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How Plato Saved Pleasure for Philosophy

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1. That *Phd.* is a message to the Pythagoreans, portrayed as “genuine philosophers” in Socrates’s “apology”, has been convincingly argued by Th. Ebert (1994). This paper seeks to define more in detail both the doctrine of these philosophers, namely their views on pleasure (as exposed by Plato), and the matter of Plato’s message. Drawing on material from *Rep.* and *Phil.*, we claim that already in *Phd.* Plato problematizes the pleasantness of the philosophical life, in virtual polemics with these philosophers.

2. Although *Phil.* is one of the latest (if not the latest) Plato’s texts, it deals with doctrines explicitly marked as “ancient” and admittedly associated with Pythagorean circles1. One need hardly doubt that the views exposed in the dialogue by Philebus and his “enemies” echoed Academic discussions on pleasure (cfr. Arist. *EN* X, 2) but this does not necessarily imply that such views were coeval with these discussions. Thus, J. Dillon2, though maintaining that it is Speusippus who hides beyond “the enemies of Philebus”, notes certain parallels with *Phd.* 60b; and the reconstruction of Sp.’s doctrine (with its ‘essential distinction’ between impure motion-pleasures and states-pleasures) makes one think of the doctrines exposed in *Gorg.* on behalf of some ‘wise men’. So, even if Plato does have Speusippus in mind in the *Phil.*, one has to admit that his nephew’s views on pleasure were not particularly novel. This justifies the use of *Phil.* for the interpretation of *Phd.*

3. Throughout the *Phil.*, Plato has in mind some “stern physiologists”, also called “enemies of Philebus”, whose position can be cursory outlined as follows.

i. Pain (λύπη) takes place in living creatures when their “natural state” (which amounts to certain combination of Limit and Unlimited) is destroyed (φθείρηται); conversely, the reversion (τὴν ἀναχώρησιν; 32a ἀπόδοσις (cfr. *Phd.*)) to their own nature (εἰς τὴν αὑτῶν οὐσίαν) is invariably pleasure (31b-32b)3. At 42b, where this theory is recapitulated, the destruction is associated with three types of movement: σύγκρισις/ διάκρισις; πλήρωσις/ κένωσις; αὔξη/ φθίσις. Not without reason A. E. Taylor pointed to Alcmaeon’s doctrine of health as ἰσονομίη of the bodily opposites in this connection (DK B4)4. That this doctrine of κένωσις and ἀναπλήρωσις was further elaborated by Pythagoreans in the ethical vein can be seen from *Gorg.*, where it is also implied in *Phd.* and explicitly expounded in *Rep.*

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1 Huffman 1993, 52.
2 Dillon 2003, 73.
3 Hereinafter transl. after Hackforth 1945, unless otherwise specified.
4 Taylor 1928: 448 sqq. “From Alcmaeon the theory passed to the Sicilian school of medicine through Pythagoreanism and Empedocles”. Doxographical tradition (DK 31 A95) ascribes a similar view to Empedocles: “Empedocles says that things have pleasures because of things similar to themselves, and that they [aim] at a re-filling (τὴν ἀναπλήρωσιν) in accordance with the deficiency; so that the desire for what is similar is caused by the deficiency. And pains occur by means of opposites. For things which are different in the combination and the blend of the blend of the elements are hostile to one another” (Transl.: Inwood 1992).
ii. Wise men do not admit of the “third condition” when living creatures experience neither deterioration nor restoration (33b; cfr. 42e μὴ κινουμένου τοῦ σώματος). The wise (οἱ σοφοί) contend that “one of these processes must always be going on in us, since all things are always flowing up and down” (43a: ἀεὶ γὰρ ἅπαντα ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω ῥεῖ)5. Against them, Socrates argues that μέσος βίος (43e) is, in fact, possible, for some of bodily depletions and restorations pass unnoticed by the soul (43a).

iii. They hold “that pleasures do not exist at all”6 (44b10: τὸ παράπαν ἡδονὰς οὔ φασιν εἶναι) by which we are meant to understand that pleasure has no nature of its own, but are simply λυπῶν ἀποφυγαί (44c; cfr. 44b2: ἀπαλλαγὴν τῶν λυπῶν). Therefore, these stern (δυσχερεῖς) physiologists (δεινοὶ λεγόμενοι τὰ περὶ φύσιν) regard pleasure as “thoroughly unsound” (οὐδὲν ὑγιές), and its very attractiveness they regard as “sorcery” (γοήτευμα).

4. “Should we believe (πείθεσθαι) them?” Protarchus inquires (44c). Not believe, Socrates replies, but “take them as providing an insight” 7. At 51a, Socrates shows how far this insight has taken him: “(I) With those who maintain that all pleasures are a cessation (παῦλα8) of pain I am not altogether inclined to agree (πείθομαι), but, as I said, I use them as witnesses to show that (II) some pleasures are apparent and unreal (τινὰς ἡδονὰς εἶναι δοκούσας, οὔσας δ› οὐδαμῶς), (III) while others present themselves to us as being great and numerous (μεγάλας ἑτέρας τινὰς ἁμα καὶ πολλὰς φαντασθείσας), but are in fact (ii) jumbled up with pains and processes of relief (συμπεφυρμένας10 ὁμοῦ λύπαις τε καὶ ἀναπαύσεσιν ὀδυνῶν) from such (iii) severe suffering as besets both body and soul”.

Socrates seems to be making three points here: (I) he used the doctrine of the δυσχερεῖς in order to show that (II) some pleasures are entirely unreal whereas (III) others are real, but (i) seem more intense than they really are by contrast with pains, the reliefs from which they accompany (ii) when these pains are strong enough to be noticed. As we see, the doctrine of the δυσχερεῖς has been significantly modified. Thus, (II) seems to refer to the mistake of δυσχερεῖς themselves: they mistake the neutral state (= rest) for pleasure (=movement)11. On the other hand, (III) the unreal pleasures (in terms of the stern physiologists) are now declared to possess some degree of reality (note a shift in wording: they are συμπεφύρμεναι ἀναπαύσεις, not ἀναπαύσεις themselves).

5. Pleasures of the latter type (i) seem more intense by contrast with pain

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5 It is hardly necessary to posit different thinkers here, as, for instance, BURY 1897 does. It is well attested that Pythagoreans (Epicharmus, Philolaus, etc.) adopted both Heraclitean problematics and vocabulary. See, e.g.: HORKY 2013, 138 et passim.
6 Gosling 1975: “who completely deny that they [sc. pleasures arising from the cessation of pain] are pleasures”. DILLON 2003: “who deny any real existence to pleasures”.
7 Gosling’s transl.
8 ERGINEL 2011 might be right in delimiting παῦλα and ἀπαλλαγή in Plato’s Rep. IX; however, this delimitation cannot be valid for the δυσχερεῖς, given their reluctance to admit of a neutral condition (see 3.ii above).
9 “to” = πρὸς τό. Hackforth’s translation (“I avail myself of their evidence that”) is corrected here according to that of Gosling (“I use them as witnesses to show”), for the distinction between “unreal” and “impure” pleasures is not that of the “wise men”, as we have seen, but Plato’s own.
10 Cfr. Phd. 66b5.
11 Cfr. 42c: ψευδεῖς ἐτι μάλλον, etc.
they accompany; this optical illusion has been explained at 42b: pleasures and pains appear greater and more intense (μείζους φαίνονται καὶ σφοδρότεραι) because of juxtaposition (τιθέμεναι παρ’ ἀλλήλας); pleasures — when compared with something painful (παρὰ τὸ λυπηρόν), pains — with pleasures (παρ’ ἡδονάς). As E. Keuls has noticed, ή παρ’ ἀλληλα θέσις is another term for the σκιαγραφία, a “divisionist [painting] technique exploiting optical color fusion: patches of color contrasted sharply to the nearby viewer, but seemed to blend when observed from appropriate distance”.

In Rep. IX, Plato claims that “the other pleasures—apart from that of the knowledgeable person (πλὴν τῆς τοῦ φρονίμου) —are neither entirely true nor pure (οὐδὲ παναληθής …οὐδὲ καθαρά)” and “are like some sort of illusionist painting (ἐσκιαγραφημένη τις), as I think I have heard some wise person say (τῶν σοφῶν τινος ἀκηκοέναι)” (583b).

This suggests that the term σκιαγραφία could have been employed by the wise themselves. If this is so, a certain transposition of meaning has taken place: whereas for the δυσχερεῖς pleasure (= σκία) is characterized by absence of οὐσία (sc. light), Plato grants a certain degree of reality to it (cfr. Rep. VII and the parable of the Cave). At the same time, associations of σκία with netherworld imagery, cherished by Pythagoreans, must also be at play here. Thus, at 586b7-c5, where the term σκιαγραφία recurs in connection with “mixed” pleasures, Socrates uses it on a par with εἴδωλα, “ghosts” or “phantoms”. Those who pursue phantasmal pleasures, Socrates says, are similar to those who fought over the phantom (εἴδωλον) of Helen through ignorance of the truth (ἀγνοίᾳ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς).

As for technical painting vocabulary employed here by Plato (586c1: ὑπὸ τῆς παρ’ ἀλλήλας θέσις ἀποχραινομέναι, ὥστε σφοδροὺς ἑκατέρας φαίνεσθαι; cfr. Phil. 42b: τιθέμεναι παρ’ ἀλλήλας, αἱ μὲν ἡδοναὶ παρὰ τὸ λυπηρόν μείζους φαίνονται καὶ σφοδρότεραι, λῦπαι δ’ αὖ διὰ τὸ παρ’ ἡδονάς τοῦναντίον ἑκείναις), it rather reflects his own interest in mimetic arts. Let us note that the idea of mutual intensification in Phil. is not ascribed to the wise (though is explained by means of its connection to ἀπειρόν, which does not admit of exact measurement, see 41d). The source is difficult to establish with certainty: after all, the deceitfulness of sensory data had become a philosophic commonplace by Plato’s time (cfr. Phd. 65b, with possible reference to Epicharmus DK 23 B2). The deceitfulness of sensory data had become a philosophic commonplace by Plato’s time (cfr. Phd. 65b, with possible reference to Epicharmus DK 23 B2).

6. In Rep. IX we find a theory which repeats, in general outline, the résumé presented by Socrates at 51a as a development of the doctrine of the ‘stern physiologists’. He begins with acknowledgement formula (584b5-6: ὡς ἐγὼ δοκῶ

12 Cfr. Arist. De sensu 440b16 and discussion in Keuls 1978, 81. There are 10 references to σκιαγραφία in Plato and 2 in Aristotle. We dispose of neither earlier literary evidence nor of archaeological artefacts. On σκιαγραφία, also see: Keuls 1974 and 1975; criticized in Pemberton 1976. Demand 1975 suggested an evolution in Plato’s attitude to σκιαγραφία, but that does not seem very convincing to us. For metaphorical uses of σκιαγραφία see: Trimpi 1978.

