalla stranezza dei criteri da Zaslavsky adottati per definire i miti platonici.

¹⁶ Queste caratteristiche sono state formulate da Most (2002) in part. 10, sulla base di un approccio che è stato definito «discorsivo», che muove «von den konkreten Bedingungen der kommunikativen Situation der Sprecher und der Zuhörer». Le caratteristiche che qui consideriamo sono alcune delle otto individuate da Most, 11-13, e che sono le seguenti: i miti di Platone 1) sono pronunziati come monologhi; 2) sono raccontati da un narratore più vecchio dell'ascoltatore; 3) si rifanno a più antiche fonti orali; 4) narrano eventi non verificabili; 5) derivano la loro autotevolezza non da esperienza diretta del narratore ma dalla tradizione; 6) sono proposti in forma non dialettica ma come narrazioni o descrizioni; 7) sono collocati all'inizio o alla fine di un contesto dialettico; come è facile vedere, anche quelle che in questa ricerca non menzioniamo in maniera specifica sono anch'esse presenti nel *Menone*. Most considera mito, senza alcuna esitazione, questo brano del *Menone* e lo prende come testimonianza delle caratteristiche 3), 4), 8).

¹⁷ Sulla caratterizzazione delle fonti dei miti come "sapienti", cfr. Dodds (1959), 297; qui nel *Menone* questi sapienti sono, cosa non consueta, più precisamente definiti, per la precisione come sacerdoti e sacerdotesse; i poeti sono quelli θεῶν.

¹⁸ Sui poeti come creatori di miti, cfr. Brisson (1982).

– sacerdoti e sacerdotesse, e quelli che fra i poeti sono θεῖοι, affermano che l'anima è immortale, e anche se τελευτᾷ, poi, di nuovo, γίγνεται,

– per questo motivo, διὰ δὴ ταῦτα, è necessario trascorrere la vita il più santamente possibile;

– infatti, γάρ, da un brano di Pindaro³⁴ si viene a sapere che Persefone, dopo aver accolto la ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος, rimanda sulla terra le anime dalle quali nasceranno illustri sovrani, uomini di eccezionale vigore e uomini dotati di grande sapienza, che nel tempo a venire sono destinati ad essere chiamati puri eroi.

Oltre ai problemi messi in luce da sempre, non è difficile accorgersi dell'esilità e della scarsa chiarezza delle connessioni che intercorrono fra queste enunciazioni³⁵:

– per quanto riguarda l'immortalità delle anime, questa dottrina, considerata di per sé, non comporta l'obbligo di vivere santamente;

– inoltre, come si è visto, il contenuto del frammento pindarico, nonostante sia introdotto da γάρ, non costituisce motivazione adeguata dell'obbligo di vivere santamente³⁶ perché, oltre a lasciare nell'incertezza in che cosa consista la ποινά che Persefone esige e come e da chi debba essere pagata, quanto è prescritto non appare avere un valore universale, non è rivolto *erga omnes*, così come appariva essere l'obbligo di vivere santamente, almeno nella maniera in cui è stato sancito da Socrate, ma concerne solo alcune anime, quelle particolarmente privilegiate che si reincarnano in sovrani, in uomini vigorosi e in sapienti, destinati diventare eroi, e quindi all'immortalità, e a trascorrere il tempo infinito della loro beatitudine forse nelle isole dei beati o dove che sia; ma è certo che, una volta raggiunto lo *status* di eroi le loro anime non sono sottoposte a reincarnazioni, e quindi in Pindaro l'infinità della catena delle reincarnazioni – necessaria per raggiungere la conoscenza dei πάντα χρήματα – non è presupposta.

Non solo, ma nemmeno tutte le conseguenze che Socrate trae nella seconda parte del suo discorso, 81c 5-e 2, risultano chiaramente motivate dai contenuti del mito:

– cosa può significare, sempre rimanendo all'interno di questo contesto, che, essendo la natura tutta congenere con se stessa, τῆς φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενούς οὔσης, nulla impedisce che, richiamata una sola cosa alla memoria, anche tutte le altre possano essere trovate, c 9-d 2?

– e perché per poter procedere a questa riconquista delle cose conosciute l'uomo deve essere ἀνδρείος, non deve ἀποκᾶμνεν ζητῶν, e una volta che sarà convinto che l'anima è immortale e che ogni conoscere è un ricordare diventerà ἐργατικός e ζητητικός, d 5-e 2, come è ripetuto anche in 86b 7-c 2?

– e infine il problema la cui soluzione costituisce la premessa irrinunciabile di ogni possibilità di capire questo sistema gnoseologico così come qui nel *Menone* appare proposto: come si può sostenere senza difficoltà che l'anima, nelle sue molte reincarnazioni e nel suo permanere nell'Ade, abbia conosciuto tutto, τὰ ἐνθάδε καὶ τὰ ἐν Ἄιδου καὶ πάντα

³⁴ Non è necessario in questa sede affrontare i difficili problemi che pone la dottrina del destino delle anime *post mortem* enunciata da Pindaro in questo testo, non solo riguardo a cosa il poeta intenda con le parole ποινὰν παλαιοῦ πένθεος del v. 1, ma anche quale sia la coerenza di quanto qui contenuto con *Ol.* II 56-83: cfr. Bluck (1961), 277-286; Cannata Fera (1990), 219-231.

³⁵ Altre difficoltà, inerenti alla vaghezza o imprecisione delle enunciazioni di Socrate, sono state messe in luce da Klein (1965), 95-97.

³⁶ Di una banalità sconcertante è la spiegazione che propone Bluck (1961), 277, per il quale in Platone parlare dell'immortalità dell'anima non era possibile senza coinvolgere una menzione delle implicazioni morali, per cui qui avremmo nulla di più di una digressione.

recollection into a simile for our capacity to use concepts and/or propositions which are not derived from empirical perception but from our mind alone. This reading of Platonic recollection, however, did not gain lasting favour with philologists; after all, considerable contortion of the text is required to get this meaning out of what Plato has actually written.

I

In this paper I shall contend that Plato's *Meno* does not offer any evidence for the claim that the so-called theory of recollection was part of Plato's philosophical creed, and that it does offer reasonable evidence for the contention that Plato did not adhere to this theory. In order to do so, I shall first make some remarks about the character of the dialogue's title figure and of how the discussion with Meno is affected by his character and behaviour. I shall then come to the first part of the passage in the text where recollection is mentioned, Socrates' speech at 81a5-d5, and Meno's reaction to it. Next I shall discuss the geometry-lesson with the slave-boy (82b6-85b7), and finally shall offer a rather detailed analysis of the ensuing discussion with Meno (85b8-86c3).

Plato characterizes Meno by depicting his behaviour in the discussion with Socrates as a rather arrogant person and also as somewhat naive in his arrogance. Meno thinks he can easily come forward with an answer to the question of what virtue is, and he thinks Socrates should know as well, since he met Gorgias while Gorgias was in Athens (cf. 71c5-8). Yet, what is even more important, Meno does not want to play by the rules of a dialectical discussion.³ Thus at 75b1, Meno, who is bound to offer an answer to the question put to him by Socrates, refuses to do so and asks Socrates to answer in his stead. When Socrates has offered him an answer to the question of what figure is, namely "that which alone among all things always follows colour" (75b10-11), Meno thinks that this is a naive answer, since now someone could come and ask for an explanation of colour (75c5-7). Socrates then makes it clear to Meno that in any dialectical discussion certain terms have to be agreed on by the participants as known (implying that colour is something everyone able to use his eyesight properly is bound to know) (75c8-d7). He then has Meno first agree to certain terms he, Socrates, wants to use in a different definition of figure, to such terms as limit, surface and solid (75e1-76a3), and then brings forth a new definition, that figure is "limit of solid" (στερεοῦ πέρασ (76a7)).

Again Meno, who has promised to tell Socrates his definition of virtue after Socrates has given his definition of figure (cf. 75b4-5), advances another prevarication: He now wants to know what colour is (76a8); this query is quite unjustified since Socrates has not used the word in his new definition of figure. Socrates' reply shows that he is well aware that Meno has been violating the rules of a dialectical discussion all along, simply in order to avoid giving a definition of virtue (76a9-b1). When Socrates has finally given an answer to this question as well, to the one about colour, his interlocutor is willing to come forward with a new definition of virtue, i.e. that virtue is, "as the poet says, to rejoice in things beautiful and be able for them" (77b2-3). Socrates then takes him to task and Meno, after a lengthy argument, has to agree that he again has not been able to produce a definition that can stand up to Socratic scrutiny (79c10-e4). When he is asked again to say what he "and his companion" (i.e. Gorgias) take virtue to be (79e5-6), Meno, instead of answering Socrates' question, first comes up with his comparison of Socrates with the torpedo fish and with a sorcerer (79e7-80b7), and after Socrates' invitation to search together for a definition of virtue (80d3-4), advances his eristical argument against the possibility of search (80d5-8).

³ An analogous observation is made by Klein (1965), 62.

forms of existence, may be known to Meno, the idea that human beings *generally* are able to do so cannot be familiar to him. That is an addition by Socrates, even if Socrates imitates Empedocles' correction of the way ordinary humans talk when he adds to the word "recollect" the rider "what men call learning" (81d2-3). Let us see how Meno reacts to this speech and to the challenge to start a common search for the definition of virtue.

Meno seems to agree with the moral Socrates has drawn from his speech, i.e. that we should not follow Meno's eristic argument, since it makes us lazy, but rather this one, which prompts us to look for things we do not yet know. This seems to be the meaning of Meno's "Yes, Socrates." (81e3). But he then goes on to ask, if we follow the text of our modern editions: "But how do you mean this, that we do not learn but what we call learning is in fact recollection? Are you able to instruct me that this is in fact so?" (81e3-5) There seems to be no point in asking for an explanation of the *meaning* of what Socrates has said. And this is the usual and primary sense of the question "how do you mean?" (πῶς λέγεις;) What is more, no such explication of the *meaning* of what Socrates has said is given in the sequel. Even more puzzling is the fact that Meno can continue and ask Socrates to show him that what he has said, is the case: "Can you instruct me that this is in fact so?" The "so" (οὕτως) shows that he has quite clearly understood the *meaning* of the claim Socrates has made; he does not ask for an *explanation* of Socrates' words but for a *proof* of what Socrates seems to have claimed with his words. This is confirmed by the repetition of his query at 82a5-6: "But if you are able to somehow prove to me (ἐνδεΐξασθαι) that it is as you say, please do so." Whenever we meet the phrase "how do you mean?" in Plato, it is used as an inquiry for an explanation of the meaning of what somebody has said; to simply take the cases from our dialogue: 73e2, 75c3, 91c6, 97c9 – in all these passages the questioner wants some further information that would enable him to understand what his interlocutor just has said. Not so in this passage.

Now there is good reason to believe that the text of our modern editions is not the text Plato wrote. In fact, the text of our editions is based on a rather late manuscript (F) and on Stobaeus. The three oldest and usually best codices (BTW), which are also independent of each other, are unanimous in offering a different reading. Instead of

ἀλλὰ πῶς λέγεις τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐ μανθάνομεν,

they read

ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς λέγεις τοῦτο, ὅτι οὐ μανθάνομεν.

Clearly, the reading of these manuscripts is by far the *lectio difficilior*. The phrase πῶς λέγεις is very common in Plato, it occurs over a hundred times in the dialogues⁶; the word ἀπλῶς together with the verb λέγειν or other *verba dicendi* is far less frequent. Its meaning is state or say something simply, or without qualification. In the *Euthyphro* 14b2, the title figure of the dialogue, in answering Socrates' question as to the result of the work of the gods states, perhaps not quite pertinently: "I say simply (ἀπλῶς λέγω) that when one knows how to say and do what pleases the gods, in prayer and sacrifice, that is holiness." At the beginning of *Rep.* III it is argued that poets when talking about the netherworld should "not disparage things in Hades without qualification" (μὴ λοιδορεῖν ἀπλῶς οὕτως τὰ ἐν Ἅιδου 386b9). This is also the meaning of the word ἀπλῶς in our passage.

If we adopt the reading of BTW in the passage discussed, the difficulties mentioned above disappear and everything falls into place. For what Meno's first question now

⁶ One could add also a stylistic observation that might make the text of our editions at 81e3 look suspicious: although the question πῶς λέγεις; (or φῆς;) is quite often accompanied by a τοῦτο, our passage would be the only one in Plato where this phrase is followed by a ὅτι-clause.

This question is non-committal and, in distinction to the preceding questions, this one has an ἢ οὐ; (“had he not”) added to it. This addition may not seem very significant to a modern reader, but we should notice that Aristotle in his *Topics* tells us that the distinction between *protasis* and *problēma* is based on this seemingly trivial difference (cf. *Top.* I 4, 101b28-34). This should at least make us recognize of the awareness with which such differences were noticed in Plato’s time.

Meno replies to this question with a simple “yes”, thus committing his first and fatal mistake. For the opinions the slave has uttered during the geometry-lesson clearly were not in him, but they were made to develop by the questioning of Socrates. Of course, this is not to deny that the slave-boy brings along some capabilities which allow him to realize the errors he has committed on the way to the solution, and to see why the square with the diagonal of the original square as basis has twice the surface of the original square: he is able to multiply and to calculate and to compare the results of his calculations to one another. But this is a far cry from the claim that the specific proposition about the square’s diagonal was somehow in him. This mathematical truth quite clearly was discovered by him for the first time in this lesson. If having an opinion is equivalent to, or implies entertaining the truth of this opinion – and I for one cannot see what else ‘having an opinion’ should mean – then the slave-boy did not have the opinion about the doubling of the square. How else could he have confessed his ignorance at 84a1-2 after his second proposal has been proved wrong?

The next question, the fourth one Socrates is going to ask, has Meno admit a general conclusion (cf. ἄρα 85c6) from the concessions granted so far:

Thus he who does not have knowledge about any matters, whatever they be, may have true opinions on such matters, about which he does not have knowledge? (85c6-7)

The absurdity of this conclusion is underlined by repeating the relative clause: *περὶ ὧν ἄν μὴ εἰδῆ, περὶ τούτων ὧν οὐκ οἶδεν*. Meno’s answer is a rather feeble: *φαίνεται*, “So it seems.” (85c8) Notice that the same phrase has been used by the slave-boy at 83e7 as he was brought to see the miscalculation implied in his second proposal.

Socrates then comes back to the case of the slave-boy, and here he commits himself to a position:

And at present those opinions have just been stirred up in him, as in a dream; but if he were repeatedly asked the same questions in various forms, you know that he will eventually have knowledge about these matters as exact as anyone. (85c9-d1)

Since Socrates’ “you know” is justified only if he himself believes in what is stated in the following *that* clause, Socrates is committed to the claim that after repeated questioning the slave-boy will have knowledge, not merely opinion. This concession, however, is quite innocuous, and, hence, can easily be granted by Socrates. Meno agrees. What Socrates has gained by this move is the option to treat the slave’s state of mind as knowledge rather than opinion.

His next question, question no. 6, turns to the way this knowledge has been acquired: Meno is asked whether the slave, if he is only asked not taught, will come to know, “recovering the knowledge out of himself”. Meno gives his assent.

Socrates’ seventh question (85d6-7) now introduces the concept of recollection into the discussion about the geometry-lesson, using the notion of recovering knowledge out of oneself:

Although this was a question directed to Meno, he does not answer yes or no to it. Instead he compliments Socrates' well spoken words:

You seem to me to speak very well (Εὖ μοι δοκεῖς λέγειν), Socrates, I know not how. (86a5)

Meno has indeed some reason for his compliments, for Socrates, again, has switched back to the high-flown style of Gorgianic rhetoric: Notice the hyperbata in the Greek as well as the assonances and homoioteleuta. If I may be permitted to attempt this style in English, a rendering might be as follows:

If now of all things the truth always dwells in our soul, then immortal would be our soul, so that you should be of good cheer and, whatever you do not happen to know at present – that is, what you do not remember – you must endeavour to search out and recollect.

Meno, again, has got an answer in the style of a tragic poet, a τραγικὴ ἀπόκρισις. Yet here as in the earlier passage, Socrates is keen on keeping his distance from Meno:

So I seem to myself, Meno. All the other points I have made in support of the argument are not such as I can confidently assert; but that, if we are convinced we should inquire after what we do not know, we should get better and braver and less lazy than if we believe that we are neither able nor obliged to inquire after things we do not know – this is something for which I am determined to fight, so far as I am able, both in word and deed. (86b6-c2)

Again, Meno compliments Socrates on his well-spoken words. Hence, all that Socrates wants to stick to is the last conclusion, the one at 86b2-4, that is, the statement, that we should endeavour to search for things we do not yet know, and not, as Meno's lazy argument claimed, drop every such search. As to the premisses leading to this conclusion, Socrates (and here we may add: Plato) is not willing to accept them either. Hence, all the claims about the soul and its ability to recollect are, as it were, cancelled by Socrates. This should come as no surprise to whoever has realized the poor logic tried out on Meno by Socrates.¹⁴

V

So what have we got here? A proclamation by Socrates of his belief in the soul's ability to recollect things from previous existences? I do not think so. What Socrates does when he comes forth with his speech at 81a5 f. is to use a stratagem meant to work with his interlocutor. And it is meant to work with Meno because it presents him with certain tenets of the Pythagorean-Empedoclean tradition he knows so well via Gorgias. Socrates is justified in using such a stratagem because he has to fight Meno's eristic argument which is introduced by Meno for the sole purpose of avoiding further discussion about the definition of virtue.¹⁵ Socrates speech is a means to break Meno's obstinacy and wilfulness by exploiting his reverence for what he knows about Western philosophy. The geometry lesson is a case of learning, not a case of recollecting something. Its main purpose is to drive home the point to

¹⁴ I have argued for this interpretation of recollection in the *Meno* first in Ebert (1973) and (1974), 83-104. At the time I was not yet aware of the import of the definition colour at 76c4-77a5 for Meno's 'Empedoclean' background; nor had I seen the relevance of the variant reading of BTW at 81e2-3. – Since the publisher did not send me any galley-proofs of Ebert (1973), there are a lot of misprints in this article, especially in the Greek quotations. An errata list was published in the first issue of *Man and World* 7 (1974).

¹⁵ A remark in Aristotle's *Topics* could be read as a comment on what Socrates is doing here: "for with a person who tries every means to seem to avoid defeat it is just to use every means to reach your conclusion, although this is not an elegant proceeding." (*Top.* VIII 14, 164b10-12)

trouve à l'arrière-plan; il serait curieux en effet que l'âme ait eu connaissance de réalités mathématiques dans l'Hadès.

– Cette interprétation semble être confirmée par le καὶ πάντα χρήματα qui suit. En effet, χρήματα peut présenter le sens général de “choses”; mais chez Platon et chez les Platoniciens, χρήματα en vient naturellement à désigner les réalités intelligibles comme on le constate en *Phédon* 66e1-2⁴. Si on s'en tient à l'interprétation de premier niveau, la conclusion est simple: l'âme a vu l'ensemble des réalités, aussi bien celles d'ici-bas, lorsqu'elle était dans un corps, que celles du monde d'Hadès quand elle était séparée de tout corps. Si on fait intervenir l'interprétation de second niveau, il faut comprendre que, lorsqu'elle était dans un corps, l'âme a vu les réalités sensibles, tandis que, quand elle était séparée de tout corps, elle a vu les réalités intelligibles, ou plutôt incorporelles, auxquelles ressortissent les mathématiques dont, chez Platon, le statut est mal défini, y compris dans la *Républicque*. En d'autres termes, pour le Platon du *Ménon*, l'âme se souvient non pas de tous les événements empiriques auxquels elle a été mêlée dans ses vies antérieures, mais des choses sensibles et des réalités intelligibles qui échappent à nos sens comme celles qui se trouvent dans le monde des morts.

La proposition principale (81c7) dont dépend la causale qui précède conforte cette lecture. On notera le parfait μεμάθηκεν. Il y a donc équivalence entre “avoir vu” et “avoir appris”. Tout processus d'apprentissage trouve son terme dans une connaissance qui est une intuition s'apparentant à une vision. Parce qu'elle a vu toutes les réalités, il n'y a donc rien que l'âme n'ait appris. Par suite, elle peut se souvenir de tout ce qu'elle a vu et donc appris.

C'est exactement ce qu'explique la phrase suivante (81c7-9). La conjonction ὥστε exprime la conséquence de ce qui vient d'être dit: apprendre, c'est être en mesure de se souvenir (οἷόν τ' εἶναι ἀναμνησθῆναι) des choses que l'on connaissait auparavant. Mais quels sont les objets de ce souvenir? On notera que le seul objet ici spécifié est ἀρετή, qui est aussi l'objet sur lequel portait la question qui ouvre le dialogue (*Ménon* 70 a1-4). Or, dans le *Phédon*, les vertus sont rangées aux côtés des réalités intelligibles: “En effet, notre discussion présente ne porte pas plus sur l'Égal que sur le Beau en soi (περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ καλοῦ), le Bien en soi (περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ) le Juste, le Pieux, et d'une façon générale, pour le dire en un mot tout ce que nous marquons au sceau de l'être” (*Phédon* 75c10-d2). Par ailleurs, le καὶ περὶ ἄλλων qui suit καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς vient généraliser l'affirmation, et ne peut être interprété qu'en fonction du statut donné à ἀρετή, c'est-à-dire à mes yeux celui de l'intelligible; l'âme a vu les vertus et les autres réalités intelligibles.

La suite insiste sur cette généralisation sur laquelle se fonde le processus de réminiscence. Elle s'ouvre sur une subordonnée causale (81c9-d2) construite une fois de plus avec un ἄτε qui gouverne un génitif absolu qui peut être construit de deux façons différentes. Ou bien on considère τῆς φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενοῦς οὔσης comme un segment indépendant, à la façon de Burnet qui imprime une virgule après οὔσης, et que l'on coordonne à l'aide du καὶ à μεμαθηκίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἅπαντα. On obtient alors la traduction suivante: “En effet, dans la mesure où dans la nature toutes choses sont apparentées et dans la mesure où l'âme a pris connaissance de toutes choses.” C'est là une construction et une traduction très fréquentes. Du point de vue de la grammaire, rien ne s'oppose à cette construction et à cette traduction; mais on ne voit pas bien ce que peut signifier “dans la mesure où dans la nature toutes choses sont apparentées”, car c'est là une affirmation trop générale et donc banale. En revanche, les choses deviennent bien plus claires si l'on considère que τῆς ψυχῆς est le sujet logique à la fois des verbes οὔσης καὶ μεμαθηκίας. En construisant ainsi on arrive à cette traduction qui me semble beaucoup plus claire: “Dans la

⁴ Sur les différents sens du terme πρᾶγμα, voir Hadot ([1990] 1998), 61-92.

non può riferirsi solo all'interrogare e confutare socratico e necessita delle integrazioni che Platone apporta a tale metodo, facendone una procedura di ricerca e scoperta del vero. La dialettica di cui cerco il legame con l'anamnesi è dunque anche quella completa di Platone, per quanto in embrione si trovi in quello reputato primo dei dialoghi della maturità.

Un presupposto formale legge poi la sezione da 80 A (Socrate torpedine marina) a 86 C (dov'egli riflette sugli esiti del test maieutico) come *unico contesto problematico*. Vi figurano 4 temi importanti: Socrate torpedine marina, cioè il dubbio; il «paradosso di Menone» o λόγος ἐριστικός sulla ricerca; la presentazione dell'anamnesi, prima religioso-poetica e poi «filosofica»; infine il test con lo Schiavo che prova la validità dell'anamnesi stessa. Temi cruciali, che hanno indotto gli studiosi a sezionarli al microscopio, spesso trascurandone il contesto comune: chi studia la torpedine in genere ne ignora il legame con il test sul quadrato e chi esamina questo scorda il richiamo a poeti e sacerdoti nella presentazione dell'anamnesi. Va invece tenuto insieme l'unico contesto di fondo, quello della *possibilità stessa della ricerca*: tema in taglio sia con l'argomento base del dialogo (l'acquisibilità ed insegnabilità della virtù), sia con il ruolo ad esso ascritto di manifesto dell'Accademia.

B. Il problema della ricerca

Socrate accetta il paragone che Menone – zittito su ben quattro ipotesi circa la virtù – fa di lui, come torpedine paralizzante chi la tocchi, ad un patto: esso funziona se si ammetta che la torpedine per prima subisca gli effetti della sua scarica. Egli infatti fa dubitare gli altri paralizzandoli «nell'anima e nella bocca» (80 B 1), ma non perché sia sicuro, bensì essendo lui per primo in istato di dubbio (80 C-D)⁷.

Menone ora è scettico sul proseguire la ricerca: come potrà Socrate, così dubbioso, cercar ciò che non sa per nulla che cosa sia? Quale delle cose che non sa cercherà e come potrà, trovatala, riconoscerla per quella cercata? Socrate risponde formulando lui il paradosso di solito ascritto al suo interlocutore⁸: non vede Menone che λόγος ἐριστικός stia portando? Non si potrebbe cercare né ciò che si sa – non occorre, se lo si sa –, né ciò che non si sa, non sapendo neppure che cosa cercare (80 D-E).

Vi è però *incongruenza* tra il modo in cui Menone formula il problema – visto tutto dalla parte *della cosa cercata* – e la generalizzazione di Socrate: egli invece guarda alla motivazione alla ricerca, dalla parte *del soggetto*, delle ragioni per cui e del modo in cui questi può cercare. A suo dire, e contro il λόγος ἐριστικός, cercare è possibile se non si dà in un ambito statico, dove gli stati cognitivi siano distinti per tagli netti, dove appunto o si sa e dunque non si cerca, oppure non si sa e dunque non si sa che cercare. La ricerca si dà in un ambito cognitivo sempre *dinamico*, lo stesso ribadito poco dopo come proprio della stessa anamnesi, quando si dirà possibile che «chi ha ricordato una sola cosa...trovi da sé anche tutte le altre» (ἐν μόνον ἀναμνησθέντα ... τὰλλα πάντα αὐτὸν ἀνευρεῖν) (81 D 2-3), purché però «sia coraggioso e non smetta di cercare» (81 D 3-4). Oltre che dinamicità, la ricerca esige allora *attività gnoseologica* e *positività comportamentale* da parte del soggetto.

un «buon interrogare» (73 A 8), è detta possibile del pari per «scienza e retta ragione». L'anamnesi delle idee, esemplificata nel *Fedone*, è dunque solo l'acme di una procedura più ampia. Cfr. Bluck (1961), 11-12 e 15-17, e Paise (1967), 235, rispetto a *Men.* 98 A: «le opinioni vere...non vogliono restar ferme a lungo e fuggono dall'anima, finché non le si legghi con un ragionamento circa la causa.. Ma ciò...è anamnesi, come prima convenuto» (corsivo mio).

⁷ 80 C 9-D 1. Il passo è basilare per la filosofia socratico-platonica: Luigi Stefanini lo scelse come esergo per la monografia su Platone (anast. 1991).

⁸ E' rilevante che sia Socrate a formulare il paradosso: è difficile perciò che Platone gli metta in bocca una questione reputata artificiosa, non importante o senza risposta. Cfr. Scott (1991), O' Brien (1991), Canto-Sperber (1991a); già Bluck (1961), 8 ss., e Canto-Sperber (1991), 66-74.

La memoria di «ciò che era, che è, che sarà» serbata dal canto di Esiodo ed Omero, la fonte Mnemosyne cui l'iniziato beve per valersi rinascita, nella laminetta orfica di Petelia, simboleggiano semmai un *eterno sottratto al tempo*, nella scansione temporale imperfettamente rappresentato, come il Chronos del *Timeo*, scandito dal moto perenne dei pianeti, è «immagine mobile dell'eterno» (37 D 5)²⁰. In sede *cognitiva*, l'anamnesi inizia a divenir *altro* dalla rammemorazione del passato: *tematizzazione di conoscenze possedute da sempre in forma latente*²¹.

E. Anamnesi e dialettica.

Dato poi che la natura tutta è congenere e l'anima ha appreso ogni cosa, nulla vieta che chi ricordi anche un'unica cosa – processo che gli uomini dicono apprendimento – trovi da sé anche tutte le altre, se sia coraggioso e non si stanchi di cercare; cercare e imparare, allora, nel complesso sono reminiscenza (81 C 9-D 5).

Se volesse riferirsi solo alla ripresa di nozioni acquisite in un «tempo» prenatale, perché Platone fa *queste* precisazioni? Che c'entrano col recupero di nozioni passate l'esser συγγενής della φύσις e la connessa capacità, da una cosa «ricordata», di richiamar da sé le altre? Ora che la pretesa μάθησις si mostra come ζήτησις (è un *ritrovar (ἀνευρεῖν) da sé*) –, è qui che entra in gioco la dialettica, intesa sì come disposizione dinamica – già nota – alla ricerca, ma ora anche come capacità di cogliere i legami interni del tutto, i rapporti, orizzontali e verticali, fra le cose e fra queste ed i loro paradigmi eterni. Quanto si dirà su anamnesi e dialettica dal *Fedone* in poi, fino ai dialoghi dialettici e al *Timeo*, trova qui anticipazione concentrata: queste righe si spiegano, ma non rispetto al passato poetico-religioso, bensì al futuro imminente dello stesso pensiero platonico.

L'esser συγγενής della natura è stato variamente inteso²²: si concorda però che, comunque si legga, esso si giustifichi quale condizione fondante la capacità dell'anima di trovar da sé ogni altra cosa (τὰλλα πάντα αὐτὸν ἀνευρεῖν, 81 D 3), a partire da quella sola che abbia ricordato (ἔν μόνον ἀναμνησθέντα, 81 D 2). Se il riferimento serve a *questo*, sono ancora generici i legami storici indicatine, o alla parentela pitagorica, fondativa della metensomatosi, delle parti della natura, o all' ἔν πᾶν senofaneo nel *Sofista*²³. Il riferimento

²⁰ Per la formula τα τ' ἐόντα, τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, *Il. I 70; Theog. 32 e 38*; cfr. Detienne (1983), 5; Vernant (1978), 99, e Napolitano (1994), 8, e 159, nota 13. Per la laminetta orfica, cfr. Pugliese-Carratelli (2001), e Brisson (1999), 33. Problematici anche i riferimenti al «tempo» prenatale dell'apprendimento nel *Fedone*: 72 E 6-7; C 2; 75 A 1; 75 D 4-5; la sezione da 76 A 4 a C 13, dove l'alternativa, pure ipotizzata, di un possesso innato delle conoscenze (76 A 4-5) è smentita perché non tutti, poi, ricordano quanto dovrebbero saper da sempre: perciò è accolta, pur non parendo definitiva, l'alternativa, che l'anima conosca – e dunque esista già – prima della nascita (76 C 11; E 2-3). Ma ciò è, rispetto all'immortalità, solo dimostrazione della «metà del dovuto» (77 C 1). Per le letture della temporalità nell'anamnesi – lettura innatista forte, innatista minimalista, anamnesi come conoscenza integrale, ma virtuale (Cartesio e Leibniz) –, Canto-Sperber (1991), 82-7; L. Brown (1991), e Brague (1991).

²¹ Canto-Sperber (1991a), 82-7, e già Vlastos (1965). Per Brisson ((1999), 28, e 2004) in sede morale la memoria e dunque la storia temporale dell'anima servono a fondarne l'individualità e perciò il sistema, cui essa è soggetta, di meriti e colpe, premi e punizioni (cfr. Puisse (1967) per il carattere personale della conoscenza come anamnesi). Non a caso però, nel mito di Er, Platone ribalta il processo anamnastico: le anime ricordano i vissuti empirici e usano questi – non il ricordo delle Idee – per scegliere la vita futura. La struttura cognitiva, come dotazione innata, apparterebbe a tutti (pure diversamente attualizzata dall'uso ed esercizio), ma la storia morale è e dev'essere peculiare di ognuno.

²² Tigner (1970): riferimenti a Thompson (1901), Bluck (1961), Klein (1965), nonché a Gulley (1954), Allen (1959), e Moravcsik (1971).

²³ Porph. *VP 19=DK 14 A 8a*: «[Pitagora] diceva che l'anima è immortale, poi ch'essa passa anche in esseri animati d'altra specie, infine che bisogna considerare come appartenenti allo stesso genere tutti gli esseri animati» (trad. A. Maddalena in Giannantoni (1986), corsivo mio). *Soph.* 242 D per Senofane. Cfr. Canto-Sperber (1991a), 259, nota 124.

Form can be participated by more than one object at a time. It couldn't be the exclusive property of an object like Meno.³

The 'is' in the who-question correlates with an identity relation. Hence, if the transition from the what-phrase (*ti esti*) to the who-phrase (*tis* or *hostis esti*) is not simply an obvious logical blunder on Plato's part – which I think is unlikely –, he must have an understanding of the what-phrase that allows him to see it too as a sort of identity question. Otherwise the example used in sentence (2) could not be an exemplary instance of the primary kind of knowledge which sentence (1) refers to in general terms.

Since the what-question, when applied to Forms, asks for a definition or essential clarification, the implication is that definitions are to be understood as identifying statements with regard to Forms.⁴ Accordingly, we have to rephrase the general principle expressed in passage P-1 as follows:

A₂: As long as one does not have identifying knowledge of an entity E, one cannot know which (additional) properties are connected with E.

This principle is meant to apply equally in the cases of knowledge about Forms and of knowledge about concrete, perceptible objects. Principle A₁ is not falsified by it. It can be understood as a specification of A₂ for the case of knowledge about Forms.

The claim that definitions are identifying statements presupposes that Forms are entities that can become objects of reference. Already in some of the earlier dialogues Plato's Socrates tries to convince his interlocutors that a Form is in some way an object of a different kind and sustains its identity through the many items that have a share of it. The *Meno* contains some very good examples of this, one being the passage where Socrates draws a comparison with the different sorts of bees that share in one common essence. Applying this to the case of the different types of virtue, he goes on to say:

P-2 “Then it's the same with the virtues too: even if they are many and various, they must still all have one and the same form (*eidos*) which makes them *virtues*. Presumably it would be right to focus on this in one's answer and show the questioner what virtue actually *is*.” (72c)

Up to the *Meno*, Plato does not suggest a separate mode of existence for the Forms. They are described as something subsisting in and through the multitude of the particular types or tokens that participate in them. This is illustrated by P-3:

P-3 “Once again, though in a different way from last time, we've found many virtues while searching for one. But as for the one virtue which extends through all of these (*hê dia pantôn toutôn estin*), that we can't discover.” (74a)⁵

The reification of definable content results in an ontology of Forms. But it doesn't yet imply the claim that Forms, or some Forms, exist separately. Hence the interpretation of definitional statements as identifying statements about Forms, although compatible with it, does not presuppose the separate existence of the Forms – an idea strongly suggested in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, but not yet in the *Meno*.

A definitional formula can serve as identification in the case of a Form, because the identity condition of a Form consists solely in a certain descriptive content, and the

³ One could understand the question who Meno is also as asking who he *really* is – namely a soul, not a visible body. But that doesn't seem to be the relevant meaning in this context. The very same passage talks of Meno as being rich, beautiful and well-born, which is not a description of his transmigrating soul.

⁴ Of course I take it for granted that the definitions Plato aims at are clarifications of essences supposed to be features of reality, not descriptions of merely conventional word meaning.

⁵ For a similar formulation see *Lach.* 192b-c.

from argumentative and discursive thinking. This is a point Plato drives home in a number of passages, not least in *Meno* 98A where he names the *aitias logismos* as the requirement of knowledge. Whatever the *aitias logismos* may be, it certainly isn't a pure act of mental vision disconnected from discursive enquiry.¹³

However, there remain serious problems. What does *aitias logismos* mean in the case of grasping the essential content of a Form, or what would be the equivalent of *aitias logismos* in this case? Does not every kind of reasoning presuppose conceptual understanding, and don't we therefore have to presuppose some sort of basic, intuitive conceptual grasp that cannot be reduced to propositional knowledge in a non-circular way?