13 Keuls 1978, 79 and 83 n. 74.


15 If Plato here, too, relies on his « wise » friends, it would support the connection of Stesichorus with Pythagorean circles, defended by Detienne 1952. However, Burkert 1972, 153 notes that “the epoch of Stesichorus is earlier than that of Pythagoras”.

16 Unjustly dismissed by Hackforth 1955, 45.

17 Already Adam (Adam II 1907, 378-380, App. IV) identified these σοφοὶ with the “enemies of Philebus” on the basis of similarity of doctrine, as well as certain textual parallels (“note in particular γοήτευμα as compared with
Given Plato’s reticence, any reconstruction of the exact doctrine of the σοφοί cannot be but tentative. However, with Phil. as a guiding thread in hand, we conjecture the following:

a) The wise maintain that all pleasures are simply λύπης ἀπαλλαγαί (584c2) or παῦλα λύπης (584b3). Note lexical similarity with Phil. 51a and 44b (3.iii), and also ἀνάπαυσιν ὀδυνῶν (Phil. 51a8) and παῦσασθαι ὀδυνώμενον (Rep. 583d4).

b) The notions of πλήρωσις and κένωσις (585b, cfr. 3.i above) are also paralleled in Phil. This, in turn, implies that the nature of all things is in constant move (cfr. ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω ἐφ᾽ ἐν 3.ii καὶ κάτω ... ἂν φέρεσθαι in 584d6-7). Just like in Phil., in Rep. Plato adds μέσον as intermediate state: cfr. 3.ii.

c) The wise of Phil. regard pleasure as “thoroughly unsound” (οὐδὲν ὑγιές), and its very attractiveness they regard as “sorcery” (γοητεία); cfr. 584a9-10: οὐδὲν ὑγιές τούτων τῶν φαντασμάτων πρὸς ἡδονῆς ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλὰ γοητεία τις.

d) For a play on ἀπιστία / ἀπληστία at 585e, compare the doctrine exposed on behalf of ‘the wise’ (του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν) in Gorg. 493 and as well as the mention of a leak-proof vessel (586b3-4: οὐδὲ τὸ στέγον ἑαυτῶν πιμπλάντες).

If our conjectures are correct and Socrates in Rep. IX indeed builds on — and implicitly polemizes with — the doctrine of the ‘stern physiologists’, then his remark at 584c1-2 (Μὴ ἄρα πειθώμεθα καθαρὰν ἡδονὴν εἶναι τὴν λύπης ἀπαλλαγὴν, μηδὲ λύπην τὴν ἡδονῆς) should be compared to the similar stance taken in Phil. 51a4 (see 4 above): οὐ πάνυ πως πείθομαι (cfr. 44c3).

7. On our reading, then, Plato’s own addition must consist in the prove that pure pleasures exist (which starts with the example of smell at 584b, but of course the main point is that the pleasures of φρόνιμος are of this type). Therefore, in the scale metaphor, the upper region of the scale must be Plato’s own addition, whereas the lower region reproduces, with some variations, the doctrine of the wise.

First of all, into the ἄνω κάτω scale of the wise Plato introduces the intermediate state (μέσον), ἡσυχία (cfr. 3.ii above). This state of ἡσυχία has nothing to do with τὸ ἄληθες ἄνω, Socrates contends (584d9). Correspondingly, scholars detected two types of mistakes concerning pleasure in this passage: (i) one mistakes the state of ἡσυχία as "properly sound". He also maintains that there are “strong positive reasons for holding… that Plato has in view preachers of the Orphic-Pythagorean moral and religious school”. Indeed, their concern with purification combined with interest in natural science, as well as the very designation σοφοί (cfr. Gorg. 493) point in this direction.

Contrariwise, Hackforth 1945 claims that the δυσχερεῖς cannot be the σοφοί of Rep. 583b “for they held there was at least one true pleasure” (sc. τοῦ φρονίμου).

As I see it, παῦλα τῆς τοῦ φρονίμου reservation is a proleptic indication to the up-shot of the investigation to follow. Such an explanation is not that steadfastly rigid; however, it seems more economic than positing another source for the theory highly reminiscent of that developed in Phil.

ἡσυχία, neutral state of the soul when it experiences neither pain nor pleasure, to be pleasure or pain and (ii) one moves from below towards the middle and thinks that he is moving in the upper region. Mistake (ii) involves less illusion for one is actually moving upwards and therefore experiences pleasure, though of “impure”, or inferior, kind. Mistake (i) is a sheer γοητεία: both pleasure and pain are movements, which contradicts to the very notion of ἡσυχία. If his reading is correct, then the whole theory, built on the doctrine of the wise, is basically the same as in Phil. However, even if Plato already has in mind two types of mistakes here, the terms ἀπαλλαγή and παῦλα seem to be used almost interchangeably at 584b (note the symmetry: Ἰδὲ… ἡδονάς, αἳ οὐκ ἐκ λυπῶν εἰσίν… ἵνα μὴ… σιγήθη… ἡδονὴν μὲν παῦλαν λύπης εἶναι / μὴ ἀρα πειθῶμεθα καθαράν ἡδονὴν εἶναι τὴν λύπης ἀπαλλαγήν). I would not insist therefore on a clear distinction of the two mistakes in Rep.: one can only mistake the movement πρὸς μέσον for ἄνω movement if one mistakes the μέσον state for τὸ ἀληθῶς ἄνω.

The black-grey-white analogy at 585a3-5 also supports such interpretation: those who are not experienced in true pleasure, when they move ἀπὸ λύπης ἐπὶ τὸ μεταξὺ, mistake painlessness (τὸ ἄλυπον) for pleasure when they compare it with pain, which is “just like comparing grey to black without experience in white”. The ἄλυπον, for which ‘grey’ stands, is a synonym for ἡσυχία; but it must also refer to the whole domain of ‘mixed’ pleasure of the lower part of the scale. As Adam justly observes ad loc., “Plato’s simile is particularly appropriate, because grey is a mixture of white and black.”

To be sure, the readers of Rep. IX, unlike us, were not acquainted with Phil. And still, Plato could expect his “acknowledgement formula” to be understood adequately, for the whole polemics with the wise concerning pleasure is already there in Phd.

9. Callicles’s vehement criticism of ἡσυχία (Gorg. 493e7) testifies to the effect that already at this early stage of his career Plato was aware of the problems inherent in the doctrine of the wise. A life of no motion is not, properly speaking, a life: it is more appropriate to stones or to corpses (492e5). This argument is playfully reproduced at the beginning of Socrates’s apology in Phd.: the Thebans would agree that philosophers are indeed nearly dead (64b: τῷ ὄντι οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες θανατῶσι), and that they, at any rate, deserve it. Socrates’s thesis that οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφοι practice “dying and being dead” (64a) makes Simmias laugh precisely because

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19 Erginel 2011 relies on the up-down-middle metaphor to support his interpretation: “Don’t you imagine, then, that (ii) if someone were brought from down below to the middle, he would think anything other than that he was moving upward? And (i) if he stood at the middle and saw where he had come from, could he possibly think he was anywhere other than the upper region, since he hadn’t seen the one that is truly up above?” (584e)

20 For the analysis of this dependence, see ibid., p. 296 sqq. I agree that impure pleasures are mixed with pain simultaneously, not sequentially.

21 It is the same false pleasure which is labelled as ψευδής ἓτι μᾶλλον in the Phil.

22 Erginel 2011, 291 n. 11 admits that mistakes (i) and (ii) are “intimately related, since the cessation of pain necessarily follows the liberation from pain”.

23 These two movements, though both being upwards movements, are different, in Plato’s eyes. The metaphor of scale can be misleading, for, with scales, it is enough to continue moving upwards to rise above zero mark. But for Plato, these are two different types of movements, more like swimming under the water and emerging above it (cfr. Phd. 109).

24 I read moribundi with Burnet 1911.
Socrates repeats a well-known cliché ridiculed later in the Middle Comedy. For ordinary people, “one who cares nothing for the pleasures that come by way of the body runs pretty close to being dead” (65a: ἐγγύς τι τείνειν τοῦ τεθνάναι ὁ μηδὲν φροντίζων τῶν ἡδονῶν αἰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος εἰσίν).

From Socrates’s apology we find out that the genuine philosophers, indeed, are not keen about the so-called pleasures (64d: τὰς ἡδονὰς καλουμένας). The reason why they disregard the body is because “bodily senses are neither accurate nor clear”, so when the soul “strives for reality” (ὁρέγηται τοῦ ὄντος) in company with the body it is completely taken in by it (65b). They “undertake the hunt for each reality alone by itself” (ἐκαστον ἐπιχειροὶ θηρεύειν τῶν ὄντων) using “intellect alone by itself”, because the body does not allow the soul “to gain truth and wisdom when in partnership with it” (οὐκ ἐῶντος τὴν ψυχὴν κτήσασθαι ἀλήθειαν τε καὶ φρόνησιν) (66a).

And yet there is no hint that the genuine philosopher allow for some other type of research but for that in company with the body. That is why they are pessimistic as to the possibility to attain wisdom before death, after the soul has been completely “purged” of the body. Only then will they be able to view “the objects themselves (αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα)” with the soul itself (66b–67b), for “never will it be permissible for impure to touch pure” (67b: μὴ καθαρῷ γὰρ καθαρῶς ἐφάπτεσθαι μὴ οὐ θεμιτὸν ἢ).

We might infer therefrom, that — in Plato’s eyes — the source of the real philosophers’ pessimism lies in their πραγματεία. They strive to establish the οὐσία of the things (65e1: ἁπάντως τῆς οὐσίας ὃ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὄν), but apply their

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25 See Riedweg 2005, 108: “If we take all these characteristics together, even in the distorted image offered by comedy, it is clear that we are dealing with adherents of Pythagoras who were trying to follow consistently the ritual prescriptions in the “oral sayings” and therefore also hoped to have privileged status in the Underworld.”

26 Dixsaut 1991, 64: “Ce que les pythagoriciens veulent connaître, et connaître rationellement, ce sont les phénomènes sensibles. Philolaos passe pour avoir voulu appliquer des principes pythagoriciens à la science de la nature : à la médecine, à l’astronomie, à l’astronomie».