Before embracing intuitionism, one needs to distinguish between (at least) two aspects of non-propositionality: Take the example of someone who suddenly understands a complicated argument after having pondered over it for a while. The mental event of understanding is not a proposition, and it does indeed invite metaphors of seeing and touching. But all the same it is not a case of non-propositional knowledge, because its intentional content is propositional, and the criterion for propositional knowledge is whether or not it is an instance of knowledge specified by a content that could be fully articulated in a propositional utterance. Now, one possible suggestion in favour of non-propositional knowledge relates to the case of elementary concepts, i.e. concepts that cannot be analysed in a non-circular way. If one were to suggest that such concepts can be known and understood only by way of an intuitive grasp, that would indeed be a type of non-propositional knowledge. Yet the knowledge of Forms whose content can be expressed in a definitional formula would be a type of propositional knowledge by this criterion.

As far as the *Meno* is concerned, Plato presupposes that Forms can be identified through definitional formulae. He also shows, however, that for knowledge to obtain it is not enough to believe something true. One needs to grasp some explanatory reason (*Men.* 98A) as well – at least in the case of that abstract and universal knowledge which is not dependent on perception but only on the soul's own rational resources. So definitional knowledge that identifies a Form would have to be belief about what this Form is, accompanied by the right kind of reasoning. In later dialogues he shows by what sort of reasoning definitions can be achieved. But he also indicates that not all Forms are definable (*Tht.* 201d^{ff.}). But even in this context he doesn't seem to embrace pure mental vision as the source of knowledge but rather to hint at an epistemological conception according to which the full epistemic grasp of an elementary Form requires an understanding of the complete conceptual structure to which it belongs.¹⁴ So even if an elementary Form is not identifiable through a definition, it is still indirectly identifiable through its position in the entire structure. I am saying: "indirectly identifiable", because I don't believe that for Plato the essence of an elementary Form could be reduced to its position in this conceptual structure. But that is a different issue that would lead us far beyond the *Meno*.

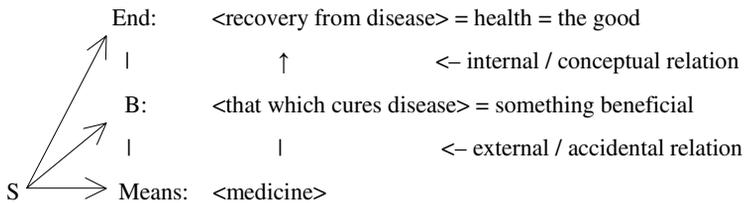
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¹³ This is also indicated by the fact that Plato considers the ability to give an (argumentative) account (*logon didonai*) a necessary condition of knowledge about Forms, e.g. *Phd.* 76b5^{f.}, *Rep.* 534b3^{ff.}

¹⁴ He develops this point by comparing knowledge of Forms to the cognitive state of knowing or understanding the system of phonetic values in one's language (*Tht.* 207A^{ff.}, *Soph.* 252e-253e., *Pol.* 277e-278d, *Phil.* 18b-c); on the possible epistemological implications of these passages see e.g. Burnyeat (1990), 187 *ff.*, D. Frede (1997), 146 *ff.*; on epistemological holism in Plato's *Politeia* e.g. Szaif (2000); on the "holistic" meaning of *Men.* 81c9-d4 cf. Moravcsik (1994), 119 *f.*

the same Y can be taken “beneficial” (or “harmful”) teleologically, in which case Y is (or is not) conducive to Z, some other good for one. So there can be a case in which Y is both good (relative to its kind) and bad (in the sense of “harmful”) (cf. *Euthd.* 281b-e). Third, it is noteworthy that the teleological structure of value concerns one’s happiness ultimately, as Penner and Rowe also stress.¹⁷

This discussion applies to the crucial passage. If Socrates uses “ἀγαθά” and “κακά” in the sense of “beneficial” (cf. 77d1, 3, 6) and “harmful” (cf. 77d2, 4, e6, 7, 78a1, 2), we encounter a certain means-end structure of desire here. To take an example: when someone, say, who is sick, desires to be cured, she may desire some medicine; but it is only when the medicine does lead to her health that she desires it. If not, she wouldn’t desire it. For she desires something beneficial. This hierarchical structure of desire implies that *prior to* her desire for this concrete medicine, logically she must have desired “something beneficial” that contributes to her health as good in itself – the original object of desire.¹⁸



From this hierarchical structure of desire, we can infer that there are two levels of thinking process that result in taking medicine. At the first level, desiring health, she begins to think what she desires, which prompts her to think of what is beneficial to her end. On the basis that she knows what her end is, health, she comes to desire something beneficial (B), that is beneficial to her health. At the second level, then, she considers *concretely* what B is, namely, medicine in this case. If she finds what is in fact beneficial, she becomes healthy eventually; but if she mistakes something harmful for B, she cannot achieve her end. The relation between B and concrete means is accidental, for what is beneficial or harmful depends on particular conditions in each case. There are imaginable cases, for example, in which she should undergo surgery instead of taking medicine.

This analysis of desire and thought helps us understand Socrates’ uses of “ἐκείνα”, “ταῦτα”, and the imperfect “ᾤοντο”. Desiring an end (unwritten in the text) and *thinking* what it is, the people *grasp* what is beneficial to their end, which is meant by “ἐκείνων ἃ ᾤοντο ἀγαθὰ εἶναι” (77e1-2). Then, by way of their grasp, they come to desire what is beneficial (οὗτοι μὲν οὐ τῶν κακῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν, ... ἐκείνων d7-e1), based on their desire for the end. *Next*, while thinking concretely what is beneficial, they come to judge (mistakenly) that these things are good or beneficial, without knowing (οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες αὐτα e1) these are in fact bad (ἔστιν δὲ ταῦτά γε κάκα e2). Accordingly, not knowing them (e2) and thinking them good (οἰόμενοι ἀγαθὰ εἶναι e3), what they really desire is not these bad things (οὐ τῶν κακῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν d7-e1) but those good things (τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμοῦσιν e3). This is why the imperfect “ᾤοντο” is used to refer to the thought about ἐκείνα prior to the judgment of ταῦτα here and now.

This is my reading of this passage. Making it clearer, I shall go on to evaluate Santas’s and Penner and Rowe’s reading in a broader context. First, Santas was correct in bringing

¹⁷ Penner-Rowe (1994), e. g. 21-2, n. 33.

¹⁸ Cf. Kurihara (1997), 40-2; Santas (1988), 30-2.

philosophe aux prises avec une pratique énigmatique du discours sur lequel il doit exercer sa raison.

Gorgias est, à l'opposé d'Héraclite, un représentant d'une pratique de l'exercice bénéfique. Deux textes peuvent être cités à ce propos: l'épigramme gravée sur le socle de sa statue à Olympie (DK82A8(b)⁴) et un passage de son *Oraison funèbre* (B6).

Dans l'exercice de l'âme aux luttes pour la vertu,

Nul ne saurait trouver plus bel art que celui de Gorgias

[Les Athéniens] se consacrèrent surtout à l'exercice de deux choses qu'il faut pratiquer: le jugement et <la force>.

Deux sens complémentaires d'exercice sont employés dans ces deux extraits. Parce qu'il confère au discours une force de persuasion, l'exercice du jugement et de la rhétorique est comparable à l'entraînement du corps. Il semble que, selon Gorgias, la valeur du discours repose entièrement sur les fins de l'orateur, car, dans l'impossibilité de tenir un discours vrai sur la réalité (*Du non-être*, § 86), la vérité du discours se limite aux effets qu'il produit sur celui qui l'écoute. Toute forme de discours est par conséquent affaire de mensonge (B11, 8-11), car, pour créer ses effets, le discours doit s'exprimer dans une langue créatrice de *peithô*, qui recourt au mensonge (*pseûdos*) et à la tromperie (*apâte*). Aucune morale ni aucune politique ne seraient possibles sans une pratique efficace du discours à même de les défendre (ce que signifie la comparaison avec le pugilat dans le *Gorgias*).

L'idée d'un effort bénéfique qui est développée dans le traité *Du régime* (II, 1-3) fournit enfin un excellent exemple d'une compréhension articulée des capacités de la *phûsis*, de l'*askesis* et de la *máthesis*⁵. À chaque étape de sa démonstration, l'auteur parfait l'art du médecin par un élément qui soutient la possibilité d'une pratique médicale efficace. La connaissance de la nature de l'homme ne suffit pas, et il faut lui ajouter celle de la nourriture et des remèdes, qu'ils soient liquides ou solides. Mais cette connaissance est elle-même insuffisante, car elle doit se compléter d'une intervention dans les activités physiques du patient de la part du médecin qui en dirige les efforts (*pónoi*: § 2). Le médecin règle alors l'ensemble de la vie de son patient, en équilibrant son régime selon chacune des journées de la convalescence (LXIX, § 1 *sq.*). C'est ainsi que se fait sentir la nécessité d'un traité sur le régime, car l'équilibre des nourritures et des exercices implique idéalement une direction de tous les gestes du patient. La manière dont un médecin guérit un malade peut par conséquent servir de modèle pour décrire les effets bénéfiques de l'éducation⁶. La comparaison avec l'éducation permet d'assigner un rôle dans l'apprentissage de la vertu à chacun des trois éléments de l'éducation (exploitation de connaissances théoriques, participation des natures particulières du patient et de son environnement, effet salutaire des exercices).

⁴ Cité par Dodds (1959), 216-217.

⁵ L. Brisson (2000) a étudié les traces de l'idéologie des trois fonctions dans les opérations de la médecine, à partir d'une lecture du passage médical du *Charmide*.

⁶ Chez Platon, la médecine sert régulièrement de modèle à l'éducation; le *Ménon* en offre un exemple parmi d'autres (90b7-c2).

dem Wesen der Tugend das Verhältnis von *epistêmê* und *phronêsis* dar? Wenn es dagegen keinen Unterschied zwischen *epistêmê* und *phronêsis* gibt, dann unterbleibt der Widerstreit zwischen den vorgetragenen Behauptungen über die Tugend, andererseits ist aber auch der Schluss von der Tugend als *phronêsis* nicht mehr möglich, denn das Wissen macht die einzelnen Tugenden der Seele nicht dauerhaft nützlich (vgl. 88a).

Ich glaube, dass Platons Inszenierung des Dialogs auf eine Unterscheidung dieser zwei Begriffe zielt. Dies scheinen u.a. Sokrates' Zweifel an Menons Überzeugung zu belegen, dass die *aretê* eine *epistêmê* ist (vgl. 89c-d), aber auch seine Unterscheidung von richtigem Meinen und Wissen (vgl. 98b). Was für eine Beziehung gibt es also zwischen *epistêmê* (Wissen) und *phronêsis* (Klugheit)¹ im Textstück 86d-100c? Dies wird das Thema unserer Interpretation sein, und zwar zuerst in der Passage 87c-89c, wo man eine Antwort auf die Frage sucht, ob die Tugend ein Wissen ist, und dann in der Passage 96d-100c, wo die Tugend in den Zusammenhang des richtigen Meinens gestellt wird.

Tugend als *phronêsis* (87c-89c)

Zu Beginn der Passage 86d-100c kehrt die Diskussion zur Eingangsfrage zurück, ob die Tugend lehrbar ist und ob sie den Menschen von Natur aus oder auf andere Art zuteil wird. Die Suche nach einer Antwort wird bedingt von der Annahme, dass das Wissen lehrbar ist.

Damit die Tugend lehrbar wäre, müsste also auf der Grundlage dieser Annahme gezeigt werden, dass sie ein Wissen ist (87c10). Der Dialog über dieses Thema mündet aber in einen Widerspruch zwischen der Behauptung Menons, die Tugend sei lehrbar (89c2), und Sokrates' Einwand, dass die Tugend nicht lehrbar ist, da sie kein Wissen ist. Sokrates stützt sich dabei auf Menons vorangehende Zustimmung zu der These, dass "die Tugend eine Art Klugheit ist" (*tên aretên phronêsin dei tin' einai*, 88d2-3) – nicht aber *epistêmê* – und "dass die Tugend eine Klugheit ist, entweder die ganze oder ein Teil von ihr" (*phronêsin ara phamen aretên einai, êtoi sympasan ê meros ti*; 89a3-4). Was jedoch Menon von der Tugend verkündet, dass sie nämlich lehrbar sei, ergibt sich daraus, dass er nicht zwischen *phronêsis* und *epistêmê* unterscheidet. Nach der Diskussion des Sokrates mit Anytos, in der sich zeigt, dass es keine Lehrer der Tugend gibt, kommt Sokrates mit Menon darin überein, dass die Tugend nicht lehrbar ist. Menon widerlegt so seine eigene Behauptung von der Lehrbarkeit der Tugend und erweist die Gleichsetzung der *epistêmê* mit der *phronêsis* als falsch. Was nun in dieser auf den ersten Blick unübersichtlichen Situation Menons Auffassung der Tugend darstellt und welche Haltung dazu der Autor des Dialogs einnimmt, versuchen wir im folgenden Teil des Textes zu klären.

Beginnen wir zunächst damit, welche Aufgabe die *phronêsis* hat und in welcher Beziehung sie in diesem Teil des Dialogs (87d-89d) zur *aretê* steht. Die Tugend wurde bislang nur im Zusammenhang des Wissens oder Meinens diskutiert. Mit der Frage der Lehrbarkeit der Tugend wird der Begriff *phronêsis* neu in die Diskussion eingeführt. Über die *phronêsis* spricht man im ganzen Dialog nur an zwei Stellen, zuerst in unserem Abschnitt 87b-89d, besonders 88b-89b, und dann in der Passage 96d-100c, besonders 97a-99d. Der Diskussion über die Rolle der *phronêsis* geht eine Auslegung der Nützlichkeit (*ophelimon*) voraus.

Dass die Tugend (*aretê*), die das Gute selbst (*agathon auto*, 87d) ist, notwendigerweise auch nützlich ist (87e3, 88c5), wird für selbstverständlich gehalten. Aber nützlich können

¹ Das griechische Wort "*phronêsis*" übersetzen wir nur in Zitaten als "Klugheit" und "*phronimos*" im Text als "klug".

Menon die Verse des Dichters Theognis zitiert: “von den Guten ist Gutes zu lernen” (*Menon*, 95d) bzw. “allein durch Belehrung schaffst du den schlechteren Mann nimmer zum Guten dir um” (*Menon*, 96a1-2). Und in dieser Hinsicht war nach Xenophon auch Sokrates keine Ausnahme, da er sich nämlich niemals als Tugendlehrer ausgab, sondern Nachfolge wünschte in dem, was er tat (*Memorabilia*, I,2).

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rule Socrates without trying to rule himself – 86d6-7.) Knowing what virtue is would enable a person to judge whether a character trait and the act that springs from it are or are not instances of virtue and virtuous action. But this is hardly enough to guide everything else, nor would it insure happiness, as Socrates assumes virtue would (88c1-2). Such guidance of soul, body, and possessions would seem, rather, to depend on practical experience that cannot be recollected. So the problem is that whereas a person could only grasp the *essential nature* of virtue as a common character through some sort of internal a priori reflection, understanding virtue as a *guide* would seem to require practical experience that could not come through recollection. There seem to be two distinct notions of virtue at work here.

IV

Let me suggest that it is just because “virtue as practical guide” is so different from “virtue as essential character” and so unlikely a subject for recollection that it makes sense for Socrates to consider whether it is knowledge and who might be able to teach it. He is not so much renegeing on his earlier insistence that learning is recollection as introducing an apparently new subject that requires practical rather than philosophical knowledge. With this thought in mind, we can see the subsequent arguments showing there are no teachers of virtue as helping to connect the two senses of virtue.

First, Socrates declares, with Meno’s agreement, that virtue does not come by nature. Socrates’ explanation that if it did, we would lock up those who have it to prevent them from being corrupted (89b) contradicts his later claim that knowledge, unlike belief, is steadfast and does not run away (97e-98a).⁷ However, given that the virtue now under consideration is *practical* guiding knowledge, it seems absurd to suppose that it could come simply from nature. The dialogue goes on to exclude other sources of this virtue: Sophists are not teachers of virtue because they harm those who study with them – a point that depends on taking the sophists to be teaching *something* to their students – and also because the sophists contradict themselves on whether virtue is a knowledge that can be taught (95b1-8). Nor are political leaders teachers of virtue because they failed to make even their own sons better (94c7-e2); and poets, too, could not be teachers because by contradicting themselves on whether virtue can be taught – Theognis is the only one considered – they show themselves not to have knowledge (95c9-96b4).

Surprisingly, the assumption here is that politicians and poets are, like sophists, actually engaged in activities that aim at instruction, activities that miss their mark. (The three candidates for teachers are the same three groups of reputedly wise men that Socrates examines in the *Apology* [21c-22e], only here sophists have been substituted for craftsmen because sophistry is the [apparent] craft that is specifically dedicated to imparting virtue.) Only the sophists actually profess to be teachers and charge a fee (91b2-3, 95b9-10). In rejecting their claims to teach virtue, Anytus – who has probably been introduced to talk about Athenian political life – proposes instead that *all* Athenian citizens are teachers of virtue (92e). When Socrates argues that not even the best of these could teach virtue to those whom they were most concerned to teach it, their sons, he tacitly assumes that politicians *aim* to teach virtue. Finally, he quotes passages of Theognis that speak of learning virtue, implying that Theognis too is engaged in teaching virtue, even if one of those passages entails that virtue cannot be taught. Similarly, Socrates assumes that politicians aim to teach virtue in a well-known passage in the *Gorgias* where he declares that he alone practices the statesman’s art because he makes people be better, rather than merely appear to be better

⁷ Klein (1965), 220, notes the inconsistency.

inquiry in itself. For Meno, then, the value of inquiry can be no more than true belief, belief that he could not hope to hold onto even if he succeeds in professing it for a time.

VI

Perhaps, though, the dialogue presents astute readers with a different sort of argument for inquiry. Let us survey the course of the final portion of the dialogue, many of whose individual arguments have already been discussed. Frustrated by Meno's unwillingness to inquire into virtue, Socrates introduces a method of hypothesis modeled on mathematical inquiries (86d-87c). He assumes the hypothesis that if (A) virtue is knowledge, then (B) it can be taught. He proceeds to argue that (A) virtue is knowledge (87c-89a), but that because there are no teachers or students of virtue, (B) virtue cannot be taught (89a-96c). It may seem that these two arguments undermine the hypothesis that motivated them. However, there is a flaw in the reasoning: whereas the hypothesis includes "recollection" as a form of teaching (87b), the argument against its apodosis excludes recollection. For the argument against the apodosis only makes clear that teaching of virtue does not consist of a knower's passing along knowledge to one who does not know. We can, thus, restate the hypothesis as: if virtue is knowledge, it can be recollected through inquiry. In this context, the arguments against politicians, poets, and sophists being teachers of virtue support the hypothesis that virtue comes through inquiry.