27 The term οὐσία, as Burnet justly notes ad loc., is Pythagorean. Cfr. Arist. Metaph. 1.5, 987a13-27: “...And concerning essence (περὶ τοῦ τί ἐστιν), they began to make statements and definitions (λέγειν καὶ ὁρίζεισθαι), but their treatment was too simple. For they both defined superficially and thought that the substance of the
effort to the ever-flowing physical world (cfr., e.g., the examples of largeness, health, and strength at 65d) and are thus frustrated. This corresponds to the description given by Aristotle of the Pythagorean philosophy in *Metaph.* I.8: despite the fact that they took their principles from non-perceptible (οὐκ ἔξ αἰσθητῶν), i.e. mathematical, objects, “they discuss and wholly make the object of their philosophical inquiry nature (διαλέγονται μέντοι καὶ πραγματεύονται περὶ φύσεως πάντα); they are “in agreement with other natural scientists that what actually exists is what is perceived (τὸ γε ὑπὸ τοῦτ’ ἐστίν ὅσον αἰσθητόν ἔστι)” (989b29 sqq30). As C. Huffman has shown, Philolaus is to be included among the “so-called” Pythagoreans, who employed the principle of theoretical mathematics in order to explain natural phenomena31.

10. In *Phd.*, just as in *Phil.* and *Rep.*, Plato does not renounce real philosophers’ attitude to bodily pleasures, but one may notice several shifts in the exposition of their doctrine in a résumé at 79cd.

i. First of all, the “the pure” itself has shifted from a negative term (= “detached from the body”) to a more positive one (= “unvarying”)32. This shift would be impossible unless the 2nd argument had established the existence of such pure and unvarying entities (78d8-9).

ii. If such entities exist, then the soul has a proper object of research (3rd argument) which can be approached without the mediation of the body. So whenever the soul is “about those objects, it is always constant and unvarying (κατὰ ταῦτα ὧςαύτως ἔχει), because of its contact with things of a similar kind (ваться τοιούτων ἐφαπτομένη); and this condition of it is called “wisdom (φρόνησις)” (79d). The ascetic κάθαρσις of the real philosophers has given place to the epistemic κάθαρσις: detachment from the body consists in the correct choice of the object of research, not in a particular diet33.

iii. The good news is that one does not need to die in order to get φρόνησις (cfr. 114с7-8 ἅπτε αρέτης καὶ φρονήσεως ἐν τῷ βίῳ μετασχεῖν). It is no more the body which is responsible for the ἀφροσύνη34, but the soul itself, for depending on the things it ἐφαπτεῖται it can either move to the realm of the “invisible” or stay “bewitched” by the body and its pleasures (81b1-d4: γοητευομένη ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ ἡδονῶν).

iv. This does not imply, of course, that philosophers can afford being licentious, but the radicalism of their asceticism if definitely mitigated. Genuine philosophers “abstain from all bodily desires” (82с3: ἀπέχονται τῶν κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἐπιθυμιῶν), as well as “from pleasures and desires and pains”35.

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30 Translation and discussion: Horky 2013, 19.


32 Whenever the soul studies alone by itself, it departs εἰς τὸ καθαρόν τε καὶ ἀεὶ ὀκνοὶ καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον (79d, cfr. 80d).

33 It is not earlier than at 84b4 where the appropriate nurture for the soul (τοιαύτης τροφῆς) is mentioned for the first time. It is opposed to the nurture and pleasure which the soul shares with the body (cp. 83d7-9: ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ ὁμοδοξεῖν τῶν σώματι καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς χαίρειν ἀναγκάζεται σώματος ὡσρῷ τοῦ ὅμορφος γίγνεσθαι). It is only its proper nurture that the soul is allowed to take with it to Hades (107d4: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ἔχουσα εἰς ἂν οὖσα ἐρχεται πλὴν τῆς παιδείας τε καὶ τροφῆς…).

34 ὁδ. 67ab: καθαροὶ ἀπαλλαττόμενοι τῆς τοῦ σώματος ἀφροσύνης etc.

35 *Phd.* 83b4-7: ὑ̄ τοῦ ὡς ἄληθῶς φιλοσόφου ψυχὴ οὕτως ἀπέχεται τῶν ἡδονῶν τε
reckoning that “when one feels intense pleasure or fear, pain, or desire (ἐπειδάν τις σφόδρα ἡσθῇ ἢ φοβηθῇ ἢ λυπηθῇ ἢ ἐπιθυμήσῃ)” one incurs “the greatest and most extreme of all evils” (δὲ πάντων μέγιστον τε κακῶν καὶ ἐσχατόν ἔστι): “It’s that the soul of every human being, when intensely pleased or pained at something (ἡσθῆναι σφόδρα ἢ λυπηθῆναι), is forced at the same time to suppose that whatever most affects it in this way is most clear and most real, when it is not so” (83с; cfr. 81b). Note, that here, just as in Phil., only the intense pleasures and pains are banned from the philosophical life insofar they entail mistakes concerning reality (cfr. 81b5: μηδὲν ἄλλο δοκεῖν εἶναι ἀληθὲς ἀλλ’ ἢ τὸ σωματοειδὲς).

11. A short note should be added on the use of σκιαγραφία in Socrates’s apology (Phd. 68-69). Socrates attacks ordinary citizens (οἱ πολλοὶ 68d) who are engaged in an exchange of pleasures and pains: “it’s because they’re afraid of being deprived of further pleasures, and desire them, that they abstain from some because they’re overcome by others”. He calls the virtue of such people σκιαγραφία τίς (69b). According to E. Keuls, “we might translate skiagraphia here simply as “an illusion of virtue”, but the underlying connotation of the “mutual intensification” is certainly present in the metaphor, as it is inherent in the principle of the relativity of pleasure and pain upheld by the κόσμιοι”36.

But if mutual intensification is already meant here, then the mistake of the κόσμιοι consists in the fact that they wrongly evaluate the magnitude of pleasures and pains because of their juxtaposition. This would imply that pleasures and pains in question are to some extent real, though overestimated (cfr. Phil. 42). Nevertheless, the addition οὔδὲν ὑγιὲς οὐδ’ ἀληθὲς ἔχῃ (cfr. 6c above; Phil. 43: οὔδὲν ὑγιὲς — γοήτευμα: Rep. 584a9-10: οὔδὲν ὑγιὲς ...πρὸς ἡδονῆς ἀλήθειαν ἀλλὰ γοητεία τίς) suggests that, from the standpoint of the real philosophers, these pleasures and pains are utterly unreal — and so is the virtue based on their exchange. So, as we have already noted in connection with Phil. (see 5 above), the etymological, and not technical, meaning of the word must be at play here.

12. To sum up, in the Phd. Plato has in mind those “wise” and “stern” physiologists, whom he mentions in Rep. and Phil. With all likelihood, he identifies them with Pythagorean thinkers, who denied any reality to pleasure whatsoever and lived a very ascetic life. In their neglect for pleasures, they failed to recognize the reality of the “true pleasures” of cognition (114e: τὰς [sc. ἡδονὰς] περὶ τὸ μανθάνειν): in Plato’s view, because their studies focused on the πράγματα, that is the objects of natural philosophy, and could not be but frustrating. By turning his interlocutors to the study of the Forms, Plato establishes — en passant — the pleasantness of the philosophical life.

Résumé

Les philosophes authentiques, au nom de lesquels Socrates expose son apologie, n’accordent aucune importance aux plaisirs du corps et croient que la vertu basée sur l’échange de ces derniers est un trompe-l’œil. À cet égard, leur position est comparable à celle des « ennemies de Philèbe » dans le dialogue homonyme. Dans le Philèbe, Socrate prend leur doctrine comme un point de départ pour sa propre enquête de plaisir, en la modifiant à deux égards (Phil. 51): (a) les plaisirs physiques sont accordés un certain degré de réalité, bien que de type inférieur; (b) l’état de repos est considéré comme le plus faux de tous les plaisirs. Ces notions se trouvent aussi dans la République IX, avec καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ λυπῶν [καὶ φόβων] καθ’ ὅσον δύναται.

36 Keuls 1978, 83-84.
une référence aux «hommes sages», sans aucune précision de la part de Platon que ce sont ses propres développements de la doctrine des « sages ». Néanmoins, Platon pouvait espérer que cette référence serait bien compris parce que dans le Phédon il avait déjà traité l'attitude des pythagoriciens vers le plaisir. Dans le Phédon, il montre que les pythagoriciens ont échoué à reconnaître les plaisirs de la cognition à cause de leur « programme de recherche » trop centré sur le monde physique. En changeant la perspective philosophique, Platon sauve donc le plaisir pur et vrai.
Plato’s *Phaedo* and “the Art of Glaucus”:
Transcending the Distortions of Developmentalism

Altman, William H. F.

**Summary:** In 1985, Diskin Clay used Socrates’ image of the embodied soul in *Republic* 10 to elucidate the enigmatic “art of Glaucus” mentioned in *Phaedo*. Despite the connection between Glaucus and the submarine imagery of the geological myth that follows, Clay’s article has received little attention, probably because both *Republic* and *Phaedrus*—to which he also refers—are generally considered later than *Phaedo*. By regarding *Phaedo* as an outgrown stage of Plato’s development, interpretations based on chronological order of composition have likewise disfigured it, and thus a new “art of Glaucus” is needed to recover its original nature. According to the conventional story, *Phaedo* introduces the Theory of Forms—even though Socrates claims there that he has repeatedly discussed them—while Parmenides subjects the Theory to a critique that allegedly forced Plato to abandon it although it is a young Socrates he depicted confronting “the third big.” But when *Phaedo* is read as the dramatic culmination of the dialogues as a whole, its Final Argument—which refers to the big—stands revealed as deliberately inadequate, especially since Socrates’ emphasis on images and hypotheses while introducing it echoes the Divided Line. Having failed to persuade his interlocutors that a philosopher must overcome attachment to the body by the practice of death, Socrates must now prove that the soul survives multiple incarnations; to do so, he employs the same inadequate methods used in *Republic*: the unity of the tripartite soul in the *Republic* 4, although it cannot motivate a voluntary return to the Cave, is now echoed by a unitary “idea of three” that, even if it does make the things it occupies odd, is inadequate for proving that soul is immortal. The famous problem of “the equals themselves” must likewise be examined in connection with *Republic* 7 and *Philebus*: instead of regarding “the three” as a multiplicity of monads, all equal to one another, Socrates treats the unitary “triad” as an Idea in the Final Argument. Knowing where to draw the line between the transcendent Ideas and what Aristotle called “the intermediates” not only presupposes our familiarity with all of Plato’s dialogues, but also our own “practice of death.” Only “the art of Glaucus,” applied first to our own souls and then to Plato’s *Phaedo*, will allow us, by reviving Platonism, to rescue all three from the distortions of developmentalism.

The doubled reference to “the art of Glaucus” at the beginning of the final myth in *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 108d4 and 108d6) has puzzled readers since antiquity, but Diskin Clay broke new ground in 1985 with the claim that the allusion was not to some lost proverb, but to Plato’s *Republic*. In retrospect, the connection seems obvious: in *Republic* 10, Glaucus is mentioned not only in the context of the soul’s “true” or even “truest nature” (*R*. 611b1 and 612a3) but of its immortality (*R*. 610e10-611b10), while the first part of the myth that follows the allusion to “the art of Glaucus” in *Phaedo* (*Phd*. 108e4-110a8) repeatedly echoes the imagery Socrates had used to describe the submerged and thus unrecognizable Glaucus. Drawing attention to a further connection between the geographical myth in *Phaedo* and *Republic* based on the Allegory of the Cave, Clay also connected its imagery to the great speech of Socrates in *Phaedrus* (cf. *Phd*. 109d2 and *Phdr*. 249c3-4), and here again, the connection seems obvious in retrospect, not least of all because a hermeneutic circle is completed when the reader considers the way Plato connects
Phaedrus to Republic 10 (cf. R. 611d3 and Phdr. 250c6). Even more curious than the failure of the ancients to consider “the art of Glaucus” in the context of Plato’s only other reference to someone of that name,7 is the lack of attention that Clay’s brief but brilliant article has received from modern readers.8 My purpose here is to explain that lack of attention by comparing Plato’s Phaedo itself to the submerged and distorted Glaucus of Republic 10, and then to argue that we need a new “art of Glaucus” to catch sight of its true or original nature (R. 611c7-d1).

One of Clay’s most illuminating insights arises from dividing explanations of “the art of Glaucus” into two kinds: those that indicate the presence of the philosopher Paul Friedländer called “Plato the geographer, ”9 and those, like his own, that depend on recognizing “Plato the transcendentalist.”10 The former is on display when Reginald Hackforth translated or glossed ἡ Γλαύκου τέχνη as “a scientific genius” and “a great scientist:”11 he was assuming that this art would yield empirical exactitude about the visible world. The latter, by contrast, emerges when the geological myth is read not as an advertisement for, e.g., the atmosphere-transcending Hubble space station or the clear skies of Egypt (cf. Epin. 986e9-987a6), but rather as a kind of anti-cosmology,12 in which our vision of the heavens is just as distorted as is the perception of Glauces, and thus of our own souls, in Republic.13

Consider the following observation by Catherine Zuckert:

In contrast to the Athenian (and Timaeus), however, Socrates does not base his belief in the existence of gods on observations of the regular, hence intelligible, movements of the heavens. On the contrary, in the Phaedo we hear him remind his close associates that human beings cannot directly, accurately, or completely observe the intelligible order of the heavens, so long as their minds are dulled and confused by their senses.14

Although our vision is turned outwards toward the heavens in the Phaedo myth, and inwards toward the soul in the Glauces image of Republic 10,15 we are confronted in both cases with a defect of vision, and connecting the two suggests that the η Γλαύκου τέχνη is less likely to be the empirical art of “Plato the geographer” than an indication that “Plato the transcendentalist” believes our embodied state precludes the possibility of seeing the true form of Glauces, our own souls, or the caelestia.16 Read as an anti-cosmology, the geological myth thus confirms Cicero’s famous description of Socrates, thanks to whom philosophy abandoned its Presocratic pretensions and returned to the city, and ultimately to the prison-house, where Socrates will take his final leave of us.

In another place,17 I have argued that Γλαύκου in the phrase η Γλαύκου τέχνη should be interpreted as an objective genitive, i.e., not as a reference to some desiderated art possessed by Glauces but rather as the art of seeing Glauces’ true nature despite the distortion created by his submarine appearance or rather on our soul-blinding reliance on sense-perception in general (Phd. 99d4-e4). My purpose here, however, is not to show how an account based on the Glauces of Republic 10 can be squared with the geographical myth in Phaedo,18 but rather to illuminate the principal obstacle blocking the path to any account of this kind: the interpretation of Plato’s dialogues based on the Order of Composition paradigm. Despite the fact that Plato chose to interweave late dialogues like Sophist and Statesman into the series of early or middle ones that begins with Euthyphro and ends with Phaedo,19 a well-entrenched orthodoxy not only prevents us from reading the latter as Plato’s Socratic response to the cosmological aspirations already voiced by other characters in Timaeus and Laws,20 but also precludes Clay’s application of passages from Phaedrus and Republic to the interpretation of Phaedo on the grounds that it was written earlier than either.21 My paper’s thesis is that we should reconsider the way
we read Socrates’ last discourse, privileging its dramatic and didactic aspects in a manner that will allow us to give Clay’s insights the weight they deserve. By contrast, a hermeneutic that regards Phaedo as an outgrown stage of Plato’s development, and not as the dramatic culmination of the dialogues as a whole, has made this great dialogue’s original form as unrecognizable as the ocean has made Glaucus.

We are all familiar with the broad outlines of the current εἰκὼς μῦθος based on Order of Composition, and thus with its relevant consequences. Although the discussion of Recollection in Phaedo is allowed to refer back to Meno, the reference to other arguments for immortality in Republic 10 (R. 611b9-10) is considered a retrospective reference to Phaedo, and thus an attempt like Clay’s to reverse this order—i.e., to elucidate Phaedo on the basis of passages from Republic or Phaedrus—becomes suspect in principle. Of even greater philosophical substance is the alleged relationship between Phaedo and Parmenides: having introduced the Theory of Forms in the earlier dialogue, Plato is presented as having abandoned it, in its Phaedo-form at least, in the later one. It has now become impossible or at least very difficult to read Phaedo without this story in already mind, and it is therefore no accident that David Bostock’s commentary begins with a section on chronology of composition. The obvious dramatic incongruities entailed by this story—Socrates’ repeated insistence in Phaedo that the Theory has frequently been his theme (Phd. 76d7-9 and 100b1-7), as well as the more general circumstance that Plato depicts a young Socrates being exposed to a critique of this theory in Parmenides—are generally overlooked, and few scholars are willing to consider the possibility that no matter when Plato may have written Phaedo, he intended it to be read by those who were already familiar with Parmenides. Taught to imagine the octogenarian Plato striving, perhaps unsuccessfully, to finish the ponderous Laws, we generally overlook the possibility that he might just as plausibly have devoted his advanced years—what Cicero described as his placida et lenis senectus—to revising and beautifying his dialogues as a whole.

The result is that Plato is presently caught in a hermeneutic cross-fire: reading Phaedo with the knowledge that its own author will eventually revise or abandon the Theory of Forms that undergirds the Final Argument, we nevertheless assume that Plato himself regarded that argument as adequate while writing it. We need not embrace this divisive conception, however, and whenever we do so uncritically, we submerge “the true nature” of Socrates’ last discourse in the distorting brine of developmentalism, encrusting it with disfiguring barnacles, seaweed, and rocks (R. 611d3-4). Consider a parallel case of dividing author from reader in a 1999 article by Dorothea Frede: in her discussion of Phaedo 65d9-e6, she first points out, accurately, that Socrates’ “assumption of separate Forms of health, strength and tallness must seem quite suspicious,” and then continues:

In the Phaedo Socrates asserts time and again that the mind will be better able to pursue such questions after death when it is free from all earthly encumbrances. But this result seems to take us full circle. It brings us right back to the dubiousness of the doubtful cases. How can there be health when there is no body, or strength or tallness? What sense does it make to say that the mind will have better understanding of them in a life after death?

These are excellent questions, and the relevant difference between my position and Frede’s turns only on the degree of Plato’s awareness of the resulting incongruities: she claims that “Plato seems to be totally unaware of the absurdity of assuming Health or Strength or Tallness as such, without any bodies whose health, strength, or tallness are thereby explained.” Of particular consequence is the fact that the word μέγεθος, which Frede translates here as “tallness,” figures prominently
in both “the Third Man” of Parmenides (Prm. 132a1-b2) and the Final Argument of Phaedo (Phd. 100e5-6). My claim is that we need not divide ourselves from Plato, or Plato from himself, but rather admit the possibility that Plato intended his readers to see the same problem Frede saw, and likewise to be familiar with the further problems associated with μέγεθος in Parmenides before encountering the Final Argument in Phaedo. And as Clay’s discussion of “the art of Glaucus” suggests, Plato also expects that dialogue’s readers to have already read his Republic.

This claim becomes more plausible when we consider the fact that Socrates introduces the Theory of Forms in the Final Argument in a manner that—to borrow Frede’s words again—“must seem quite suspicious” to a reader already familiar with Parmenides and Republic:

I will go back to those much-spoken-of things and begin from them, having hypothesized [ὑποθέμενοι] something to be beautiful in and of itself and good [ἀγαθόν] and big [μέγα] and all the others.39

In addition to the hammered insistence that Socrates is discussing matters that he has often discussed before, two other things deserve comment. The first is that joining good and beautiful to “big” is significant not only because of the decisive role the latter plays in “the Third Man” (Prm. 132a3 and 132a7; cf. 132a10-11), but also in relation to the doubled reference in Parmenides to the beautiful, the good, and the just (Prm. 129b7-9 and 135c9), a triad that emerges in Gorgias (Grg. 459c6-460a2), flourishes in Republic 7 (R. 520c5) and Phaedrus (Phdr. 278a3-4), and has already appeared in Phaedo itself (Phd. 65d4-8).40 And the use of ὑποθέμενοι in the context of the word ἀγαθόν creates a second, and even more important doubled contrast, this time with Republic 6: there, the Idea of the Good is the un-hypothetical principle of the First and highest part of the Divided Line (cf. 509b6-8, 511b2-c2, and 532a5-b2), while the word ὑποθέμενοι has already appeared in the preceding speech in Phaedo (Phd. 100a3-4) in close proximity to the word for images (ἐν εἰκόσι at Phd. 100a2), the other distinguishing methodological feature of the Second Part of the Divided Line (cf. R. 509b4-6 and 509b9-511b1).