So understood, the final portion of the dialogue is, as it were, a successful inquiry into inquiry. Although we do not discover what virtue is, we do show that inquiry alone could be the source of knowledge about virtue. Given that knowledge of virtue is essential for virtuous action, we infer that we should inquire into virtue. Recall, now, that Socrates and Meno are seeking the nature of virtue in order to determine how best to live. My claim here is that *to discover that we should inquire into virtue is to discover how best to live*. Properly understood, then, the final portion of the dialogue serves to show that "learning is recollection" is not only a statement about how we come to know but also a statement about how we should live. This point is not properly demonstrated; it is, rather, a well-founded belief that results from a bit of Platonic irony. It is through our failure to find the nature of virtue and through our recognition that we could only find it through inquiry or recollection that we conclude that we should inquire and, thereby, discover virtue to be, for us, inquiry.

VII

One final point. If virtue is inquiry and if inquiry is always an activity of an individual, whether or not he works with another, then the expectation that politics, properly practiced, would make citizens virtuous is a false hope. It is not virtuous leaders' having had true belief rather than knowledge that made them unable to impart virtue. Even if they had had knowledge, they could only have imparted beliefs; for the learner comes to acquire knowledge only through his own activity. Ironically, it is *beliefs* that can be imparted to others. But the problem with imparted beliefs is that the recipients cannot hold on to them, whether they be true or otherwise. What enlightened politicians can do is to provoke citizens' reflection and to preserve conditions in which citizens are free to inquire. One way this might be done is sketched in the *Republic*. However, the figure of Meno shows dramatically that no provocation, no matter how much or how compelling, need necessarily succeed in moving another person to conduct his own philosophical inquiry. Anytus could be reassured that the prominent political figures of Athens do not deserve censure for failing to teach their sons

On the face of it, Meno does not propose breaking off the “attempt” to find virtue to which Socrates has invited him. Rather, he is asking whether they might use a question concerning a particular quality of virtue, namely, the way it is acquired, as a lens to get virtue into focus, as it were, for the purposes of the inquiry into its essence. Or perhaps it would be better to say that while Meno may have started off with the request to return to the original question, in adapting his remark to correspond to Socrates’ prior question, he ends up both putting this request and at the same time suggesting that the question of quality be used as a springboard for the inquiry into essence.³ In Socrates’ response we can see him disentangling these two points. First, he scolds Meno for wanting to arrive at a decision about a quality – that is, at knowledge of whether a quality does or does not belong to something – without first attaining knowledge of that thing’s essence. Then, in introducing the method of hypothesis, Socrates effectively endorses the suggestion that one may start with a thing’s quality – or more precisely, with what one suspects might be a quality of the thing under investigation – in the investigation into that thing’s essence. For that, I suggest, is precisely the procedure of the method of hypothesis.⁴

I will not here quote the obscure geometrical passage with which Socrates introduces the method of hypothesis. It will be sufficient, for our purposes, to look at how Socrates applies it to the present case:

In the same way about virtue, since we do not know either what it is nor of what quality it is, laying down a hypothesis let us investigate whether it is teachable or not, saying as follows: “If virtue were what sort of thing among the things in the soul would it be teachable, or not teachable? First of all if it is of another sort than the sort of thing knowledge is, is it teachable or not...?” (87b2-7)

As we know, in other Platonic dialogues Socrates shows himself partial to the idea that virtue – that is, the essence of virtue – is knowledge. Here he arrives at this suggestion by asking what virtue would have to be like if it has a quality that has sometimes been ascribed to it. Of course, there is nothing probative here; whether knowledge is the essence of virtue is not proved by the method of hypothesis. That method is, rather, an heuristic one, one that can direct one’s attention to certain possibilities in the search for essence. That the search for essence might have a successful outcome is established by the discussion of recollection. The method of hypothesis is a method for continuing, in a systematic way, the search for essence after one’s initial stabs at that essence, based on one’s pre-reflective beliefs, have proven inadequate.

The method of hypothesis, as I have briefly sketched it, has a strong resemblance to Aristotle’s scientific methodology.⁵ For Aristotle, one moves from what seems to be a *kath’ hauto symbebekos* of a substance – a quality that belongs to all and only instances of that substance, an *idion* – and searches for the middle term that, as (part of) the essence of the substance, explains why the substance has this quality. Before one has found this essential middle term, indeed, one has no *knowledge* that this quality belongs to this substance, no matter how well-founded one’s certainty that it does so belong. The parallel with the method of hypothesis in the *Meno* is strong. And it was noticed by Aristotle himself. In *Prior Analytics* B 25 Aristotle refers to the example of the method of hypothesis we have looked at.

³ For a discussion of the ambiguities of Meno’s response that is congruent with mine, see Canto-Sperber (1993), 279-280 n.184. The ambiguities are also noticed by Weiss (2001), 127 n.1.

⁴ In view of the similarities between the second part of the slave discussion and Socrates’ use of the method of hypothesis with Meno, any condemnation of the latter should bring the latter down with it, too. Brown (1971), who underlines these similarities, drew this conclusion. Other detractors of the method of hypothesis have not been so consistent.

⁵ The comparison has been made by, among others, Canto-Sperber (1993²), 285 n. 193.

matematica del *Menone*, confrontarla con quella delle altre opere di Platone, e anche con quella di Aristotele e degli *Elementi di geometria* di Euclide.

Già da una prima analisi risulta che, in ciascuno dei tre *loca mathematica* del *Menone* (73 e-76 a; 82 b-86 c; 86 c-89 b), si riscontrano sia termini che da Platone a Euclide scompaiono (στρογγυλότης, στρογγύλον, 73 e 4-5, 74 d 8; ἀναγράφειν, 83 b 1; παρατείνειν, 87 a 5, 6), sia termini che si mantengono, con lo stesso significato (στερεόν, ἐπίπεδον, 76 a 1-2; πηλίκη, πηλίκον, 82 d 9; 83 e 1; 85 a 4; κύκλον, 86 e 4-5, 87 b 1-2). Vengono così alla luce sia elementi che confermano una continuità fra il *Menone* ed Euclide, in più casi anticipata da Aristotele, sia elementi di discontinuità fra l'uno e l'altro, di nuovo talora confermata da Aristotele. Particolarmente significativi mi sembrano due esempi: πηλίκη e πηλίκον (82 d 9; 83 e 1; 85 a 4); e παρατείνειν, presente nella forma dei participi παρατείναντα e παρατεταμένον (87 a 5, 6).

2. Πηλίκη, πηλίκον

I termini ricorrono tre volte nel corso dell'esperimento maieutico, a indicare quello che lo schiavo viene spinto a ricercare.

a) La prima volta (82 d 9) Socrate gli chiede «quale sia la grandezza» (πηλίκη) della linea che corrisponde al lato del quadrato di superficie doppia rispetto al quadrato dato, avente i lati lunghi due piedi; lo schiavo presume di sapere la risposta, che in realtà è sbagliata: il lato doppio rispetto a quello dato.

b) La seconda volta (83 e 1), Socrate ha già indotto il ragazzo a riconoscere che da un quadrato avente il lato lungo quattro piedi non deriva una superficie doppia rispetto a quella data, ma quadrupla, e allora gli domanda, di nuovo, «quale grandezza» (πηλίκην) ritiene che abbia il lato del quadrato di superficie doppia, stabilito che deve avere una grandezza maggiore di due piedi e minore di quattro piedi. Il giovane risponde «tre piedi», e Socrate gli mostra che dal lato di tre piedi deriva una superficie quadrata di area nove; egli dunque, dopo l'invito di Socrate: «prova a esprimere con esattezza» questa grandezza, e «se non vuoi contare, mostraci almeno da quale grandezza deriva» (83 e 11-84 a 1) la superficie doppia, termina ammettendo di non sapere rispondere.

c) La terza volta (85 a 4), Socrate porta lo schiavo a «mostrare» tale grandezza, cioè a farla vedere su una figura tracciata; ma in questo percorso, πηλίκον è usato non per richiedere la lunghezza del lato del quadrato doppio, bensì «quale grandezza» abbia la superficie di un quadrato, ritagliato all'interno del quadrato quadruplo rispetto a quello dato, avente come lato la diagonale del quadrato dato; il giovane lì per lì risponde di non conoscere questa grandezza, e però Socrate gli fa contare le metà del quadrato dato, che formano il quadrato ritagliato all'interno del quadrato quadruplo: sono quattro, quindi il quadrato ottenuto è doppio rispetto al quadrato dato; e questo quadrato doppio deriva da una linea descritta come «quella che abbiamo tracciata da un angolo all'altro del quadrato avente il lato di quattro piedi» (85 b 2-3), alla quale i «sofisti» attribuiscono il nome di «diagonale» (*ivi*, 4). «Dalla diagonale, come tu dici, o ragazzo può derivare la superficie doppia» – conclude Socrate (*ivi*, 4): il lato del quadrato di superficie doppia è stato identificato, anche se nessuno dei due dialoganti ha saputo «esprimere con un numero esatto» (cfr. 83 e 11) la sua πηλίκη.

In questi passi πηλίκη e πηλίκον indicano dunque la «grandezza» della diagonale del quadrato, che non viene espressa con un numero esatto, e la «grandezza» del quadrato di superficie doppia rispetto a un quadrato dato, determinata in rapporto alla divisione di altre superfici quadrate di estensione più ampia e alla sua inclusione in esse; e se nel resto delle opere di Platone i due termini scompaiono, si ritrovano in tre passi aristotelici.

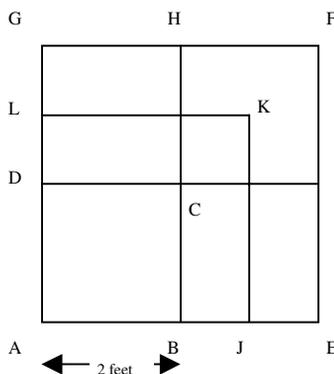
‘Similarity’ in the Solution to the Duplication Problem in Plato’s *Meno*

Moon–Heum Yang

Traditional interpretations of the duplication problem in the *Meno* have not done justice to some crucial points about which Plato appears to be quite explicit. What I have in mind, in particular, is the contrast between ‘equality’ and ‘similarity’ as it relates to the distinction between ‘true opinion’ and ‘knowledge’ in solving the problem. I shall show in what way a full understanding of ‘similarity’ is required in order for the Slave-boy to reach *knowledge* in its solution. To this end it will be necessary to pursue the notion’s implications as these occur in the *anamnesis* context containing three stages for dealing with the problem.

Let me begin by pointing out that in the first stage (82b9-e3), Socrates tells the boy to discover the length of one side of a square which duplicates the area of a given square whose sides are each two feet long (square ABCD in Fig. 1). What we should keep in mind is that this discovery involves ‘similarity’, which I shall call the ‘condition of similarity’ (82d5-7):

“Now could one draw another figure double the size of this [ABCD], but *similar* [*toiouton*], that is, with all its sides equal like this one?”¹



< Fig. 1 >

I am aware that there are objections to translating the word *toiouton* as ‘similar’. It has been pointed out that Socrates in this passage is explaining the notion of ‘square’ to the boy without the idea of similarity, although the squares in question are geometrically similar.² However, I would like to point out that Socrates has already explained that notion at *Meno* 82b10-c1. Or more precisely, the slave-boy has understood what the square means.³ So, rather than understand the *toiouton* in the context of explaining the notion of square, we should understand it in the context of the special problem of the duplication of the original square. By ‘special’, I am implying that the duplication problem raised by the quoted passage cannot be fully

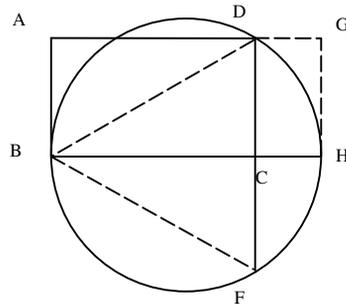
¹ Translation borrowed from Guthrie (1956) (emphasis mine).

² Bluck (1961), 450, note 1.

³ For the omission of ‘the equality of the angles’, see Vlastos (1965) dans Day (1994), 106, note 8.

One may still suspect Plato’s motives: why should we not grant the boy knowledge, when he correctly answers that the diagonal of the original square is one side of the double square? Is this not the answer which Plato wanted to hear from the boy? Maybe, after all, the duplication problem is such that it “can be proved intuitively by a construction which is clear without any special mathematical training.”⁹ However, one thing is clear: the boy does not understand fully the geometrical significance of the notion ‘diagonal’. This point can be made explicit by observing that Socrates’ use of ‘equality’ is strictly confined to showing that the diagonal is just the line on which the double square is drawn, so that the intrinsic relationship between the two notions ‘diagonal’ and ‘incommensurability’ is not indicated. (Their relationship is well-established by the method to prove the incommensurability of the diagonal of a square with its side by *reductio ad absurdum*.)¹⁰ As my discussion so far indicates, the prominence given to the condition of similarity with its implications (including the assumptions of reduction and incommensurability) in solving the duplication problem at the level of knowledge seems obvious. More specifically, as is already suggested, related theories of proportions and incommensurables will be required, further elaboration of which goes beyond the scope of this paper.¹¹ My approach to the problem, thus, is quite consistent with Socrates’ requiring that someone “put the same question to him [the Slave-boy] on many occasions and in different ways” (85c10-11) in order to lead him to knowledge.

I would like to conclude this paper by commenting on the ‘similarity’ in the geometrical problem of inscribing in a circle a triangle equal in area to a given figure, the problem through which method of ‘hypothesis’ is explained (86e-87b). Interpretations of this problem vary greatly. However, I consider two approaches, Butcher’s interpretation¹² and the Cook Wilson-Heath-Becker-Knorr interpretation,¹³ the most probable, because these two are not only consistent with our previous approach to the duplication problem in regard to those assumptions of reduction and incommensurability, but also fit the crucial notions of ‘similarity’ and ‘deficiency’ implied in the inscription problem. According to Butcher’s interpretation (see Fig. 4), the problem requires that the *given* rectangle ABCD be such that, when applied to the *given* diameter BH, it falls short by the rectangle DCHG similar to itself.¹⁴ Now for this to be the case, the point D



<Fig. 4>

⁹ Brumbaugh (1954), 32.

¹⁰ Heath (1926²), vol. 3, p. 2.

¹¹ Let me point out that in this relation Plato’s *Theaetetus* 147c-148b commands special attention. For one thing, this passage can be read as connected to the question of the relationship between the side of the given square and that of the double-sized one, which occupies the first and second stages for dealing with the duplication problem. Note first how *Theaetetus* defines ‘length’ (*mēkos*) and ‘power’ (*dynamis*). The former is defined as ‘the line that produces in square the square number’ (*Theaetetus* 148a6-7); the latter as ‘the line that produces in square the oblong number’ (*Theaetetus* 148a7-b1). The definition of ‘length’ can be applied to the sides of the given square, and the definition of ‘power’ to the sides of the double-sized square. Now we see how *Theaetetus*’ distinction between “in length” and “in the plane areas” (*Theaetetus* 148b1-2) addresses the relationship between the two sides in question.

¹² Butcher (1888), 219-25.

¹³ Cook-Wilson (1903), 222-40; Heath (1921), vol.1, 298ff; Becker (1966), 85-6; Knorr (1986), 72ff.

¹⁴ The other interpretation, however, assumes that the given figure is not already given as a rectangle. Thus, construing the word *chōrion* at 86e generally, that is, as indicating any rectilinear figure, this version tries to evade some grave difficulties implied in Butcher’s interpretation.

4

COMPREHENSIVE PAPERS

since the *Apology* Socrates uses the word *oida* ambiguously, i.e. in a strong and in a weaker sense, e.g. also in the sense of right opinion: “And yet I know pretty well (*schedon oida*) that I am making myself enemies by just that conduct: which is also a proof that I am speaking the truth” (*Ap.* 24 a6-7). And: “For well I know (*eu oida*) that wherever I go, the young men will listen to my talks, as they do here” (*Ap.* 37 d6-7). Socrates uses the word *oida* also in an ordinary sense like his contemporaries, where the word has hardly its emphatic and non-doxastic meaning, but rather the meaning of right opinion. But evidently also in the ordinary use of the word it is used in a stronger and weaker sense and with qualifications. Socrates knows for example “barely” (*schedon*), “well” (*eu*), or “not enough” (*ouk hikanos*) (cf. *Ap.* 24 a6. 37 d6. 29 b5). Evidently there are degrees of *belief* even in the ordinary meaning of the word *oida* as used by Socrates.

But the philosophical point of the alleged “knowledge” and “ignorance” of Socrates seems to me that with these ambiguities it has not yet been explained. In the same way, the distinction between knowledge, in the sense of a craft or skill, and ethical knowledge seems to me not to hit the nail on the head. Socrates starts to prove his proposition (2) “virtue is knowledge” in the *Gorgias* from the model of expert knowledge or expert skills (*Grg.* 460 a5-b6); but he does not distinguish explicitly between “knowledge” in the sense of ethical knowledge and expert skill.

But since the *Apology* he distinguishes explicitly between human and divine wisdom (cf. *Ap.* 23 a). However if the propositions (1) to (7) are truths, they cannot be refuted. They remain as certain or infallible as truths can be: “For the truth gets never refuted” (*Grg.* 473 b).⁹ If infallibility is the mark of divine knowledge, the knowledge of Socrates would then be divine knowledge, and the difference in the dual meaning of the word “knowledge” – elenctic or fallible knowledge, which Socrates has, and certain or infallible knowledge, which God has – would disappear. But is there not also infallible human knowledge as Socrates affirms of his truths (1) to (7), at least *as long* as the meanings of the expressions are maintained by the conventions in a *homologia*?

The decisive philosophical point seems to me to be the following. The truths (1) to (7), or at least (2) to (7), which seem to him “held down and bound by arguments of iron and adamant”, fulfil the criterion of coherence or consistency. But if we accept coherence or consistency as a criterion of truth, the following question still remains open: A proposition or a system of propositions may be coherent, but is it true?¹⁰ This means: the propositions (1) to (7) may survive the *elenchus* and be *homologoumena*. But are they also true? It is logically possible that they have survived an *elenchus*, but are nevertheless not true, but false (i.e. *contrary to being*, cf. *Sph.* 240 d). To assert their truth we need an external criterion of truth which transcends the consistency reached by an *elenchus* and would imply correspondence with being, and this means for Socrates/Plato correspondence with an ideal reality. In fact Socrates/Plato assumes not only a coherence-, but also a correspondence-theory of truth and a non correspondence-theory of falsehood.

But to affirm a correspondence between the propositions (1) to (7) and their ideal counterparts we have to know the propositions (1) to (7) and independently their counterparts. Only in this way we may decide whether the propositions (1) to (7) mirror their counterparts or not. We need an objective instance or God’s eye view. The correspondence theory of truth presupposes God’s eye view.

In fact the ultimate criterion of truth for Plato from the *Apology* to the *Timaeus* is not consistency, but the knowledge which God has “who is in fact wise” (*Ap.* 23 a5-6;

⁹ Cf. for the analytical character of e.g. proposition (2) my paper (1991).

¹⁰ Cf. my critique of the coherence- and consensus-theories of truth (2003), 96-97, 99-101, 103-104.

οὐ γὰρ εὐπορῶν αὐτὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν, ἀλλὰ παντὸς μᾶλλον αὐτὸς ἀπορῶν οὕτως καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν.

Socrates' second point ([2] 80c8-d1) is that he is himself thoroughly in a state of *aporia*, and that it is in this way that he causes *aporia* in others. It is natural to understand this point as being an example of his familiar profession of ignorance, indeed he goes on to say that he is ignorant about virtue while inviting Meno to take up the search for what virtue is (80d1-4), at which point, famously, Meno asks how one can search for something about which one is completely ignorant. However, we should note that the fact that Socrates insists that he is himself in a state of *aporia* does not imply that he accepts Meno's characterization of *aporia* as a state of mental paralysis – that he accepts the stingray comparison – for he may think that he is in a state of *aporia* but conceive of this state in a different way than does Meno. If, therefore, there is a question about whether Socrates accepts the comparison, this is not settled by pointing out his insistence that he is himself in a state of *aporia*.

It seems to me there is such a question. First, what Socrates says in the crucial lines ([1] 80c6-8) is not that he is himself like the stingray, but that he is like it if, and only if, stingrays are themselves paralyzed and this is how they cause paralysis in their victim. But surely Socrates knows that stingrays are not paralyzed – he did not need Pliny to tell him so (*Natural History* 9.42.143). But if Socrates thinks that stingrays are not themselves paralyzed, then he rejects the comparison; this is indicated by the words 'but if not [i.e. if stingrays are not themselves paralyzed], not [i.e. then I am not like it]' (εἰ δὲ μή, οὐ, 80c7-8).

Second, Socrates' present profession of *aporia* and ignorance (80c8-d3) recalls his profession of ignorance and consequent examination of others in the *Apology*. But when in that work he famously likens his activity of examining others to that of a gadfly (30e-31a), he likens it to an agent that, far from being paralyzed, is eminently live and active. This provides further support for thinking that he does not accept Meno's comparison. Indeed, when he says that he is like the stingray if, and only if, it is itself paralyzed 'and this is how it causes others to be paralyzed' (οὕτω καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιεῖ ναρκᾶν, 80c7), we are surely supposed to wonder how an agent can, to the extent that it is paralyzed and inactive, cause something to happen in a patient – this looks like intentional paradox and absurdity.

Third, Socrates may not know the answers to the questions he raises, such as the question 'Can virtue be taught?' and 'What is virtue?', but evidently it does not follow that he is speechless and inarticulate about such questions – paralyzed in mind and tongue (cf. 80b1). Socratic ignorance is anything but silent or inarticulate. The point is not simply that Socrates enjoys speaking and knows how to express himself, but that his ignorance about a particular problem (such as whether virtue can be taught) or concept (such as virtue) is directly related to his ability to speak about this problem or concept. It is because Socrates recognizes, and is capable of articulating, a variety of problems about virtue, teaching, and their relation, and because he recognizes that he does not know how to answer these and similar problems, that he considers himself ignorant about whether virtue can be taught and about virtue in general.

2. Plato's conception of *aporia*

What may we infer about Plato's positive conception of *aporia*? We might infer that Meno, like other interlocutors who give the same characterization of their *aporia* (such as Laches in *Laches* 194a-c and Euthyphro in *Euthyphro* 11b-d), simply mischaracterizes this state.³ But this conclusion would not be natural. The characterization of *aporia* as a state of mental paralysis is apt, it captures what it is like to be in a certain mental state appropriately

³ This is Ebert's view (1974), 91.

Der Gegensatz von Platon und Aristoteles in den neuplatonischen Interpretationen des Menonparadoxons und der Anamnesislehre

Christoph Helmig

Es ist allgemein bekannt, daß Aristoteles Platon häufig und nicht ohne Polemik kritisiert bzw. korrigiert. Das wurde besonders deutlich und mit einer Fülle von Material dargestellt von H. Cherniss in seinem monumentalen Werk *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*.¹ Auch heutzutage ist der Gegensatz zwischen Platon und Aristoteles allgemein anerkannt, obschon es immer wieder Versuche gibt, beide Denker zu harmonisieren und Aristoteles' Kritik zu relativieren.² Solche Harmonisierungsversuche sind auch schon in der Antike, ja sogar bei Platons direkten Nachfolgern nachzuweisen.³ Auch im Falle der Neuplatoniker lassen sich derartige Tendenzen feststellen.⁴ Im folgenden möchte ich dagegen ausgewählte Texte präsentieren und analysieren, die dieser Strömung entgegneten: einige neuplatonische Interpretationen des Menonparadoxons und seiner Lösung, der Lehre von der Wiedererinnerung. Dazu ist es zuerst notwendig, Aristoteles' Reaktion auf Platons Lehre von der Wiedererinnerung kurz zu skizzieren.⁵

Aristoteles' Kritik an Platons Wiedererinnerungslehre

Es besteht kein Zweifel, daß Aristoteles an mindestens zwei Stellen seines Werkes auf Platons Theorie der Anamnesis kritisch Bezug nimmt, nämlich im letzten Kapitel der *Analytica Posteriora* und im ersten Buch der *Metaphysik*.

¹ Cherniss (1944).

² Eine solche Tendenz kann man m.E. in den Büchern von Radke (2003) und Schmitt (2003) erkennen. Gerson (2004) unterstreicht, daß die Annahme, daß platonische Ideen und aristotelische Universalien (Aristotelian universals) die gleiche Funktion erfüllten, nicht haltbar sei. Derselbe hat der Harmonie von Platon und Aristoteles ein Buch gewidmet, Gerson (2005).

³ Vgl. Sorabji (1990b), 3-5; Schibli (2002), 26-31. Porphyrius' harmonisierende Interpretation der Philosophiegeschichte ist ausführlich von Zambon (2002) dokumentiert worden. Vgl. auch den Aufsatz von Dörrie (1965). Vgl. ferner Zambon (2003) zum Verhältnis von Platon und Aristoteles bei Boethius und zu dessen Quellen.

⁴ Vgl. Hadot (1991). Romano (2004) skizziert einige neuplatonische Reaktionen auf Aristoteles' Kritik an Platon.

⁵ Schon H.D. Saffrey und R. Sorabji haben darauf hingewiesen, daß Proklos und sein Lehrer Syrianos zwar in vielen Bereichen eine Übereinstimmung von Platon und Aristoteles angenommen haben, dieses jedoch für die Platonische Ideenlehre nicht gelte. Vgl. Sorabji (1990b), 3, und Saffrey (1990). Zur Kritik des Syrianos an Aristoteles vgl. schon Praechter (1932), 1769-1772. Proklos' Aristoteleskritik ist vor allem aus *In Parm.* II 731, 15-17 ersichtlich.

sich wiederzuerinnern.²² Gerade bei der Interpretation der Wiedererinnerung, die Platons Antwort auf das Menonparadoxon ist, zeigt sich deutlich der Gegensatz, den Neuplatoniker zwischen Platon und Aristoteles bzw. dem Peripatos gesehen haben. Gerade im Rekurs auf die οὐσιώδεις λόγοι der Seele, die auch bei der Verarbeitung einfacher Inhalte der Sinneswahrnehmung involviert sind,²³ ist der Unterschied zwischen Platon und Aristoteles von den hier herangezogenen Neuplatonikern deutlich markiert. Die neuplatonische Interpretation der Anamnesislehre ist ein weiterer Beleg dafür, daß die Harmonisierung von Platon und Aristoteles innerhalb der neuplatonischen Schule markante Ausnahmen aufweist.

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²² Olympiodoros, *In Phaed.* 4, 8.

²³ Vgl. dazu Helmig (2004a), 94-97.

such and such a context.¹⁹ One can know a square or not know it, just as one can grasp a pencil or not grasp it. But in order to know a square as an area bounded by four equal sides and having two equal diagonals, one must resort to a triadic model of knowledge: x knows A as B. Such a model also provides an analysis of recollection as recognition: x recognises f as F.²⁰

This model is introduced, for the first time, in the *Meno*, precisely in the context of *anamnesis* and the differentiation between opinion and knowledge: γιγνώσκεις τετράγωνον χωρίον ὅτι τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν; ‘Do you recognise a square area, that it is like this?’ (82b9-10). To have knowledge (*episteme*) of something is to know it as it is (γινῶναι ὡς ἔστι τὸ ὄν)²¹; to have an opinion (*doxa*) about it is to know it ‘partly’: not that a square area is ‘this’ (τοῦτον) but ‘like this’ (τοιοῦτον). Indeed, what Socrates presumably drew in the sand was not ‘that which is a square area’ (ὁ ἔστι τετράγωνον χωρίον) but only a (particular) representation of a square area.²² Nevertheless, the slave boy recognises the drawing as (imperfectly) a square.

It is significant that the introduction of the triadic model in the dialogues is regularly connected with the establishment of the difference between true and false *doxa* (to be translated here rather as ‘judgment’ than as ‘opinion’) or between *doxa* and *episteme*.²³ *Anamnesis*, as the passage from true *doxa* to *episteme* or from false *doxa* to the realisation of its falsity, necessarily depends on this model. An essential prerequisite of *anamnesis* is the ability to see something *as* something else. It is to see the square as having the properties relevant to the solution of the problem in the *Meno*, to see the sensible equals as images of the equal itself in the *Phaedo*.

A consequence of the triadic model is that there is no essential separation between the object of knowledge and the object of opinion. The difference between the two states is in the recognition of the object as belonging within a web of *aitiai*, not only logical but also ontological. The object of opinion is not the sensible object in itself (which, in any case, cannot be in itself) but the sensible object – or rather: its sensible qualities – as a reflection of the respective ideas. (In the same way, ideas, inadequately perceived, can be objects of an opinion-like apprehension.²⁴)

So, there is no atomic recognition of objects: Even the recognition of the square as a square, as distinct from other four-sided figures, has to be teased out from the slave boy gradually, by way of analysis of his presumably common-sense notion of a square.²⁵ One never deals with atomic, but always with interconnected, holistic entities. One always knows something about what one is looking for, and this is always, in a sense to be specified only in the *Parmenides*, one object, referred to by one single term.²⁶

There is no such thing as a totally isolated opinion. As there is no atomic object of knowledge, there is also no atomic object of opinion. To know something ‘partly’ is to see it within an erroneous, because limited, context. The boy realises the falsity of his opinions

¹⁹ These are two alternative formulations of the same state-of-affairs. To consider an object as being such and such is to establish a set of relations between the concept of the object and the concepts of the aspects under which the object is considered. This equivalence is explored in the *Parmenides*.

²⁰ For an analysis of the binary and triadic models of knowledge in Plato, see Scolnicov (2000).

²¹ *Republic* 477b10, cf. 478a6. This phrase (repeated twice, with a small variation) is almost routinely disregarded by interpreters.

²² The ambiguity between the two senses is made easier in Greek by the lack of the indefinite article.

²³ True and false *doxa*: *Euthydemus* 277e5-278a1, 284c7, *Sophist* 240e, 258c, 263d, *Cratylus* 385b; *doxa* and *episteme*: *Meno* 82b9-10, *Republic* 477b10, 478a6.

²⁴ Cf. *Republic* 510e.

²⁵ He is Greek and speaks Greek (82b), hence he has the concept of a square (which barbarians may not have or may have a different one) and has the Greek word for it.

²⁶ Cf. White (1974-75), 157. The small differences between his approach and mine should be clear.

manquera pas, le cas échéant, d'irriter ses juges et de provoquer sa propre condamnation (521d). Cette deuxième raison justifiant le refus de la rhétorique est également présente dans l'*Apologie* : Socrate y soutient (38d-e) que ce n'est pas en raison de son incapacité à prononcer des discours rhétoriques qu'il a été condamné à mort, mais parce qu'il n'a pas eu l'effronterie ni l'impudence nécessaire pour s'abaisser à prononcer le genre de discours, et à user du genre de moyens (prières, larmes, supplications) qui plaisent aux juges et qui les apitoient. L'opposition est donc très nette, aussi bien dans le *Gorgias* que dans l'*Apologie*, entre d'une part une rhétorique flatteuse qui cherche uniquement à plaire au mépris de la vérité et, d'autre part, une forme de discours qui satisfait aux exigences de la vérité et qui ne cherche pas à plaire. De fait, Socrate insiste à de nombreuses reprises, dans l'*Apologie*, sur la vérité de son discours³ et sur le fait que loin de chercher à plaire aux juges, il les irrite très souvent⁴, ce qui est un indice, parmi d'autres, de son refus de la rhétorique. *Troisièmement*, l'homme juste injustement accusé qui ferait appel à la rhétorique pour se défendre utiliserait forcément des procédés et des moyens qui sont non seulement indignes de lui et des juges, mais aussi contraires à la justice dans la mesure où ils risquent d'inciter les juges à violer leurs serments de juger en conformité avec la loi (*Apol.* 35c). L'homme juste serait ainsi en contradiction avec lui-même puisqu'il consentirait à user de moyens injustes pour se défendre. Cette troisième raison justifiant le refus de la rhétorique est absente du *Gorgias*, mais elle n'est pas incompatible avec le *Gorgias*.

Si Socrate refuse d'admettre que la rhétorique puisse être utile à l'homme injuste (accusé justement), de même qu'à l'homme juste (injustement accusé), est-ce à dire qu'il devrait lui-même renoncer à se défendre s'il était injustement accusé? Je répondrai à cette question dans la deuxième section de cette étude.

2. Une défense dialectique

Alors qu'il discute avec Polos, Socrate oppose l'un à l'autre deux types d'*elenchos* (471e-472c), soit l'*elenchos* rhétorique qui est habituellement employé devant les tribunaux, et l'*elenchos* dialectique dont Socrate semble considérer qu'il est le seul à le pratiquer. Sauf erreur de ma part, aucun commentateur n'a jusqu'à maintenant relevé l'intérêt de ce passage pour la compréhension du type de défense présenté par Socrate à l'occasion de son procès⁵. Voici comment Socrate caractérise l'*elenchos* rhétorique :

Mon très cher, tu essaies de me réfuter par des procédés de rhétorique (ῥητορικῶς γάρ με ἐπιχειρεῖς ἐλέγχειν), comme le font ceux qui croient réfuter devant les tribunaux (ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις ἡγούμενοι ἐλέγχειν). Là, un orateur croit réfuter (δοκοῦσιν ἐλέγχειν) son adversaire quand il peut produire en faveur de sa thèse des témoins nombreux et considérables (μάρτυρας πολλοὺς ... καὶ εὐδοκίμους) alors que l'autre n'en a qu'un seul ou point du tout. Mais ce genre de réfutation (οὗτος δὲ ὁ ἔλεγχος) est sans valeur pour découvrir la vérité (οὐδενὸς ἀξίος ἐστὶν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν); car il peut arriver qu'un innocent succombe sous de faux témoignages nombreux et qui semblent autorisés. (471e-472a; trad. Croiset)

Dans la suite du *Gorgias*, Socrate fait de nombreuses allusions à l'inutilité d'un grand nombre de témoins pour fonder un *elenchos* (cf. 473d, 474a, 475e-476a, 523c, 523e). Le

³ Cf. 17b, 20d, 22a, 22b, 24a, 28a, 28d, 31c, 31e, 32a, 33c, 34b.

⁴ Cf. 17d, 20e, 21a, 27b, 30c, 34c-d.

⁵ Les commentateurs du *Gorgias* (Dodds (1959), Irwin (1979)) et de l'*Apologie* (Brickhouse & Smith (1989), Reeve (1989), de Strycker-Slings (1994)) que j'ai consultés n'établissent aucun rapprochement entre ce passage du *Gorgias* et l'aspect formel de la défense de Socrate dans l'*Apologie*.

imaginary objector and have an everyday conversation with him. *So the true defence of Socrates takes the form of dialectic and not of oratory.*¹⁴” Il me paraît abusif de parler de “ dialectique ” en un sens aussi vague et je considère qu’une argumentation ne peut être qualifiée de dialectique que s’il y a échange de questions et de réponses entre deux interlocuteurs présents à l’entretien et qui participent effectivement à cet échange. Si la troisième section est “ dialectique ”, comment faut-il alors qualifier la réfutation de Méléto? Que dirait le Socrate du *Gorgias* d’une argumentation “ dialectique ” qui ne fait pas “ voter ” l’interlocuteur et qui se fonde à trois reprises sur des témoignages? Enfin, le fait de répondre à des objections n’est pas un trait distinctif de la dialectique, puisque l’orateur doit également être en mesure de répondre à des objections. S’il est vrai que cette section constitue “ la vraie défense de Socrate ”, il faudrait en conclure, selon mon analyse, que Platon confie à l’*elenchos* rhétorique, plutôt que dialectique, le soin d’assumer la partie la plus déterminante de la défense de Socrate contre les accusations de 399. Alors que Socrate dans le *Gorgias* prône l’usage exclusif de l’*elenchos* dialectique et ne semble reconnaître aucune légitimité à l’*elenchos* rhétorique, non seulement, dans l’*Apologie*, il n’hésite pas à les utiliser l’un et l’autre à l’occasion de son procès, mais il réserve même à l’*elenchos* rhétorique un rôle qui supplante celui qui est assumé par l’*elenchos* dialectique.