A reading of Phaedo based on the currently reigning paradigm of Plato’s development precludes interpreting “the art of Glaucus” on the basis of Republic 10 for the same reason that it forecloses an interpretation of its Final Argument based on the Divided Line. My claim, by contrast, is that these twin foreclosures obscure the dialogue’s “true nature,” and what is more, both are linked to the image of Glaucus by the true nature of the soul, or at least they would be so linked if it were acknowledged that the Shorter Way, which Socrates is following in Republic 4 (R. 435c9-d4), is based on the methods of the Second Part of the Divided Line.41 There Socrates uses the City as an image (R. 368c8-d7),42 and by hypothesizing the Law of Non-Contradiction (R. 437a5), generates an account of the tripartite soul that renders justice choice-worthy even if there are no post-mortem consequences to be considered (R. 366d5-367a5), while in Phaedo, he proves to another pair of matched interlocutors, and by means of yet another triad, that post-mortem continuance accrues to the soul regardless of its practice of justice.43 Given these parallels, perhaps the greatest non-ironic contrast between the two arguments is their location in their respective dialogues: in Republic, the Longer Way follows the Shorter, whereas in Phaedo, the Affinity Argument—which requires the philosopher to master the practice of death (Phd. 64a4-6, 67e5-7, and 80e2-81a3), emancipate herself from the body (Phd. 67c5-e4 and 80d5-81a11), and overcome the desire that leads to repeated incarnations (Phd. 81b1-e2)—precedes the Final Argument.44

The dubious claim that there is any meaningful sense in which the number Three can really be One is a particularly important link between the Shorter Way
in Republic and the Final Argument of Phaedo. In Republic 4, the description of the just soul reaches its climax when Socrates describes it as “a one out of many” (R. 443e1-2), a claim that precedes the discussion of arithmetic in Republic 7, where the infinitely repeatable but also part-less and indivisible One (R. 525d8-526a7), reappearing as the philosopher’s monad in Philebus (Phlb. 56d4-e6), becomes the basis of every number, even and odd, and more importantly is identified as an indispensable propaedeutic for emancipating the soul from the sensible realm of Becoming (R. 524d1-525a8). Despite the Problem of the One and the Many (Phlb. 14c8-10), another unitary Triad reappears in the Final Argument of Phaedo—much as Glaucus will reappear after it is concluded—and does so in order that, having “occupied” three things, it can bring along in its wake an even-excluding oddness that Socrates then uses to prove that soul brings a death-excluding life to the things it occupies. Glauceus appears in Republic to remind the reader of the inadequacy of the Shorter Way’s tripartite soul (R. 611a10-b8), and looking back on it in Republic 10, Socrates claims that he has merely accounted for its present appearance (R. 611c5; cf. R. 435d5-6). Glauceus reappears in Phaedo not only because “Plato the transcendentalist” wants to hammer home the inadequacy of Presocratic physics with the geological myth that follows, but also in order to remind us that without being mindful of the Divided Line, we are apt to take the Final Argument as adequate. My claim, by contrast, is that Plato didn’t regard it as such, and that he expects us to recognize why he doesn’t do so primarily on the basis of what Aristotle will call “the intermediates.” The problem is that we cannot recognize this basis unless we interpret Phaedo in the light of Republic, Parmenides, and Philebus, something the Order of Composition paradigm presently makes it almost impossible to do.

Although the Final Argument has persuaded few (if any) readers that the soul is immortal, it has managed to persuade a great many scholars that Plato embraced what Aristotle calls ἀσύμβλητοι ἀριθμοί, also known as “eidetic” (as opposed to “monadic”) numbers. Despite the elementary arithmetic lesson of Republic 7, the philosopher’s monads of Philebus, and Aristotle’s monad-based critique of ἀσύμβλητοι ἀριθμοί in Metaphysics M-N, many have followed the path John Cook Wilson laid out in 1904, maintaining that Plato’s numbers were exclusively eidetic, and thus that each “one” of them was a unitary Form. Taking this position on “Plato’s philosophy of mathematics” has required those who embrace it to reject Aristotle’s frequently repeated claim that Plato regarded mathematical objects (τὰ μαθηματικά) as “intermediate [μετάξυ]” with respect to Forms and sensible objects, and since the unitary Triad that brings oddness in its wake in the Final Argument is the best evidence for Plato’s embrace of eidetic number in the dialogues, Phaedo has played a prominent role in the ongoing and still unresolved debate about “intermediates” in Plato, aptly called "the longest running show in town." Increasing the importance of Phaedo in this debate is the fact that many have also found evidence for Plato’s embrace of the “intermediates” in the famous words αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα (Phd. 74c1) in the Recollection Argument. This mixed message should be regarded as deliberate on Plato’s part, and therefore instructive. An old debate about Plato’s so-called “philosophy of mathematics” has but little connection to what most of us currently find interesting in Phaedo, but it really goes to the heart of the matter: the true purpose of Plato’s immortal dialogue on immortality. My claim is that Plato’s Phaedo is not designed to prove that our souls are immortal regardless of how we live our mortal lives, but rather to persuade us to acquire immortality by following Socrates back down into the Cave in full knowledge—thanks to the art of Glauceus—that the sensible world is nothing more, and that our soul, no longer imaged as tripartite, can only become itself among the Ideas (Phd. 81a4-11). When Phaedo is read as the culmination
of the Platonic dialogues as a whole, its Final Argument can be recognized as deliberately inadequate not simply because it fails to prove that the soul will survive multiple incarnations, but more importantly because the dialogue’s true purpose is to persuade us to overcome the desire that leads to its reincarnation (Phd. 81b1-e2), and thus to emancipate ourselves from the submerged semi-vision imposed by the body—a semi-vision responsible for both the tripartition of the soul and for the somatic concerns of “Plato the geographer” (cf. Phd. 81b4-5)—by becoming immortal through philosophy, revealed in Phaedo as the practice of death. It is only the Affinity Argument that reminds us of how this is to be accomplished, and to accomplish it we must rise up to the fully transcendent Ideas—the Idea of the Good in particular—by breaching the aquatic surface of the merely sensible. Although useful for reaching that surface from below, “intermediates” like the logically archaic monad, cause of Number in general and not merely of the odd, remain no closer to the intelligible and transcendent than they do to the visible and physical, and the soul will only recover its archaic nature by acquiring the capacity to recognize where to draw the dividing line between the Ideas and merely hypothesized images like “equality,” “bigness,” and “the triad.”

Consider in this context Bostock’s argument that the reference to αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα in the Recollection Argument cannot refer to the so-called “intermediates.”

So far in the Phaedo [sc. up to Phd. 74c1] Plato has spoken of sensible things, such as equal sticks and stones, and of forms, such as the form of equality. But we have been given no suggestion that there is also some third kind of entity intermediate between the two. If Plato meant to introduce a third kind of entity, he could not have imagined that the bare phrase ‘the equals themselves’ would reveal what he had in mind. Therefore, he did not mean to introduce a third kind of entity. The phrase must be intended to refer to something we have had before, and in that case it can only be an alternative expression for the form.

Here then is another example of how developmentalism leads to distortion. On my account, Plato is not introducing “a third kind of entity” in Phaedo; he has already done so in Republic 6-7—necessarily in the juxtaposed context of the Idea of the Good—and has then built on that foundation in Phaedrus, Parmenides, and Philebus. It is on the basis of Philebus, for example, that we can recognize why it is only the philosopher’s monads that are the necessarily plural basis for the enigmatic αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα since all of them are the same (Phlb. 56e2-3). But even more importantly, it is only in Parmenides that “the One,” at once the ἀρχή of τὰ μαθηματικά and Plato’s solution to the Problem of the One and the Many, is explicitly connected to διάνοια (Prm. 143a6-9), already identified with the Second Part of the Divided Line. By echoing the language of the Line’s Second Part in the prelude to the Final Argument (Phd. 99d4-100b9), Plato is not only indicating why that argument must prove to be inadequate, but is challenging us to remember the only truly Platonic path to immortality: the Longer Way, lit by the un-hypothetical Idea of the Good, that has led Socrates, in accordance with Justice, back down to the shadows, and now to the hemlock.

In both dialogues, of course, there is an obvious alternative to this Longer Way, and the emergence of Glaucus at the end of Republic has the purpose of destabilizing what Plato must have recognized as the reader’s natural inclination to regard the tripartite soul of the Shorter Way as his last word on the subject. But the problem becomes particularly acute beginning in nineteenth century: by placing Phaedo before Republic, the Order of Composition paradigm justifies an ongoing fascination with “Plato’s Moral Psychology,” and when Phaedo is reduced to the status of outgrown stage, the revisionist significance of Glaucus in Republic 10 can be
contested. If tripartition were not taken as Plato’s “mature doctrine,” the obvious textual links between *Phaedo* and the Glaucus image—which, as already mentioned, emerges in the context of the soul’s immortality in *Republic*, and then reappears in anticipation of the similarly submerged state Socrates goes on to describe in the geological myth—could at last be given their due. In *Republic* 10, Socrates remarks that it is only by looking to the soul’s φιλοσοφία (*R*. 611d6–612a7) that we can catch sight of Glaucus’ original form, and thus see the soul as something other than “how it appears at present” (*R*. 611c5 and 612a4–6), but it is only in *Phaedo*, where φιλοσοφία is finally revealed as the body- and sense-transcending “practice of death” (*Phd*. 81a2), that Plato teaches us—by precept, example, and by pedagogical challenge—how to accomplish this life-altering result. Deftly enfolding the earlier Cyclical and Recollection Arguments into the dialogue’s Final Argument, Plato restates the lesson of the Glaucus passage only in the Affinity Argument, climaxing as it does with the prophetic Swan Song. There, the undistorted soul is once again revealed by its kinship with the divine, the deathless, and the eternal (*R*. 611e1–2), and it is this Apollonian Song that constitutes the Platonic precept, while Plato’s Socrates, who has followed the course of Justice back down into the Cave in order to sing it to us, is immortalized there as an emulation-inspiring example.

But thanks to its deliberate inadequacies with respect to proof, *Phaedo* is also a pedagogical challenge in the form of a final examination, and Plato forces us to look beyond the outward appearance of its Final Argument to the substance of our own souls and the merely aqueous world in which we temporarily find ourselves. Better than anyone else, he knows that most of his readers do not recognize that we are living in such a world, and as a generous teacher, he has valuable and salutary lessons even for those of us who don’t; hence the Shorter Way of *Republic* and the Final Argument of *Phaedo*. He allows us, for example, to consider the problem of participation in the theoretical and ultimately physical context of “the big in us” and “the triad,” and not only in the considerably simpler context—at once practical and exemplified—of the kind of causes that Socrates uses to explain his presence in the prison-house (*Phd*. 98d6–99a5). Although Plato has prepared us in *Phaedo* itself to deconstruct “the triad” with “the equals themselves,” and to see through “the beautiful itself, the good, and the big” by means not only of the earlier passage that Frede astutely identified as “quite suspicious” but also the reference to the just, beautiful, and good right before it (*Phd*. 65d4–8), he nevertheless leaves the final decision to us, and is more intent on keeping philosophy alive—even in the deceptive form of a bee’s stinger (*Phd*. 91b7–c6)—than Platonism.

On the other hand, “Plato the transcendentalist” knows that the more we ponder what he meant by “the art of Glaucus,” i.e., the more we read him as Clay did, the closer will we come to seeing the geometrical line that divides the sensible from the transcendent for what it really is: intermediate between the two. Plato has been teaching us this art of seeing, and in a form specifically geared to his culminating *Phaedo*, at least since *Republic* 6, and if we have acquired it, we will recognize that Plato’s last dialogue has more to do with the purification of our souls than with proving them immortal. Rather than reading the Final Argument as evidence for a version of the Theory of Forms that the mature Plato would reject, Plato’s advanced students are therefore given the opportunity to purify their souls from an attachment to the merely physical—i.e., to acquire immortality through “the art of Glaucus”—by recognizing the “intermediate” status of merely hypothetical images in comparison with the Good, the Beautiful, and the Just.