4. Conclusion : vote et dialectique

Dans le *Gorgias* (474a), Socrate prie Polos de ne pas lui demander de faire voter l’assistance car la seule personne qu’il est disposé à faire voter en tant que “ témoin ”, c’est son interlocuteur. Dans un contexte dialectique, il suffit à Socrate que son interlocuteur témoigne et vote contre lui-même, c’est-à-dire reconnaisse qu’il se contredit, pour que sa position soit par le fait même défaite. Il ne procède pas autrement lors de l’interrogation de Méléto : il lui suffit d’avoir mis en lumière les contradictions inhérentes au discours de Méléto pour considérer que les accusations portées contre lui sont nulles et non avenues. Si l’interrogation de Méléto s’était déroulée dans un cadre dialectique, Socrate aurait pu considérer que cette réfutation était en effet suffisante. Or cette réfutation s’inscrit dans un cadre inédit pour Socrate, celui d’un procès dont l’issue, qu’il le veuille ou non, *est scellée par le vote de ceux qui assistent*, en l’occurrence les juges. Socrate est ainsi dépossédé du verdict prononcé sur l’issue d’une réfutation dialectique et c’est bien là, me semble-t-il, que résident les limites de sa défense. Il ne fait aucun doute qu’il s’est défendu, et que sa défense est à l’image même de sa façon de pratiquer la philosophie, mais c’est la première fois que le verdict prononcé à l’issue d’une réfutation dialectique lui échappe. De ce point de vue, l’*elenchos* rhétorique est sans doute plus approprié que l’*elenchos* dialectique au contexte judiciaire; en effet, comme les témoins sur lesquels se fonde l’*elenchos* rhétorique sont d’une certaine façon autant de votes en faveur d’une thèse, le recours aux témoins est en un sens une préfiguration et une anticipation du vote des juges. Autrement dit, comme l’*elenchos* rhétorique repose sur le nombre et que son fondement est ainsi identique à celui du vote, il jouit certainement d’un avantage considérable sur l’*elenchos* dialectique dans le cadre d’un procès où les juges sont nombreux. Le fait même que Socrate n’ait pas hésité à pratiquer une forme d’*elenchos* rhétorique dans la troisième partie de sa défense invite à penser qu’il était conscient des limites de l’*elenchos* dialectique et que sa réfutation de Méléto n’était probablement pas “ suffisante ”.

¹⁴ de Strycker-Slings (1994), 128 (je souligne).

superiore alla condizione precedente – come la consapevolezza di non sapere è superiore alla pretesa di sapere quando non si sa (84b) –, ma non corrispondono ancora al possesso di una forma di verità, sia pure doxastica e non “scientifica”. Le uniche opinioni vere sono quelle formulate dallo schiavo nella terza parte dell’esperimento (84a-85b), quando egli, condotto da Socrate, raggiunge la soluzione del problema e individua in un certo segmento del primo quadrato il lato sul quale occorre costruire il quadrato doppio.⁵ Tuttavia, come detto, il dialogo rimane costantemente confinato nell’ambito delle opinioni e non raggiunge il livello del sapere. Lo schiavo non sembra neppure in grado di assegnare un nome appropriato al segmento trovato ed è Socrate a spiegare che si tratta di ciò che i geometri professionisti chiamano “diagonale” (85b).

Il passaggio successivo, quello che dovrebbe trasformare le opinioni vere in conoscenze, non viene dunque descritto, ma solamente accennato da Socrate, e per di più in forma cursoria.⁶ Egli spiega infatti che lo schiavo, che è in possesso di queste opinioni, se “interrogato costantemente (πολλάκις) e nelle forme più differenti (πολλαχῆ) intorno a questi stessi argomenti ... alla fine avrà conoscenza (ἐπιστήσεται) intorno ad essi con non minore precisione di un altro.” Egli perverrà a questo risultato senza che nessuno gli abbia insegnato, ma solo a condizione che qualcuno lo interroghi conoscerà (ancora ἐπιστήσεται), ricavando da se stesso la conoscenza (ἀναλαβὼν αὐτὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπιστήμην) (85c-d). Come si vede, si tratta di un accenno abbastanza vago, dal quale è francamente difficile ricavare informazioni sufficientemente precise. Socrate sostiene che la reminiscenza, cioè il procedimento consistente nel ricavare da se stessi (dalla propria anima) determinati contenuti mentali, è responsabile della consapevolezza da parte dello schiavo che le prime risposte erano errate (84a-b); essa è responsabile anche delle opinioni vere che lo schiavo ha acquisito intorno al problema matematico (85b-c); infine essa va considerata responsabile della conoscenza autentica (*epistēmē*) che lo schiavo *potrà avere* qualora continuasse ad essere interrogato in forme diverse intorno alle stesse cose (85c-d).⁷

Sul modo in cui avviene il passaggio dall’opinione vera alla conoscenza il testo non dice praticamente nulla. Risulta poi veramente difficile comprendere come la reminiscenza si colleghi all’*aitias logismos* e al *desmos* di cui si parla nella sezione conclusiva del dialogo.

4.

Un collegamento deve comunque esserci, visto che ciò che Socrate afferma in 98a riprende quasi alla lettera la tesi formulata in 86a. In quest’ultimo passo egli sostiene che le opinioni vere, se risvegliate per mezzo dell’interrogazione (ἐρωτήσῃ), diventano conoscenze (*epistēmai*), mentre in 98a dice che le opinioni vere, quando vengono legate (δεθῶσιν), in un primo tempo si trasformano in conoscenze e poi diventano salde. La lettura contestuale di questi due luoghi consente di osservare che la funzione svolta dall’interrogazione nel primo testo viene assunta nel secondo dal legame. Questa constatazione potrebbe indurre a identificare i due concetti, a ritenere cioè che il legame che consente la transizione epistemica altro non sia che la ripetizione delle domande. Non si tratta di un’identificazione del tutto fuori luogo. Tuttavia, come alcuni studiosi hanno sottolineato, la semplice ripetizione non può davvero risultare condizione sufficiente per la trasformazione delle opinioni vere in conoscenze. Essa può rappresentare, tutt’al più, una condizione necessaria, che difficilmente

⁵ Aronadio (2002), 66 ss.

⁶ Dimas (1996), 2: “But he (Socrates) never offers a demonstration of him doing that”.

⁷ Sia Williams (2002), 136 che Nehamas (1985), 21, rilevano che l’ultima fase del procedimento dell’*anamnēsis* non viene descritto, ma indicato come un evento collocato nel futuro.

Der Arzt, der Koch und die Kinder. Rhetorik und Philosophie im Wettstreit

Matthias Vorwerk

Platons Dialoge *Gorgias* und *Staat* haben eine gemeinsame Grundintention: Die These der Sophisten vom Recht des Stärkeren zu widerlegen und die Bedeutung der Philosophie für das Glück des Menschen zu erweisen.¹ Zur Unterstützung und Abrundung der philosophischen Argumentation im engeren Sinne wird am Ende beider Dialoge ein Mythos geboten, der den Lohn der Gerechten sowie die Bestrafung der Ungerechten im Jenseits bezeugt. In der Tat weisen die Mythen des *Gorgias* und des *Staates* in den Grundzügen weitreichende Parallelen auf, die den Schluß nahelegen, daß sie lediglich Variationen desselben Themas bieten.² Allerdings fällt im Mythos des *Gorgias* die Hervorhebung der Rolle der Richter auf, die nicht nur namentlich benannt, sondern in ihrer Funktion kritisch beleuchtet werden. Nicht von ungefähr haben die neuplatonischen Interpreten den Schwerpunkt des Mythos des *Staates* auf den verurteilten Seelen, den des *Gorgias* hingegen auf den Richtern gesehen.³ Die Bedeutung der Richter für das Verständnis des Mythos sowie des ganzen Dialoges soll im Mittelpunkt der folgenden Überlegungen stehen.

Zu Beginn des Dialoges äußert Sokrates sein Interesse zu erfahren, worin eigentlich die Kunst des berühmten Sophisten Gorgias bestehe (447c1-3). Im Gespräch mit dem Sophisten stellt sich heraus, daß diese Kunst, die Rhetorik, sich mit den für den Menschen wichtigsten Dingen beschäftigt (τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀνθρωπείων πραγμάτων [...] καὶ ἄριστα, 451d7 f.). Sie verleiht denen, die sich ihrer bedienen, Freiheit und Macht über andere, indem sie sie befähigt, in öffentlichen Versammlungen jeder Art, vor Gericht und in der Ekklesia, überzeugend zu sprechen (452d1-e4). In dieser Hinsicht, behauptet Gorgias (456a7-c6), sei die Rhetorik sogar dem Fachmann überlegen; denn während ein Arzt allein aufgrund seiner medizinischen Kompetenz einen unwilligen Patienten nicht zu einer unangenehmen Therapie überreden könne, sei der Rhetor ohne jegliche medizinische Kenntnisse dazu in der Lage. Es könne ihm sogar gelingen, dem Arzt vorgezogen zu werden. Somit erweise sich die Überlegenheit der Rhetorik gegenüber allen anderen Disziplinen.

Kallikles spitzt diesen Anspruch in einem *argumentum ad hominem* sogar noch zu (486a7-d1): Wenn Sokrates nicht aufhöre zu philosophieren und sich statt dessen in Rhetorik übe, könne es ihm passieren, daß er eines Tages angeklagt werde und unfähig sei, sich angemessen zu verteidigen: “[...] dir würde wohl schwindelig werden und der Mund offen stehen bleiben, da du nicht wüßtest, was du sagen solltest” (b1 f.); die Todesstrafe würde die

¹ Nach Olympiodoros, *In Plat. Gorg. prooem.* 4 Westerink ist das Thema des Dialoges nicht die Rhetorik, sondern eine Diskussion “über die ethischen Prinzipien, die uns zum politischen Glück (ἐπὶ τῆν πολιτικὴν εὐδαιμονίαν) führen”; vgl. Dodds (1959), 1-4.

² Vgl. Vorwerk (2002) mit weiteren Hinweisen.

³ Olympiodoros, *In Plat. Gorg.* 46,9 Westerink; Proklos, *In Plat. Remp.* I 168,11-23; II 128,12-23 Kroll; Damaskios, *In Plat. Phaed.* I 471; II 85 Westerink.

sagt Sokrates in einer Replik auf Kallikles' frühere Bemerkung, wird dem Rhetor "der Mund offen stehen und schwindelig werden" (527a2).

Der Mythos hat somit eine protreptische Funktion. Er soll die Bedeutung der Philosophie für das 'Heil der Seele' hervorheben und darauf verweisen, daß Rhetorik im Grunde nutzlos ist, weil sie im diesseitigen Leben nur zur Verschleierung von Unrecht und zur Manipulation dient, während sie im Jenseits überhaupt keine Verwendung findet.¹⁶ Der Philosoph wird immer die Wahrheit sagen und nicht schmeicheln wollen; er gleicht dem Arzt, nicht dem Koch. Wenn er nach seinem Tod im entscheidenden Gericht steht, hat er es mit ernsthaften Richtern zu tun, nicht mit unvernünftigen Kindern. Diese Richter schauen allein auf die Tugend seiner Seele, die er durch Philosophie erworben hat, nicht aber durch Rhetorik.

Zugleich beschreibt der Mythos eine ideale Situation, die als Vorbild für eine gerechte Form der Gerichtsbarkeit dienen soll. Zu Beginn des Mythos (523a3-524a7) berichtet Sokrates, daß Zeus eine Reform des Totengerichts vorgenommen habe, weil sich Pluton als Herrscher des Tartaros und die Aufseher der Inseln der Seligen über die Zuweisung von Seelen beschwert hätten, die eine Bestrafung bzw. Belohnung nicht verdient hätten. Die Ursache für die Fehlurteile habe in der Tatsache gelegen, daß lebende Richter über noch lebende Todeskandidaten geurteilt hätten (ζῶντες [...] ζῶτων, 523b5). Unter solchen Bedingungen traten eben die Mißstände auf, die das athenische Gerichtswesen charakterisierten: Die Richter ließen sich von Äußerlichkeiten wie gutem Aussehen, Abstammung und Reichtum sowie von einer Vielzahl von Zeugen beeindrucken (ἐκπλήττονται, d1), weil die körperliche Existenzweise sowohl der Todeskandidaten als auch der Richter die klare Wahrnehmung der tatsächlichen moralischen Verfassung der zu richtenden Personen wie ein Schleier verhüllte (πρὸ τῆς ψυχῆς [...] ὅλον τὸ σῶμα προκεκαλυμμένοι, d2-4). Erst nach der Reform des Zeus, die diese Mißstände durch eine Verlegung des Totengerichts auf einen Zeitpunkt nach der Trennung von Körper und Seele behebt, kommt es zu einem gerechten Verfahren, nicht nur weil kein Körper mehr im Wege steht, sondern auch, weil die neu eingesetzten Richter Minos, Radamanthys und Aiakos¹⁷ als Söhne des Zeus Garanten des Rechts sind und die Prinzipien des Rechtes kennen. Es liegt nahe, in der mythischen Reform des Zeus eine Aufforderung zu einer Reform des athenischen Gerichtswesens zu sehen, die – soweit das in der körperlichen Welt möglich ist – die genannten Mißstände beseitigt. In der *Apologie* hat Sokrates die Prinzipien eines solchen reformierten Gerichtswesens auf eine kurze Formel gebracht: Die Tugend des Richter sei es, allein auf das Recht zu achten, die des Redners, die Wahrheit zu sagen.¹⁸

Abschließend stellt sich die Frage, ob Platon überhaupt noch eine Funktion für die Rhetorik sieht, nachdem er ihre gewöhnliche Verwendung als gefährlich für die Seele verworfen hat. Die Rhetorik wurde anfangs als Vermittlerin überredender Überzeugungskraft definiert (πειθοῦς δημιουργός [...] πιστευτικῆς, 454e9 f.), d.h. einer Fähigkeit, andere ohne Fachkenntnis, ja ohne das Bestreben nach solcher Fachkenntnis oder Wahrheit zu überreden. Eine solche Rhetorik ist unphilosophisch, da nicht an der Wahrheit bzw. an der Suche nach der Wahrheit und dem Guten orientiert. Aber Sokrates erwähnte noch eine zweite

¹⁶ Die einzige Anwendung der Rhetorik, die Sokrates *Gorg.* 480b7-d7 gelten läßt, ist die Selbstanklage und die Anklage von Freunden und Verwandten, um durch Bestrafung eine Heilung von begangenem Unrecht herbeizuführen; vgl. 527b2-c4.

¹⁷ Zu diesen s. Dodds (1959), 374.

¹⁸ [...] αὐτὸ δὲ τοῦτο σκοπεῖν καὶ τοῦτω τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν, εἰ δίκαια λέγω ἢ μή· δικαστοῦ μὲν γὰρ αὕτη ἀρετὴ, ῥήτορος δὲ πάληθ' ἕξειν, 18a3-6; vgl. dazu de Strycker-Slings (1994), 36-40. Ähnlich läßt Gorgias den Palamedes sagen: [...] τῶι σαφεστάτῳ δικαίῳ, διδάξαντα τάληθες, οὐκ ἀπατήσαντά με δεῖ διαφυγεῖν τὴν αἰτίαν ταύτην, *Palamedes* 33 (VS 82 B 11a); die Berufung auf die Wahrheit ist natürlich ein Topos der Gerichtsrede, findet bei Sokrates jedoch eine neue Deutung; vgl. Heitsch (2002), 42-44. 53 f.

expérimentale, pour ainsi dire, de la doctrine de la réminiscence, mais aussi, en faisant parcourir à l'esclave, sous les yeux de Ménon, le même itinéraire que lui, de faire comprendre à ce dernier que ce qu'il a pris pour une entrave à l'exercice de son talent oratoire est en réalité un progrès, à la fois vers la conscience lucide de son degré de connaissance – en réalité, d'ignorance – de ce qu'est la vertu, et vers une meilleure disposition à le rechercher.

Un point doit maintenant retenir notre attention. Comme nous l'avons vu, à la question «de quelle taille doit être le côté du carré de huit pieds?», il n'y a pas de réponse, sauf à écrire le symbole d'un nombre irrationnel, c'est-à-dire d'un nombre qu'on ne peut pas calculer. Socrate a donc raison de considérer la découverte que fait l'esclave de son ignorance à ce sujet comme un fait de réminiscence: il a découvert – ou «s'est remémoré» – la seule chose qu'en savent et peuvent en savoir les mathématiciens, à savoir qu'*on ne sait pas* de quelle longueur est ce côté. Si l'on s'en tient à la lettre de l'épisode, c'est là tout ce qu'a découvert l'esclave, sa seule réminiscence. À la différence du Socrate de l'*Apologie*, qui a fini par penser que, si le dieu le déclarait le plus sage des hommes, c'est qu'à la différence de ceux qui croient en savoir plus que ce qu'ils savent, lui sait qu'il ne sait rien, l'esclave n'a été conduit à comprendre ni, de façon générale, que ce que les hommes croient savoir, en réalité ils ne le savent pas, ni que les mathématiciens, en particulier, croient en savoir plus que ce qu'ils savent en réalité. Au contraire, il a été introduit, sous les espèces de sa propre ignorance, à ce que savent fort bien les mathématiciens, à savoir qu'il n'est pas possible de déterminer par des moyens arithmétiques – de calculer – la longueur du côté recherché, mais qu'il est possible, en revanche – et c'est ce que va montrer la seconde partie de l'interrogation –, d'en avoir connaissance par des moyens géométriques.

Maintenant, pour autant que Ménon, dans cette première partie de l'interrogation de son esclave, est invité à s'y voir comme dans un miroir, il est à croire que le même message lui est délivré au sujet de la vertu. Si le spectacle de la vanité de la recherche d'une quantité irrationnelle par des moyens arithmétiques doit être tenu pour une représentation en miniature de la recherche tentée auparavant d'une définition de la vertu, nous devons conclure qu'à l'instar de la recherche arithmétique de l'irrationnelle, la recherche d'une définition de la vertu doit être tenue pour vaine. Si le calcul est à l'irrationnelle ce qu'est à la vertu la recherche d'une définition, alors, de même que c'est par des moyens géométriques que peut être atteinte l'irrationnelle, de même c'est d'autres moyens que d'une définition qu'il faut attendre une connaissance de la vertu.

C'est ce que semble avoir bien compris Ménon: invité par Socrate, à l'issue de l'interrogation de l'esclave, à reprendre l'enquête sur la vertu, il répond à cette invitation par la reprise de sa question initiale sur l'enseignabilité de la vertu, sans plus tenir compte de la priorité logique de la question de la définition, imposée jusque-là par Socrate. C'est probablement aussi ce qui explique la complaisance avec laquelle Socrate, à l'opposé de son attitude initiale, accède cette fois à cette requête.

Tout se passe comme si l'interrogation de l'esclave aboutissait à une transaction entre Ménon et Socrate, aux termes de laquelle Ménon abandonne l'objection de l'impossibilité de chercher ce qu'on ne connaît pas, par laquelle il avait mis fin à la première partie du dialogue (80d5-8), cependant que, de son côté, Socrate renonce à faire de la question *ti esti* le préalable à une enquête sur la façon dont s'acquiert la vertu. Les termes de la transaction apparaissent dans le premier échange de répliques qui fait suite à la leçon tirée par Socrate de l'interrogation de l'esclave :

SOCRATE : Consens-tu, puisque nous sommes d'accord qu'il faut enquêter sur (*zeteteon peri*) ce qu'on ne connaît pas, à ce que nous entreprenions

Rhétorique, Dialectique, Maïeutique: Le commentaire du *Gorgias* par Olympiodore¹

François Renaud

Le commentaire du *Gorgias* par Olympiodore (VI^e siècle apr. J.-C.) est le seul commentaire ancien du dialogue qui nous soit parvenu.² Sa réception moderne a été jusqu'à dernièrement très critique, et les commentateurs en règle générale n'y font pas appel.³ En revanche, quelques publications récentes, notamment une traduction anglaise richement annotée⁴ et diverses études de Harold Tarrant⁵, invitent à une lecture plus favorable.

I. Un commentaire à la fois unique et représentatif

Ce commentaire, composé de notes de cours, porte sur l'ensemble du *Gorgias*. Il se présente comme une analyse très claire et assez détaillée du dialogue (268 pages au total dans l'édition Teubner). Outre l'introduction (ou le proème), le texte se divise en 50 leçons dont chacune commente une ou deux pages du dialogue. L'auditoire d'Olympiodore est composé de jeunes étudiants, à majorité chrétienne. Le commentateur souligne avant tout l'utilité morale du dialogue pour son jeune auditoire. Le contenu du commentaire est largement traditionnel, puisant fréquemment chez les prédécesseurs néoplatoniciens. En l'absence de tout autre commentaire ancien sur le *Gorgias*, ce texte représente le document le plus important pour la reconstruction de l'interprétation néoplatonicienne du dialogue. L'enjeu premier ici ne sera toutefois pas son caractère spécifiquement néoplatonicien ou encore l'éventuelle originalité d'Olympiodore, mais plutôt l'intérêt que peut représenter ce commentaire comme une interprétation globale du *Gorgias*.

Comme ses devanciers, Olympiodore ne discute pas la question de l'ordre chronologique des dialogues, mais plutôt le classement par types de dialogue.⁶ Ce classement répond à la principale tâche interprétative de l'époque, soit démontrer que les différences entre les dialogues, loin d'indiquer des contradictions doctrinales, révèlent les diverses stratégies

¹ Ce texte est une version abrégée de la conférence présentée à Würzburg en juillet 2004 : la troisième section du texte original, qui discutait des forces et faiblesses de l'interprétation d'Olympiodore, n'a pu faute d'espace être incluse dans cette version. Une version longue paraîtra dans *Philosophie antique* (Paris). Je tiens à remercier les participants pour leurs questions, ainsi que le Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada pour son appui financier.

² La date exacte du commentaire du *Gorgias* n'est pas connue; Westerink propose 525. Olympiodore (env. 495/505-apr. 565) est l'auteur de deux autres commentaires sur Platon, l'un sur l'*Alcibiade* (éd. Westerink 1956), l'autre sur le *Phédon* (éd. Westerink 1976) en plus de deux commentaires sur Aristote. Il était sans doute l'auteur d'un commentaire sur le *Sophiste* (cf. *in Alc.* 110.8-9), maintenant perdu. Sur Olympiodore en général, voir p. ex. Beutler (1939); Westerink (1976), 20-27; Westerink-Trouillard (1990), xvii-xxxi; Tarrant (1997a), 182-188; Jackson *et al.* (1998), «Introduction», 1-33.

³ Cf. p. ex. Beutler (1939), col. 207, 210; Dodds (1959), 59; Westerink-Trouillard (1990), xxi.

⁴ Jackson *et al.* (1998).

⁵ Tarrant (1997a), (1997b), (1998), (2000), auxquelles je référerai dans la suite.

⁶ Albinus, Prologue 3; Diogène Laërce III, 49-51.

recours aux notions communes représente, par ailleurs, ce qu'il considère comme le fondement de la dialectique.

III. Dialectique et maïeutique: les notions communes

Contrairement à la majorité des commentateurs modernes s'intéressant à la forme du dialogue, Olympiodore ne considère pas Platon comme un penseur anti-dogmatique ou anti-systématique. Sa lecture du *Gorgias* est à la fois dramatique, maïeutique et doctrinale. Selon lui, la structure dramatique indique les stratégies pédagogiques de Platon. L'argumentation socratique ne teste pas seulement l'incohérence (logique et morale) de son interlocuteur, mais vise aussi à établir la vérité de la thèse contraire. Qui plus est, il insiste sur l'idée que le *Gorgias*, dans son ensemble, constitue une source d'enseignement pour le lecteur.¹⁸ Le caractère doctrinal de l'*elenchos* chez Socrate vient du fait que les prémisses de son argumentation reposent sur des vérités universelles que Olympiodore appelle les notions communes (*koinai ennoiai*).¹⁹

Qu'est-ce que Olympiodore entend par les notions communes? Rappelons d'abord que l'appropriation des notions communes (ou des «notions naturelles»), à partir du stoïcisme, remonte au moyen platonisme, et peut-être au-delà.²⁰ Chez les Stoïciens, il s'agit de notions présentes en tout être humain, consistant en une généralisation issue de l'expérience sensorielle. Déjà à l'époque de Cicéron, le terme stoïcien *ennoia* est lié aux réminiscences innées des idées platoniciennes.²¹ Olympiodore, pour sa part, n'a guère recours à la doctrine de la réminiscence, mais plutôt à l'art de la maïeutique socratique. Chez Olympiodore, les notions communes sont des principes innés, avant tout d'ordre moral, représentant la condition du bonheur «constitutif» et le fondement de la dialectique. Parmi ces notions communes (ou plus précisément les propositions qui se fondent sur celles-ci), on compte les suivantes: «Le bien [*agathon*] est ce qu'il faut rechercher» (20.2, cf. 39.6); «Ce qui est juste [*dikaion*] est admirable ou beau [*kalon*]» (21.1); «Ce qui est admirable est bon [*agathon*]» (21.2). On compte d'autres notions communes, comme celles-ci: «Dieu est bon» (41.2); «On doit honorer Dieu» (41.2). Ces notions communes sont la source du savoir. Elles sont accessibles, en principe, à tous les êtres humains, car elles nous ont été données par Dieu, avec notre libre arbitre (7.1). Elles fournissent à Socrate des prémisses de démonstration, mais elles ne sont pas elles-mêmes démontrables (3.1, 48.5). C'est pourquoi elles sont indépendantes de tout enseignement à proprement parler et relèvent de la maïeutique.

La structure du *Gorgias* suit, selon Olympiodore, un mouvement de *déclin graduel*, chaque nouvelle position impliquant le rejet de la position précédente. Socrate, qui incarne le caractère philosophique par excellence, défend la double thèse selon laquelle tout ce qui est

¹⁸ Cf. Jackson *et al.* (1998), 42.

¹⁹ Olympiodore, comme plus généralement l'école d'Alexandrie aux Ve et VIe siècles, est connu – et souvent critiqué – pour son attitude très conciliante à l'égard du christianisme dominant. Toutefois, cette attitude d'adaptabilité et de tolérance n'est pas motivée uniquement par la prudence : elle correspond aussi, comme l'a souligné Harold Tarrant (1997a), à une position philosophique dont le fondement est l'universalité des notions communes: tout être humain porte en lui la voix intérieure de ces notions, et l'éveil de cette voix constitue, selon Olympiodore, la première grande étape de l'éducation platonicienne.

²⁰ L'appropriation des «notions communes» ou plus précisément des «notions naturelles» est déjà présente dans le moyen platonisme. Chez Alcinoos, par exemple, on lit: «l'idée innée [*physikè ennoia*] est une intellection [*noêsis*] déposée dans l'âme» (155.24, 28; éd. Whittaker (1990)). Plutarque réfère aussi aux «notions naturelles», et cela en rapport à la maïeutique: Socrate n'enseignait pas (*ouden edidaske*), il faisait réfléchir et aidait à l'accouchement des idées innées (*emphyous noêsis*). L'interlocuteur acquiert ses nouvelles idées non pas de l'extérieur, mais de ce qui lui est propre (*oikeion en heautois*, *Questions platoniciennes*, 1000 e; éd. Cherniss (1976)). Sur la distinction stoïcienne entre les notions communes et les notions naturelles, voir l'étude pionnière de Todd (1973), en particulier p. 70, n. 62.

²¹ Cicéron, *Tusc.* I. 24.57.

Combattre le mal par le mal. Socrate et sa méthode de soin homéopathique dans le *Gorgias*

Annie Larivée

Pour Maja Jaakson et Ashley Biro

*Queues alimentaires. Une même action est plus facile si le mobile est bas que s'il est élevé. Les mobiles bas enferment plus d'énergie que les mobiles élevés. Problème: comment transférer aux mobiles élevés l'énergie dévolue aux mobiles bas?*¹

Le soin d'autrui est affaire de combat. C'est en tout cas la conviction exprimée par Socrate dans ce manifeste thérapeutique qu'est le *Gorgias*². Évidemment, cette manière bagarreuse, presque guerrière³, d'envisager le soin est aux antipodes de l'*Ethics of care* contemporaine qui le décrit plutôt comme une vertu typiquement féminine – voire maternelle – s'exerçant principalement dans la sphère de la vie privée⁴. Tel que Socrate le conçoit, le soin de l'âme incombe à la πολιτικὴ τέχνη⁵ et la «thérapie de la cité» (τὴν θεραπείαν τῆς πόλεως) n'a rien d'un tendre maternage : elle «consiste à lutter contre les Athéniens (τὴν τοῦ διαμάχεσθαι Ἀθηναίους) pour les rendre meilleurs»⁶, ce qui implique des douleurs pour ceux qui en sont l'objet et des risques pour ceux qui l'assument⁷. Ce refus de toute complaisance, cette intransigeance «pure et dure» dans la recherche du bien forcent

¹ S. Weil (1947), 9. Je tiens à remercier Catherine Collobert pour m'avoir transmis ses commentaires sur ce texte.

² Il est important d'élucider le mode d'être de la rhétorique dans la mesure où elle représente une contrefaçon de l'authentique *therapeia* de l'âme, voir 464b sq. Le thème de la *therapeia* a donc une priorité par rapport à celui de la rhétorique et le *Gorgias* gagne en intelligibilité interprété dans cette optique.

³ Dans la *République* les philosophes-rois auxquels incombe le soin des citoyens sont choisis parmi la classe des guerriers et sont également décrits comme des médecins, voir *Rép.*, III, 389b-c.

⁴ Depuis la parution du livre de C. Gilligan (1982), la littérature sur l'éthique du souci ou de la sollicitude – éthique féministe qui se présente comme une alternative à l'éthique de la justice (l'éthique déontologique d'inspiration kantienne) – est très abondante. Sur l'idée voulant que le souci soit une vertu essentiellement liée à la maternité, voir N. Noddings (1994) ; pour une critique de cette approche réductrice, voir J. Tronto (1993).

⁵ Contrairement à ce qu'on croit généralement, le soin de l'âme n'incombe pas directement à la philosophie selon Platon, mais à l'art judiciaire et à la nomothétique, deux branches de la *politikè technè*, voir 464b2-4 et *Lois*, I, 650b6-9. Pour une interprétation du *Gorgias* qui insiste sur l'aspect politique de la philosophie comme thérapie, voir Rodríguez Sándeiz (1995).

⁶ 521a2-4. Voir aussi 517b6-9: pour rendre les citoyens meilleurs, le politique doit «modifier leurs désirs et y résister (μεταβιάζειν τὰς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν) [...] par la persuasion ou par la force (πειθοντες καὶ βιάζόμενοι)».

⁷ Voir 486b-c, 508c-d, 511a-b, 521b-c, 521e-522c. Bien sûr, l'allusion aux risques du métier fait écho, de manière anticipée, au procès et à la mort de Socrate. Sur le lien étroit entre le style offensif et «aristocratique» du soin de l'âme socratique et les causes de sa condamnation, voir Montuori (1996).

physiques. Il revient donc à la charge en conservant l'image des tonneaux, mais en précisant leur contenu dans le but manifeste d'allécher l'hédoniste résolu qu'est Calliclès. En effet, cette fois, Socrate présente l'âme tempérante comme celle d'un homme qui posséderait des tonneaux étanches et bien remplis *de vin, de miel, de lait et d'autres liquides rares*, alors que l'âme incontiente ressemble à celui qui disposerait des mêmes liquides, mais dans des contenants pourris et troués (493e). Même si cette tentative de séduction hédoniste – plutôt retorse, avouons-le – échoue lamentablement²⁰, il n'en reste pas moins qu'elle montre bien jusqu'où Socrate est prêt à aller afin d'initier un changement d'orientation chez ses interlocuteurs. Pour lutter contre l'emprise des désirs physiques, Socrate n'hésite pas à exploiter ces mêmes pulsions en présentant la vertu de l'âme qu'est la maîtrise de soi, la tempérance²¹, comme une condition plus ou moins nécessaire de la jouissance corporelle. Dans la mesure où la manière tranchée dont Socrate oppose bien et plaisir tout au long du dialogue exclut qu'il soit lui-même un hédoniste, il semble donc que nous assistions ici à une autre tentative de transfert d'énergie psychique d'un motif «bas» à un motif plus «élevé»²². Tout comme dans le *Protagoras* et le *Philèbe*, dialogues où l'on trouve le même type d'approche²³, cette méthode homéopathique vise à amener l'«ami du corps» à reconnaître la priorité de l'âme en utilisant la force motrice de son propre souci dominant²⁴.

Accentuer l'importance du soin de l'âme en la trivialisant

L'âme comme œuvre d'art (503d-505b)

Avec la question du châtement, nous avons vu que pour inciter graduellement ses interlocuteurs à se soucier du bon état de leur âme, Socrate n'hésitait pas à assimiler son mode d'être à celui du corps. En réalité, ce réductionnisme fait partie d'une stratégie homéopathique beaucoup plus vaste reposant sur une forme de «banalisation de l'âme». En effet, dans le *Gorgias* comme dans plusieurs dialogues de jeunesse où il est aux prises avec des interlocuteurs soucieux avant tout d'honneurs, de richesse et de plaisirs, Socrate tente d'inciter au souci de l'âme non pas en insistant sur sa dignité particulière, mais plutôt en comparant la *psychè* aux réalités les plus triviales. Il y aurait beaucoup à dire sur la comparaison qui apparaît vers la fin du dialogue entre le soin collectif de l'âme humaine et le dressage des animaux – analogie récurrente dans le corpus platonicien et que l'on trouve également chez Xénophon et Isocrate²⁵. Mais nous nous contenterons ici d'évoquer la manière dont Socrate assimile le soin de l'âme à la fabrication d'objets.

Selon Socrate, par sa manière complaisante d'entrevoir le rôle des orateurs, Calliclès néglige les soins dus à l'âme de ses concitoyens. Et c'est également le cas de ses modèles,

²⁰ Pour Calliclès, vivre avec des tonneaux remplis, c'est vivre comme une pierre ou un mort, sans avoir ni joie ni peine, alors que «ce en quoi réside... l'agrément de la vie, c'est l'afflux le plus abondant possible!». 494a-b.

²¹ Sur la maîtrise de soi et la *sôphrosunè* voir, entre autres, 491d-492c. Selon Kenny, on verrait ici apparaître pour la première fois l'idée d'harmonie psychique, centrale dans la *République*, Kenny (1971), 234.

²² Contrairement à Irwin nous adoptons donc une interprétation *ad hominem*, Irwin (1995), 86.

²³ Dans le *Protagoras*, Socrate s'appuie sur l'appétit de plaisir de ses opposants pour leur faire admettre que même si le bien correspondait à l'*hedonè*, le recours à l'intelligence, au savoir et à une certaine forme de calcul resterait nécessaire pour assurer la plus grande somme possible de jouissances, voir 356c-357e. Cette manière d'amener progressivement ses interlocuteurs à prendre conscience du rôle capital de l'âme et de l'intelligence en exploitant leur attachement au corps joue également un rôle essentiel dans le *Philèbe*. En effet, un des premiers arguments de Socrate pour prouver que la vie la meilleure ne peut correspondre au plaisir consiste non pas à le dénigrer, mais à montrer qu'il serait impossible d'en jouir si nous ne disposions pas des facultés psychiques permettant d'en avoir conscience, voir 21b sq.

²⁴ On trouve une idée similaire chez Irwin : «We might say that Plato realizes that elenctic argument ought to reach people who disagree quite deeply with Socrates, and that once he sees this, he works out the line of argument that ought to convince such people». Irwin (1995), 125.

²⁵ Voir *Cyropédie* I, 2, *Antidosis* 210-14, et *À Nicoclès* 12.

Prolepsis in *Gorgias* and *Meno*?

Charles Kahn

By “prolepsis” I mean the artistic anticipation of things to come, as the prelude to an opera may present in a preliminary way themes to be more fully worked out in a later scene. In a case of prolepsis in the strict sense, the author is deliberately preparing the reader for the reception of material to be developed later on in the same work. I have argued that Plato makes abundant use of this literary device in the first book of the *Republic*, introducing concepts and arguments that will play a major role in the design of later books. (Kahn 1993) This is prolepsis proper, within a continuous text.