In conclusion: recognizing the connection between “the art of Glaucus” in *Phaedo* and Socrates’ image of the true nature of the soul in *Republic* 10 is only the tip of a hermeneutic iceberg. Eventually, perhaps, we will realize that Plato entrusted
his last word to the immortal Socrates who calmly drinks the hemlock, and not to an Athenian Stranger who recommends imbibing wine, its antidote (Ly. 219e2-4), 87 and thus to read Phaedo not only in the context of Meno and Protagoras, 88 but also of both Timaeus and Laws. 89 Only by transcending the distortions of developmentalism can we begin to take seriously the fact that Plato placed his Apology of Socrates where the missing Philosopher would have been, and thus become less inclined to accept the reigning orthodoxy that the Eleatic Stranger constitutes any kind of improvement on the son of the midwife Phaenarete. 90 Toward this end, Clay has put us on the right track by emphasizing the dependence of Phaedo on Republic, and I would add that the reason the last word in Phaedo is “most just” (Phd. 118a17) is because Socrates has followed the Longer Way: by dying in what he had recognized as a prison-house long before being confined to a literal one (Grg. 492e7-493b3 and Cra. 400b8-d2), 91 he completes the process that first became explicit with the word κατέβην immunity in the context of the soul innate to the tripartite soul of the Shorter Way as a prison-house, Socrates us. er t. The Order of Composition paradigm blocks the path to recognizing this kind of completion, and I am therefore proposing a paradigm-shift based on reviving the ancient concern with Reading Order. A re-ordering of the Platonic dialogues based on pedagogical considerations restores the dramatic τέλος of Socrates’ story to its rightful place, and frees it from the disfigurement that follows directly from imagining Phaedo as an outgrown stage of Plato’s Development.

Resumen

En 1985, Diskin Clay usó la imagen de Sócrates del alma encarnada en el libro 10 de la República para elucidar el enigmático “arte de Glauco” mencionado en el Fedón. A pesar de la conexión entre Glauco y las “imágenes submarinas” del mito geológico que le acompañan, el artículo de Clay ha recibido poca atención, probablemente debido a que ambos, la República y el Fedro—al cual también se refiere—son considerados generalmente como “posteriores” al Fedón. Considerando al Fedón como parte de la etapa del “desarrollo de Platón,” las interpretaciones basadas en el orden cronológico de composición, lo han, asimismo, desfigurado, y por ende un nuevo “arte de Glauco” es necesario para recobrar su naturaleza original. De acuerdo con la historia convencional, el Fedón introduce la Teoría de las Formas—a pesar de que Sócrates afirma allí que él repetidamente la ha discutido—mientras que el Parménides somete la Teoría a una crítica que alegadamente forzó a Platón a abandonarla, aunque es a un jóven Sócrates a quien representa confrontando “el tercer hombre.” Pero cuando se lee el Fedón como la culminación dramática de los dialogos como una totalidad, su Argumento Final—que se refiere a “lo grande”—se mantiene esta en pie revelado como deliberadamente inadecuado, sobre todo debido al énfasis de Sócrates que al introducir las imágenes e hipótesis hace eco al Símil de la Línea. Habiendo fallado en persuadir a sus interlocutores de que el filósofo debe superar su cariño al cuerpo por medio de la práctica de la muerte, Sócrates debe ahora probar que el alma sobrevive a múltiples encarnaciones: para hacerlo, emplea los mismos métodos inadecuados usados en la República: la unidad del alma tripartita del libro 4, que a pesar de que no puede motivar a un retorno voluntario a la Caverna, ahora hace eco mediante una unitaria “idea de tres” que, incluso si logra hacer las cosas que ocupa impar, es inadecuada para probar que el alma es inmortal. El famoso problema del “es igual a sí mismos” debe, del mismo modo, ser examinado en relación con República 7 y Filebo: en vez de considerer “los tres” como una multiplicidad de mónadas, todos iguales entre sí, Sócrates considera la “tríada” unitaria como una Idea en el Argumento Final. Saber dónde trazar la
línea entre las ideas trascendentales y lo que Aristóteles llamó “los intermedios” no sólo presupone nuestra familiaridad con todos los diálogos de Platón, sino también nuestra propia “práctica de la muerte.” Solamente “el arte de Glauco,” aplicado en primer lugar a nuestras propias almas y luego al Fedón de Platón, nos permitirá, reviviendo el platonismo, rescatar a los tres de las distorsiones del desarrollismo.

Notes


4 Cf. Ronna Burger, The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 268n17: “Socrates’ description of the true earth echoes the description he presents to Glaucon, at the conclusion of an argument on the immortality of the ψυχη, of the sea god Glauclus (to whom he may allude at Phaedo 108d): the difficulty of apprehending the true nature of the sea god, concealed by the earthly accretions clinging to him, illustrates the difficulty of apprehending the true nature of the ψυχη itself, whether polyeiotic or monoedetic or whatever it is like, as long as it is not cleaned of the earthly accretions clinging to it (Republic 611b-612a).”


7 See Clay, “Art of Glaukos,” 234 (emphasis mine): “Artisan and creator of harmonies or a man who became a god of the sea and a prophet—which explains the Platonic allusion? The answer to this question can only come from Plato; it comes both from the immediate sequel in the Phaedo and from the Republic, where Socrates offers Glaukos ‘of the sea’ as an image of the disfigurement of the incarnate soul. The immediate sequel of the Phaedo is closely connected with this image in the Republic: both passages treat the theme of the immortal soul, and both illustrate the possibility of transcendence within a hierarchical scheme of sea, earth, and heaven.” Cf. Green, “Platonic Rebirth,” 70: “The name Glaucus is supposed to conjure specific reactions within the reader’s mind between Phaedo and Republic.”
8 A most welcome exception is David Sedley (ed.), *Plato: Meno and Phaedo*, translated by Alex Long (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 105n59: “This may be (a) the Glauce who contrived an ingenious musical instrument out of four disks, which when struck in unison produced a harmony; (b) Glauce of Chios, the inventor of welding (Herodotus 1.25); or (c) the Glauce who possessed some marvelous art, perhaps prophecy, but was lost at sea and became a sea-god, encrusted with barnacles (cf. *Republic* 611c-d).” He then cites Clay. See also Green, “Platonic Rebirth,” 70.


10 Clay, “Art of Glaukos,” 233: “There is another Glaukos who emerges from the depths of the sea, and he points away from Presocratic science and Plato ‘the geographer’ (as Paul Friedlander called him) to Plato the transcendentalist.”

11 R. Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedo: Translated with Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1955), 169: “Well, you know, Simmias, I don’t think it needs a scientific genius [attached note at 169n2 reads: ‘Γλαύκου τέχνη was a proverbial phrase, the origin of which was variously explained by the paroemiographers. Their views are recorded by a scholiast quoted in Burnet’s Appendix II, but I think it unnecessary to give them.’] to explain merely what the account is: but to show that it is true seems to me too difficult even for a great scientist; and not only is the task probably beyond my own powers, but even if I had the knowledge, the span of life left to me seem insufficient for the lengthy argument required.”

12 Cf. *Phd*. 114d8-115a3 (H. N. Fowler translation): “This then is why a man should be of good cheer [θαρρεῖν] about his soul, who in his life has rejected the pleasures and ornaments [οἱ κόσμοι] of the body, thinking they are alien to him and more likely to do him harm than good, and has sought eagerly for those of learning, and after adorning [participle from κοσμεῖν] his soul with no alien ornaments [here κόσμος is merely understood], but with its own proper adornment [κόσμος] of self-restraint and justice and courage and freedom and truth, awaits his departure to the other world, ready to go when fate calls him.” For analysis of this passage, see my *The Guardians on Trial: The Reading Order of Plato’s Dialogues from Euthyphro to Phaedo* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2016), section §14.

13 Note ἑαυτῶν at R. 515a6.


15 Clay, “Art of Glaukos,” 234: “To understand Plato’s allusion to the seagod Glaukos in the *Phaedo*, we must turn with Glaukon to the perspectives of the *Republic*, where the human eye is raised up from ‘the sea in which it now dwells’ (R. 611e5). Here Glaukos is seen in barely recognizable form from a world above; in the *Phaedo* the perspective is reversed.”

16 See Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.10. On Cicero as Platonist (and as the first to identify what we now call “Presocratic Philosophy”), see *The Revival of Platonism in Cicero’s Late Philosophy: Platonis aemulus and the Invention of ‘Cicero’*
17 See *Guardians on Trial*, section §14.

18 A useful place to start is the Fragestellung at Clay, “Art of Glaukos,” 232: “But the question remains: Who is the Glaukos whose art is not needed to rehearse an anonymous description of the true earth, but whose art, as great as it apparently is, cannot persuade of the truth of this description?”

19 See *Guardians on Trial*, chapter 2.

20 See *Guardians on Trial*, section §14.


22 The words εἰκὼς μῦθος appear first in *Ti*. 29d2; for a succinct retelling of “the likely story,” see the first paragraph of the opening paragraph of Lloyd Gerson, “Plato Absconditus” in Gerald Press (ed.), *Who Speaks for Plato?*, 201-210 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 201. For an alternative, see my *The Guardians in Action: Plato the Teacher and the Post-Republic Dialogues from Timaeus to Theaetetus* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2016), especially xiii-xxxvi and section §19.

23 Cf. David Gallop, *Plato, Phaedo; Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 115; I will be using his terminology as follows: as follows: “the Cyclical Argument” (69e6-72e1), 103-13; “the Recollection Argument” (72e3-78b3), 113-37; “the Affinity Argument” (78b4-84b8), 137-46; and “the Final Argument” (102a10-107b10), 192-222.

24 Cf. David Bostock, *Plato’s Phaedo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 3: “From our point of view the most important points are that the *Meno* comes before the *Phaedo*, and the *Republic* comes fairly soon after it, while the *Symposium* is about contemporary. On these points there is no scholarly disagreement at all.”

25 Hackforth, *Plato’s Phaedo*, 11: “If further confirmation be needed of the priority of the *Phaedo* to the *Republic*, it may be found in their different conceptions of the soul.”

26 See Gilbert Ryle, *Plato’s Progress* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 8-17, especially 9-10: “If Plato was anything of a philosopher, then he cannot have been a lifelong Platonist.”


28 Bostock, *Plato’s Phaedo*, 206-7: “After all this criticism [sc. of the theory of forms in *Parmenides* as described on 201-6], what remains of the theory of forms as we find it in *Phaedo*? It seems to me that Plato himself henceforth abandoned the whole notion of forms as standard examples, as things which exemplify unambiguously the properties which perceptible things have only ambiguously. He does not stop
talking about forms, but this way of thinking about them does not recur in any of his writings after the Parmenides. (Nor does the doctrine of recollection.) But whether or not this was Plato's own reaction, it is surely the right reaction.”