The dialogues, on the other hand, are independent literary texts, and the notion of prolepsis between dialogues is more problematic. Hence I have proposed a looser use of the term prolepsis for a relationship between separate dialogues. I have argued that some of the so-called Socratic dialogues should be read proleptically, when an adequate interpretation of the dialogue in question requires reference to a later work, and notably to the *Republic*. In such cases it seems more dubious to attribute a definite artistic intention to the author, since we do not have the design of a continuous text. I propose now to clarify and refine this broader notion of prolepsis between dialogues by testing its application to the *Gorgias* and the *Meno*. We shall find that the *Gorgias* is not an example of prolepsis at all, whereas a proleptic reading of the *Meno* turns out to be fruitful and perhaps indispensable. But I now want to make a distinction between two kinds of proleptic claims, a distinction which was not always clear in my earlier use of this term. I shall call *weak prolepsis* the claim that reference to another (presumably later) dialogue is needed for a full interpretation of the dialogue in question. *Strong* or *deliberate prolepsis*, on the other hand, will be the more controversial claim that a forward reference of this kind is part of the author’s intention. In a case of strong prolepsis the author has designed the work to be incomplete, so that some parts of it call for clarification, to be provided in later writing or in oral commentary. In regard to the *Meno* a claim of weak prolepsis will scarcely be controversial. Most interpreters would agree that, in commenting on the *Meno*, it is necessary to bear in mind what Plato says about recollection in the *Phaedo*, if only by way of contrast. What will provoke controversy is the stronger claim that the statement of recollection in the *Meno* has been left deliberately incomplete, to await further clarification.

Since the *Meno* poses many problems of this kind, I begin with the simpler case of the *Gorgias*. There are obvious connections between the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. My question is: in what sense does the *Gorgias* look forward to the *Republic*? Is there anything in the *Gorgias* that is not self-explanatory, that requires exegesis from the *Republic*? Let us review some points of contact between these two dialogues.

The most striking similarity is the parallel between Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Both speakers attack the Socratic conception of virtue as entailing a

entire guardian class, mathematics and dialectic for the select group of future philosopher-kings. Since one of the virtues is wisdom, which implies knowledge, and since true knowledge is available only to philosophers who have access to the Forms, the virtues for the wider class of guardians must be based on correct *doxa* rather than on knowledge.³ Thus all of the possibilities considered in the *Meno* are realized in the *Republic*. Virtue is not teachable in ordinary circumstances, only under the utopian conditions specified in the *Republic* (corresponding to the position of Teresias among the shadows at *Meno* 100a). And even there, for most citizens, virtue will be guided by right opinion rather than by genuine knowledge. Virtue in the fullest sense is teachable only insofar as philosophical insight is teachable. (Much later in the *Laws* Plato will offer a more complex solution to the problem of teaching virtue, on the basis of a different utopian construction.)

2. Definition of the virtues, required as a condition for determining teachability. The needed definitions are provided in Book IV of the *Republic*, on the basis of the tripartite psychology. This psychology and these definitions are offered only as a rough sketch, but without them the question of the *Meno* cannot be answered. (Notice that although the *Republic* does not offer a general definition of *aretê*, one is easily inferred from the specific definitions given: virtue is the condition of the soul in which these particular virtues are realized.)

3. The doctrine of learning as recollection is developed further in the *Phaedo* and more fully still in the *Phaedrus*. The passage introducing recollection in the *Phaedo* is remarkable, even unique. For this is the only example in the large group of pre-*Republic* dialogues where one work contains an unmistakable reference to another work, designed to signal a continuation of the same theme. The mention of diagrams and skillful questioning to reveal pre-existent knowledge at *Phaedo* 73ab reminds every reader of the episode with the slave boy in the *Meno*. Thus the author of the *Phaedo* makes clear that he is deliberately developing a topic presented in the earlier dialogue. (And it is precisely this passage that assures us of the priority of the *Meno*.)

This is not the occasion to survey the accounts of recollection presented in three different dialogues. I have argued elsewhere that these three accounts should be interpreted as three partial statements of the same underlying theory.⁴ Of these three accounts, the version of *anamnesis* presented in the *Meno* is the most tentative and incomplete. First of all, we are not told *what* is recollected; we must consult the *Phaedo* or the *Phaedrus* to learn that the object of recollection is the transcendent Forms. But without such a reference to transcendent experience, it is not easy to see how recollection could provide any solution to Meno's paradox. (If our prenatal cognition is not radically different, recollection will give a regress rather than a solution to the paradox.) Furthermore, recollection is introduced again later in the *Meno* to explain the transition from true opinions to knowledge, which is said to consist in "tying them (*doxai*) down with the reasoning of a causal account" (*aitias logismos* 98a3). But how recollection is supposed to provide such an account is left entirely unexplained. And just what is the slave boy remembering in the geometry lesson? In all these respects the account of recollection in the *Meno* calls out for an exegesis that the dialogue itself does not provide.

4. The method of hypothesis. Here again the *Meno* introduces the first, tentative statement of a concept that will receive fuller development in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, and again in the *Parmenides*. The method of hypothesis is nothing less than the method of deductive inference, borrowed here from mathematics in the form of a conditional proof. The

³ For this interpretation of the virtues in *Republic* IV, see my review of C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast* in Kahn (2004b).

⁴ See Kahn (2003).

ἄτε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενοῦς οὐσης·
(Men. 81 c9- d11)

Die Implikationen der ‘Verwandtschaft’ der gesamten Natur

Thomas Alexander Szlezák

(1) Der *Menon* ist kein Dialog über die Natur, weder über die Natur im Sinne der physikalischen Welt noch über die ‘Natur der Dinge’, d.h. das Wesen der Wirklichkeit. Gleichwohl findet sich in diesem Dialog eine Formulierung, die als exemplarische Kurzfassung eines zentralen Aspektes der platonischen Naturauffassung zu werten ist. Sie steht ziemlich am Anfang des entscheidenden Mittelteils¹ und lautet: ἄτε γὰρ τῆς φύσεως ἀπάσης συγγενοῦς οὐσης, „da ja die gesamte Natur verwandt ist“ (81 c 8 -d 1). Die Einführung des Gedankens der Verwandtschaft der gesamten Natur durch ἄτε, „da ja“, zeigt, daß der Sprecher, ‘Sokrates’, diesen Gedanken im vorliegenden Zusammenhang nicht als etwas Überraschendes und Erstaunliches erscheinen lassen möchte, sondern eher als etwas Selbstverständliches oder zumindest allgemein Akzeptiertes.

Für heutiges Weltverständnis hätte die Ansicht, daß es eine durchgehende Verwandtschaft in allen Dingen gibt, wenig Aussicht, als etwas Selbstverständliches durchzugehen. Aber auch vom stets kritisch nachfragenden und zum Elenchos bereiten ‘Sokrates’ der aporetischen Dialoge würde man erwarten, daß er eine Begründung fordert. Da er es nicht tut, muß der genaue Sinn der Formel zunächst unklar bleiben. Ich will im Folgenden diesen zwei Fragen nachgehen: wie es im Zusammenhang der platonischen Dialogschriftstellerei zu werten ist, daß eine offensichtlich bedeutungsschwere Formulierung ohne Prüfung bleibt, und was ihr Sinn im Rahmen des *Menon* und im weiteren Rahmen der platonischen Philosophie insgesamt sein mag.

Der Zusammenhang, in dem der Gedanke einer Verwandtschaft der gesamten Natur erscheint, ist bekanntlich die Abwehr eines Einwandes Menons gegen die Möglichkeit des Suchens von etwas, von dem man nicht weiß, was es ist. Was man nicht kennt, kann man sich nicht zur (näheren) Untersuchung ‘vorlegen’. Und wenn man auf das Gesuchte stieße, würde man es doch nicht als das Gesuchte erkennen können (weil man ja nicht wüßte, was das Gesuchte eigentlich war) (*Men.* 80 d 5-8).

Sokrates stuft dieses Argument als ‘eristisch’ ein, würde es doch das Suchen überhaupt aufheben: was man weiß, braucht man nicht zu suchen, was man nicht weiß, kann man nicht suchen (80 e1-5). Gegen dieses lähmende Argument hält er, was er von Männern und Frauen gehört hat, die weise sind in den göttlichen Dingen und denen daran gelegen ist, Rechenschaft

¹ Daß der Mittelteil mit dem Nachweis der Möglichkeit des Erforschens des Unbekannten (80d-86c) „in Wahrheit den Kern des Dialogs enthält“, ist eine sehr alte Einsicht (die zitierten Worte finden sich bei Natorp (1921³), 31).

Kleinen erfahren habe (497c3-4)⁷. Das Verständnis der Ordnung, die die Welt zusammenhält, ist als Eingeweihtsein in die Großen Mysterien zu verstehen im Vergleich mit den ‘Kleinen’ Mysterien des schlichten Glaubens an ein Leben im Jenseits. Daß dieses Verständnis mit ‘Geometrie’ zu tun hat, weist auf eine Ausweitung der Perspektive von der Ethik und Seelenlehre zu umfassenderen ontologischen Zusammenhängen. Inhaltlich erläutert wird das ebensowenig wie die Allverwandtschaft der Natur im *Menon*⁸.

Eng verwandt mit den besprochenen Stellen ist *Phaidon* 69c3-d2, wo das Wort σοφοί zwar vermieden wird, die Stifter der Mysterien jedoch mit einer ausdrucksstarken Litotes als οὐ φαῦλοι eingestuft werden. Ihre Lehre sieht Sokrates in ungetrennter Einheit mit seiner Auffassung von ἀρετή, die für ihn letztlich φρόνησις und καθαρμός ist (69 a 6 - c 3). Die ‘Uneingeweihten’ (ἀμύητοι, 69 a5) der Mysterienweisheit, die schon im *Gorgias* vom italisch-sizilischen Exegeten als ‘Unvernünftige’ (ἀνόητοι) gedeutet worden waren, setzt auch Sokrates indirekt mit denen gleich, die die philosophische ‘Reinigung’ nicht erreicht haben, wenn er die wenigen wahren Bakchoi als die πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὁρθῶς identifiziert (69 d 2).

Auf etwas, das er „von einem der Weisen gehört zu haben“ meint, beruft sich Sokrates auch *Politeia* 583 b 5-6. Es ist dies die Ansicht, daß die Lusterfahrung anderer Menschentypen als des Vernunftbestimmten weder wirklich wahr noch rein, sondern nur ein Schatten wahrer Lust ist. Dieses Zitat einer ‘fremden’ Autorität eröffnet den letzten Teil des dreiteiligen Beweises der Überlegenheit des Gerechten über alle anderen Menschentypen gerade hinsichtlich der Lusterfahrung und der Eudaimonie (576c-588a, dritter Beweis 583b-588a). Unübersehbar ist die Übereinstimmung der Stelle mit der soeben genannten Passage aus dem *Phaidon*, die die allein durch Philosophie erreichbare Arete als allein ‘rein’ versteht. Seit langem diskutiert wird auch die Beziehung zu *Philebos* 44 b6 ff., wo Denker zitiert werden, die den Lustbegriff überhaupt für verfehlt halten: was als Lust bezeichnet wird, sei bloß das Loswerden des Schmerzes. Die Vertreter dieser rigorosen ethischen Position, die die körperlichen Lüste überhaupt zu leugnen erlaubt, stuft Sokrates als Leute ein, von denen man sagt, sie verstünden viel von der ‘Natur’. Die Verbindung einer weltverneinenden ethischen Extremposition mit besonderem Interesse an der φύσις scheint dieselbe zu sein wie die im *Gorgias*. Wir sind also wieder auf Pythagoreer verwiesen, und das gilt dann wohl auch für den ‘Weisen’ von *Politeia* 583 b 5. Den genaueren Sinn dessen, was er von diesem ‘gehört’ hat, will Sokrates ‘herausfinden’ durch sein ‘Suchen’, wobei ihm Glaukon als Antworter dienen soll (583 b 8 - c 1) – wir haben also wieder das uns schon vertraute Verhältnis von religiöser Grundthese und philosophischer Ausdeutung vor uns.

Von anderer Art scheint auf den ersten Blick die Berufung auf die Weisheit anderer zu sein, die im *Phaidros* vorliegt. Nachdem das Programm einer künftigen, philosophisch fundierten Rhetorik entworfen ist, die auf Kenntnis der Seelen (bzw. ‘Naturen’) der Hörer und auf dialektischer Erkenntnis des Wesens der zu behandelnden Dinge beruhen müßte (269 c 9 – 273 e 4), macht Sokrates seinem fiktiven Gesprächspartner Teisias klar, daß die Verwirklichung dieses Programms nicht ohne große Anstrengung zu erreichen ist, die der Besonnene nicht um seiner Mitmenschen willen unternehmen wird, sondern um in der Lage zu sein, gottgefällig zu reden und zu handeln (273 e 4-8). Denn wer Vernunft hat, der wird nicht darauf bedacht sein, seinen Mitsklaven zu Gefallen zu sein, sondern unseren guten Herren, den Göttern – dies sagen, so versichert Sokrates seinem ‘Teisias’, οἱ σοφώτεροι

⁷ Zur Deutung dieser Anspielung s. Szlezák (1985), 199 f.

⁸ Vgl. Burkert (1962), 69: „Platon beruft sich dabei [sc. in *Gorg.* 507 e f.] in einer vom Dialog her nicht aufzuhellenden Weise auf die Geometrie“. – Zu Platons Explikation des Begriffs Arete durch die Begriffe κόσμος und τάξις im *Gorgias* vgl. Krämer (1959), 57-83 sowie 118-145 zusammenfassend zur „Arete-Eidos-Taxis-Ontologie“ der früheren Dialoge bis hin zur *Politeia*.

Mysterien zu kennen vor den Kleinen (*Gorg.* 497 c), bedeutet nicht nur, daß er sich über seinen moralischen und intellektuellen Status nicht im Klaren ist, sondern auch, daß er selbst dann, wenn er zur moralischen Reinigung fähig und zur intellektuellen Kooperation willens wäre, vorerst nur die 'Kleinen Mysterien', also nur eine vorbereitende Unterweisung, erhalten könnte, ist es doch nach Sokrates 'nicht zulässig' (οὐ θεμιτόν), die Großen Mysterien vor den Kleinen zu erfahren. Die Mysterienmetaphorik dient also zur Standortbestimmung des Gesprächs und enthält zugleich einen (impliziten oder expliziten) Hinweis auf die Fähigkeit des Gesprächsführers, über das bisher Gebotene hinauszugehen.

Im *Menon* heißt es ausdrücklich, die 'in den göttlichen Dingen' weisen Priester und Priesterinnen ließen es sich angelegen sein, Rechenschaft geben zu können. Nach dieser einleitenden Bemerkung wird von ihren Überzeugungen viel referiert – aber alles, wie erwähnt, ohne Rechenschaftsgabe über die Gründe. Wie ist der Hinweis auf das λόγον διδόναι zu verstehen? Etwa so, daß Sokrates lediglich den Anspruch der von ihm zitierten Autoritäten wiedergibt, ohne ihn beurteilen zu können, da er als Nichtwissender nicht beurteilen könne, was beweisbar ist und was nicht? Oder sollen wir gar die Diskrepanz zwischen dem Anspruch auf die Fähigkeit der Rechenschaftsgabe und dem Fehlen einer solchen als ironischen Hinweis auf die Hohlheit des Anspruchs werten?

Näher scheint folgende Deutung zu liegen: Sokrates, der Meister des Elenchos, der wie kein zweiter verstanden hat, was das λόγον διδόναι philosophisch bedeutet, erlaubt sich gegenüber dem zum Abwarten der 'Mysterien' unfähigen Menon, bedeutende Dinge ohne Begründung einzubringen, deutet dabei aber gleich zu Beginn an, daß all das, was hier als 'fremde' Meinung diskussionslos hingestellt wird, sehr wohl im Prozeß der Rechenschaftsgabe Bestand haben würde. Anders gesagt: wenn die anonymen Priester und Prieserinnen nur eine Maske sind für den Dialektiker, der sie als Autorität vorschiebt, weil er das Gespräch auf einen dem *Menon* angemessenen Niveau halten möchte, dann ist auch die Fähigkeit zum Rechenschaftgeben auf niemand anderen zu beziehen als auf Sokrates selbst – oder, wenn man so will, auf seinen Schöpfer. Jedenfalls ist es nicht glaubhaft, daß Platon den Hinweis auf die Rechenschaftsgabe ohne eine bestimmte Absicht an den Anfang des Referats der Ansichten der 'Priester und Priesterinnen' gesetzt hat. Wenn Sokrates sagt, daß er von der Wahrheit des referierten Logos überzeugt ist (81 e 1-2), so heißt das doch wohl, daß er die zugehörigen philosophischen Rechtfertigungen für hieb- und stichfest hält. Sein späteres Abrücken von den Einzelheiten will dann nur besagen, daß er es nicht für möglich hält, mit Menon über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele zu diskutieren (dafür bräuchte er Partner wie Simmias und Kebes) oder auch nur in mythischer Redeweise mit ihm (wie mit Phaidros) über die vorgeburtliche Ideenschau zu sprechen.

(4) Wenn nun auch die Verwandtschaft der gesamten Natur zu den Dingen gehört, die prinzipiell (wenn auch nicht mit einem Menon als Partner) begründbar und explizierbar wären, so bleibt die Frage, was diese Vorstellung genau beinhaltet und wie eine philosophische Rechtfertigung aussehen könnte.

Zunächst gilt es, Umfang und Natur des von der unsterblichen Seele vorgeburtlich erworbenen Wissens zu bestimmen. Sie sah „alle Dinge“, sowohl was „hier“ anzutreffen ist als auch was sich „im Hades“ findet (*Men.* 81 c 6-7). Wenn 'Hades' hier als ein Ort des Dunkels und des schattenhaften Seins zu verstehen wäre, so wäre die Kenntnis aller Dinge dort wenig nützlich für das hiesige Erkenntnisstreben der Seele. 'Hades' ist also wohl nach der Etymologie im *Kratylos* (404 b) als „das Reich vollendeten Wissens“¹⁸ aufzufassen.

¹⁸ Siehe Friedländer (1964), II 264, der die *Kratylos*-Stelle zur Erklärung von τῶν ἐν Ἄδου *Gorg.* 493 b 4 (τὰ ἐν Ἄδου *Men.* 81 c 6) heranzog.

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