29 See Bostock, Plato’s Phaedo, 1-5 (“Introduction: A. Chronology”).

30 A welcome exception is Kenneth Dorter, “The Theory of Forms and Parmenides I” in J. Anton and A. Preus (eds.), Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy III: Plato, 183-202 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 183-184: “If Plato wanted us to take Parmenides’ arguments as decisive, why would he make the victim someone whom he has already depicted as subsequently, and in greater maturity, unshaken in his adherence to the theory?” An excellent question, and followed by a perfect observation in response: “But those who find the theory of forms too speculative for their taste tend to feel the same way about conclusions drawn from Plato’s dramaturgy.”


32 Cicero, De senectute 13.


36 Frede, “Plato on the Body’s Eye,” 197.

37 For further discussion of Frede’s critical response to “the two-world interpretation of Plato’s metaphysics” for the sake of the “secular” reading she recommends, one that would “de-transcendentalize” Plato (“Plato on the Body’s Eye,” 193), see Guardians on Trial, section §16.

38 Frede, “Plato on the Body’s Eye,” 195.

39 Phd. 100b4-7 (translation mine).

40 On “Plato’s Trinity,” see Guardians in Action, xxxiv and section §13.

41 For the connection between the Second Part of the Divided Line and the Shorter Way, see my Plato the Teacher: The Crisis of the Republic (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012), chapter 3, 113-15; the crucial step is to take seriously the first and non-mathematical description of the Line’s Second Part at R. 510b4-8.

42 See Plato the Teacher, section §13, especially 137-39.

43 For the relationship between Phaedo and Republic with respect to the theory and practice of Justice, see Guardians on Trial, section §17.

44 It is this arrangement that explains Socrates’ reference to Penelope (Phd.
Right before introducing the swans of Apollo, Socrates invokes Penelope at the loom as a negative example: he tells his audience that once philosophy has managed to loosen (λύειν at 84a4) our soul’s attachment to the body, it would be senseless to give it back over to pleasures and pains (84a2-7). With respect to the Affinity Argument, the Final Argument reweaves what Socrates has just loosened.

45 A crucial point about the way Plato speaks of Number is made by Nicholas Denyer, *Plato, Protagoras* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 192 (on *Prt.* 356e6-357a1): “the numbers generally were described as ‘the odd and the even’ (cf. e.g. R. 510c, *Tht.* 198a).”

46 Consider R. A. H. Waterfield, “The Place of the *Philebus* in Plato’s Dialogues.” *Phronesis*, 25, no. 3 (1980), 270-305, on 304n69: “When Socrates says that ‘almost everyone’ has agreed to ignore the sort of one-and-many problem which generated the *Phaedo* doctrine, it is far from clear that he includes himself among ‘almost everyone.’” Cf. Dorothea Frede, *Philebos; Platon. Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 115: “Diese vehemenz der Kritik ist um so verwundlinder, als Platon diese Fragen an anderer Stelle durchaus Ernst zu nehmen scheint. Weder in der *Politeia* (523c-525b) noch im *Theaitet* (154d) wird die Problematic von Einheit und Vielheit von Eigenschaften und ihrer Träger als ein Scheinproblem. So fragt man sich, mit welchem Recht Sokrates für seine Zurückweisung dieser Deutung ‘allgemeines Einverständnis’ in Anspruch nimmt, daß man sich mit derlie Kindereien nicht mehr abgibt (14d).” As indicated by the second half of *Prm.*, Plato by no means regards the Problem of the One and the Many as a Scheinproblem; see *Guardians in Action*, section §11.


50 Particularly useful is Jacob Klein, “The Concept of Number in Greek Mathematics and Philosophy” (1939) in Klein, *Lectures and Essays*, 43-52 (Annapolis, MD: St. John’s College Press, 1985), 45-48, including the golden sentence on 48: ‘As far as it is concerned with all visible things, the Pythagorean ‘Arithmetic’ [identified by Klein with ‘eidetic number’] is not merely a ‘mathematical’ discipline (in our sense of this word) but also and mainly a science of the visible universe, a *cosmology*, i.e., the science of the unity and the order of this universe.’ By turning the Many into One (cf. ‘universe’), cosmology tends to trigger the Problem of the One and the Many; only the part-less monad is (by definition and posit) a One evades it. With respect to “Penelope” (see n. 44 above), the One of *Republic* 7 loosens the soul’s connection to the body while, e.g., *Timaeus* reweaves it.


53 Cf. Paul Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1903), 83: “The theory of ideas, the hypostatization of all concepts, once granted, numbers do not differ from other ideas.”


56 For the problems associated with reconciling Aristotle’s testimony on “intermediates” and Form Numbers—particularly by means of an Ableitungssystem—see *Guardians in Action*, 215-18. The Anglophone approach to reconciliation, as opposed to that of Tübingen-Milan, is chronological rather than vertical; see Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 1.lxvii: “We come now to what was probably the last phase in Plato's development of the ideal theory, a phase which is a much less legitimate development of the theory known to us from the dialogues.”

57 See Wedberg, *Plato's Philosophy of Mathematics*, 120-22 and 131-35, Pritchard, *Plato's Philosophy of Mathematics*, 73-78 and 153-54, Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 180-81, and Julia Annas, “On the 'Intermediates.'” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 57, no. 2 (1975), 146-166 on 150: “Aristotle says twice that for Plato numbers were Forms; Plato never says so explicitly, but it is clear from *Phaedo* 101 and 103-105 that he treats number-terms as though they had the same logic as other general terms which he takes to stand for Forms.”

58 For a recent assessment of the status quaestionis, see Lloyd Gerson, *From Plato to Platonism* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 21n39: “Though the matter is controversial, the weight of scholarship since Adam has been in support of Aristotle’s interpretation.” Explaining the reference is James Adam (ed.), *The Republic of Plato*, two volumes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 2.115: “Mathematical units are in every case (ἐκαστόν) equal to each, (πάν παντὶ) and destitute of parts; whereas sensible units (e.g. one horse, one cow etc.) are not equal to each other, and are divisible. In πάν παντὶ Plato copies the formal language of mathematics: cf. ἐκατέραν ἐκατέρα and the like in Euclid passim. For the sense see Phil[ebus] 56 C ff., where these two kinds of number are made the basis of a distinction between philosophical or scientific and popular or unscientific ἀριθμητική. It should be carefully noted that a plurality of mathematical units is expressly recognized both here (ὑον τε ἐκαστόν πάν παντὶ κτλ.) and in Phil. 1. c. (μονάδα μονάδος ἐκάστης τῶν μιρίων μηδεμίαν ἄλλην ἄλλης διαιρέουσαν). This entirely confirms what Aristotle tells us, viz. that Plato placed μαθηματικά between ἀισθητά and εἴδη, τῷ τὰ μὲν πόλλ᾽ ἄττα ὁμοία εἶναι, τὸ δὲ εἴδος ἀυτὸ ἐν ἐκαστον μόνον (Met. A. 6. 987b14 ff.).”

59 Roger A. Shiner, “Knowledge in *Philebus* 55c-62a: A Response.” *Canadian*
This piece includes a well-designed review of the Anglophone literature on this critical topic on 180-183. Up-to-date is Hera S. Arsen, "A Case for the Utility of the Mathematical Intermediates." *Philosophia Mathematica* III 20 (2012), 200-23.


61 Particularly useful is J. M. Rist, “Equals and Intermediates in Plato.” *Phronesis* 9, no. 1 (1964), 27-37, who connects the alternately plural and singular references to both “the three” and “the equals” (29-30), and concludes on 37 (emphasis mine): “we may conclude not only that αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα can not be intermediates, but that, despite difficulties in his conception of mathematical Forms, which a separation of ‘mathematicals’ from Ideas would have dispelled, Plato cannot be shown to have made such a separation in the dialogues.”

62 Cf. Green, “Platonic Rebirth,” 72: “The message [sc. of *Phdr*. 247b-248a] is that through philosophy an individual soul can transcend its environment and attain to a purer, heavenly world above. The Phaedo’s Hollows of the Earth is exactly to do with [sic] the flight of the soul upwards. It has similarities with the simile of the Cave. The three levels [cf. Clay, ‘Art of Glaukus,’ 235: ‘The hierarchical scheme of three levels which structures the world as it is viewed in this passage has its counterpart in the image of the cave in Book VII of the Republic, and its imagery of emergence connects with the central myth of the Phaedrus:’] at Phaedo 109c3-d5 are a counterpart to the image of the Cave (Clay 1985, 235).”

63 For analysis of this passage, see *Guardians on Trial*, section §16.

64 For the equation of the Idea of the Good and the One, see *Plato the Teacher*, section §28 (“Higher Education: Why the Good is not the One”). In common with Hans Joachim Krämer, I identify R. 534b8-d1 (i.e., what I call “the Battle Hymn” of the *Republic*) as a critical text, but we disagree on its implications for the equation. See especially his “Über den Zusammenhang von Prinzipienlehre und Dialektik bei Platon; Zur Definition des Dialektikers Politeia 534 B-C.” *Philologus* 10 (1966), 35-70. Raising the appropriate question on 41—“was sind nun die ἄλλα πάντα, von denen abstrahiert werden soll?”—Krämer deftly restricts these to all other εἰδη, a
restriction warranted only by a prior restriction of the participle ἀφελών at R. 534b9 to “die dihairesis-abstrahierenden Separation und Isolierung eines εἶδος” (40-41; emphasis in original). Pressing the Eleatic Stranger’s “greatest kinds” into service (46-47), he then shows that Einheit is the basis (Grund) of identity, similarity, and equality—as if any of these were possible without at least two things other than themselves (see below)—before allowing himself to claim on this basis (49; the whole is emphasized in the original): “In der Überführung dieser obersten Gattungen [sc. identity, similarity, and equality] in die reine Einheit des Grundes liegt ein Akt dialektisch-synoptischer Abstraktion vor, wie er Politeia 534b für das ἀγαθόν gefordert ist.” In other words: since die reine Einheit is necessarily a product of an Akt of abstraction—as indeed it is, as witnessed by Prm. 143 (see below), although calling this abstraction “dialectical-synoptic” isn’t quite right—it must also be identical to the Idea of the Good because the Battle Hymn asks us to abstract everything else from it. The problem here is that if you abstract everything else from the likes of Krämer or Altman, you get the One, and thus reduced, we could then make the two of them similar, equal, or even identical—this last would require the Akt to be dialektisch-synoptischer—but if you abstract everything else from the Idea of the Good, you get: the Idea of the Good. Equating the One and the Good is a useful pedagogical tool (see n. 83 below) because anyone who accepts it has failed to grasp the essential difference between the First and Second Parts of the Divided Line.

65 The ἀκμή of deliberate inadequacy in the Final Argument is reached at Phd. 105c4-6, where Socrates claims, in accordance with “the subtler [κομψοτέρον] theory,” that the monad is the cause of oddness. Plato had ensured almost from the start (Alc. 2 140a7-9) that every neophyte would reject the preceding claim (Phd. 105c2-4) that it is not by disease that we are diseased, but rather by fever (see Gallop, Plato: Phaedo, 209-11), and therefore that his very next claim requires the closest possible scrutiny, served up at Bae, “Soul and Intermediates,” 181-82: “before he launches on the Final argument Socrates criticizes other causal explanations given by scientists or materialists [100e8-101c2]. The criticism revealed that he tacitly endorses the following principle of causation: ‘If something is responsible for making others F, it is itself to be characterized as F.’ This was clear, for instance, in his objection to citing a small head as the cause of something’s being large [101b1].” This leads to her perfect epitaph for the Final Argument on 193 (emphasis mine): “The principle [sc. that ‘what makes something odd is itself odd’ on 182] is of course crucial to Socrates’ ultimate purpose of proving soul’s immortality: Viewing the soul as one of such causes that satisfy the principle [vitiated deliberately by the later claim that the cause of oddness is the (oddness of the) μονάς, at 105c5; for background, see J. E. Raven, Pythagoreans and Eleatics (London: Cambridge University Press, 1948),116-18 and 138-39 and John Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy, fourth edition (London: Macmillan, 1930), 288] will directly yield the desired conclusion that it is deathless. And yet it is a dubious one, likely to be the main culprit for the failure of Socrates’ Final argument to convince readers of the soul’s immortality.” Just as the Glaucus passage illustrates the inadequacy of the tripartite soul of the Shorter Way, so too does “the monad as the cause of oddness” passage (see Hackforth, Plato; Phaedo, 158n2; note well that this remaining monad is necessarily nothing more than one of multiple monads, and not the eidetic “form of One”) does the same to “the Idea of Three,” whether because it (1) falsely configures “one” as odd, (2) creates an equivocation on μόνας, or (3) because it does both simultaneously. For the equivocation, see Gallop, Plato: Phaedo, 209 (“‘oneness’ (or ‘a unit’)”) and 210 (emphasis mine): “The word translated ‘oneness’ at 105c6 may stand for the Form of One, as it clearly does at 101c6 [he’s still using Burnet’s OCT]. But it may also be
66 It is because the Second Part of the Divided Line consists of “intermediates,” i.e., not only the τὰ μαθηματικὰ of Aristotle but rather all intelligible images of sensible things based on the hypothesis that each set of Many can be cognized as a One, that explains the equality in length of the Second and Third parts of the line; see Plato the Teacher, section §13, especially 136-36.

67 It is the singular “equality” (ἡ ἰσότης) and the oft-repeated “the equal itself” (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον beginning at 74a12) that causes the trouble, not αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα, and it was the great service of P. T. Geach to point out that the latter was a preferable formulation; see his “The Third Man Again.” Philosophical Review 65, no. 1 (January 1956), 72-82 on 76 (emphasis mine): “Another case in which our natural assumptions when we use abstract nouns diverge from Plato’s is that of abstract nouns expressing plurality. For us, plurality is not plural; nor is equality or similarity plural, though it takes two things at least to be equal or similar.” Conversely, it is loyalty to a unified plurality like αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον that bedevils Gregory Vlastos, “Postscript to the Third Man: A Reply to Mr. Geach” in R. E. Allen (ed.), Studies in Plato’s Metaphysics, 279-291 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Humanities Press, 1965) on 287-88: “But that the expression [sc. αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα] does refer to the Form, Equality, is proved by the sequel in the text.” Equality—like both likeness and difference in this respect—exists only in relation to two or more things, and therefore a perfectly monadic “equality” without any parts is every bit as self-contradictory as an “atomic line” (see Plato the Teacher, section §28) and for exactly the same reason: just as a line is intermediate between two points, so too is the equal either intermediate between “the greater and the less” (as at Phlb. 24e7-25b4 and Prm. 164e3-165a5) or—and this is the true Platonic solution—it is the very thing that led Aristotle to distinguish τὰ μαθηματικὰ from the Ideas: all of them were equal. And once we grasp that the paradigmatic equals (αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα) are uniquely the philosopher’s monads out of which “the Odd and the Even” (see n. 45 above) are composed, we can then add a third deliberate self-contradiction to ἡ ἰσότης and “the atomic line,” likewise testing our grasp of the difference between Ideas and τὰ μαθηματικὰ: what Aristotle called ἀσύμβλητοι ἀριθμοί. And all three of these self-contradictions attracted Aristotle’s critical attention, and he refuted all three as if he were refuting Plato without fully realizing why it was so easy for him to do so.

68 Recall Frede’s comments about “tallness” quoted above: she pointed out that there is no μέγεθος without bodies. What allows “the Third Man” to cut against “bigness” is that it is the hypostatization of a sensible property, inhering originally in bodies, and rendered unitary only by a process of dianoetic abstraction, i.e., in accordance with διάνοια (cf. Phdr. 249b6-c5).

69 Bostock, Plato, Phaedo, 80.

70 As indicated in n. 68, Phdr. 249b6-c5 is a crucial text because it describes the process by which many sense experiences are synthesized into one; for discussion, see Guardians in Action, section §11.

71 An argument for the claim that Plato discovered or invented “pure” units (i.e., separate from “objects of sense”) “which are indivisible, of the same kind, and accessible only to thought”—as opposed to the claim itself, which is mine—is found (as are the previous quotations) in Jacob Klein, Greek Mathematical Thought and the
especially in discussing numbers, Aristotle never tires of stressing that Plato, in opposition to the Pythagoreans, made them ‘separable’ from objects of sense, so that they appear ‘alongside perceptible things’ (παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητά) as a separate realm of being.” While it is true that neither Klein nor anyone else I have discovered has made the claim that these separate monads were Plato’s invention, no other person or group is credited with having made that discovery either—the fullest ancient account is Iamblichus (In Nicomachi Arithmeticam Introductionem, 10.8-13.4; Pistelli), and it sheds no light on the matter—yet someone must have made it. In this context, consider Klein again (70-71), this time interspersed with some comment: “Yet it is not unimportant to note that the emphasis with which the thesis ['hypothesis' would be better; cf. 71] of ‘pure’ monads is propounded [sc. by Plato] is indicative of the fact that arithmoi were ordinarily [which I would now gloss as ‘previously’], and as a matter of course [as, for example, by the Egyptians, from whom Iamblichus tells that Thales learned the definition of ἀριθμός as μονάδων σύστημα (11.1)], understood only as definite numbers of sensible objects. The thought of ‘pure’ numbers separated from all body is originally so remote that it becomes the philosopher’s task [cf. Philb. 56d5-6] precisely to point out emphatically [as Plato was clearly the first, if not the only, one to do] the fact that they are independent and detached, and to secure this fact against all doubt. In short, while Klein does not assert that Plato invented these “independent and detached” numbers, “separated from all body,” it is impossible to name anyone better qualified to have done so, and attributing this discovery to Plato makes him a mathematical pioneer without imagining that he made any significant contribution to what would now be called “higher mathematics.” Consider Socrates’ claim in Republic 7 that “those who are expert in the subject” (οἰ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοί at R. 525d9) refuse to permit divisions inside the One. As indicated by the discomfiture of Theaetetus, a mathematical prodigy, with respect to the alleged unity of “six” (Tht. 205a7), this is scarcely true if by οἰ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοί we mean mathematicians like this precocious young man, but it applies well—and perfectly playfully—to Plato on my account.

72 The importance of the heretofore overlooked passage linking the One to διάνοια in Prm. for the debate about “intermediates” in Plato cannot be overestimated, especially since Ross, Plato’s Theory of Ideas, 58-62 concludes that best evidence for them are the passages about the One in R. 7 and Phlb. Perhaps the best argument against “intermediates” in Plato—by contrast, the claim that τὰ μαθηματικά are Forms, as in Nicholas D. Smith, “Plato’s Divided Line.” Ancient Philosophy 16 (1996), 25-46 on 42 begs the question (note also his reliance on Ross at 35n27)—is that Plato does not spell out the doctrine in the Divided Line; see R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, Plato’s Republic: A Philosophical Commentary (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), 235-36, climaxing with: “If the doctrine [sc. of intermediates] does appear in the Republic, it is something new, and one would expect Plato to introduce it as such, explain it, and express it in unambiguous language. In fact, however, this is not done.” The explanation for this silence must be pedagogical—Plato requires us to discover this crucial point for ourselves—and this is why, “having hypothesized the odd and the even” at R. 510c3-4, he makes the link between the One and διάνοια explicit only in Prm.

73 Cf. Adam, Republic of Plato, 2.67 (ον ἀρχὴν ἀνυπόθετον): “The only ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος is the Idea of the Good: cf. VII 532a f.” This brief comment explains perfectly: (1) that the reason we are made to wait until R. 532a5-b2 for textual confirmation that the ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος is the Idea of the Good, is (2) the same
reason why Socrates does not specifically identify the One as a merely hypothetical ἀρχή in the Divided Line, providing instead the necessary data to do so in the arithmetic section of Republic 7 with confirmation postponed until Prm., and finally (3) why the deliberately false claim that the Idea of the Good is the One (see n. 64) is a perfect test of whether the student has achieved the insights motivating both ‘(1)’ and ‘(2),’ and hence is ready to say, along with the great Adam: “The only ἀρχή ἀνυπόθετος is the Idea of the Good.”

74 For the claim that Justice compels the philosopher to return to the Cave voluntarily, see Plato the Teacher, chapter 4.

75 The lesson of the Glaucus image is thus the retrospective counterpart of the prospective R. 435c9-d4; see Plato the Teacher, section §12.

76 See Guardians in Action, preface and section §19.

77 For a recent indication of interest, see Rachel Barney, Tad Brennan, and Charles Brittain (eds.), Plato and the Divided Self (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).


79 As in Louis A. Ruprecht Jr., Symposia: Plato, the Erotic, and Moral Value (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 29; cf. Lloyd Gerson, “Review of Klaus Corcilius and Dominik Perler (eds.), Partitioning the Soul: Debates from Plato to Leibniz.” Bryn Mawr Classical Review (2016.03.12): “For Descartes, psychical conflict is really a conflict between body and soul, not among putative parts of the soul itself. Thus, Descartes ignores the complex argument of Plato’s Republic to return to what appears to be the relatively crude body/soul dualism of Phaedo.”

80 Cf. Grg. 481c3-4 and Cicero, De re publica, 6.18 (Powell). Note also the following analogy: Glaucus in Republic 10 : Cave :: Geographical Myth in Phaedo : Somnium Scipionis in Cicero. In the first two, living beneath the earth's surface causes distortion, in the second pair, the greater reality made possible by the heavens renders the earth's surface the locus of distortion.

81 Cf. David Gallop, “Plato’s ‘Cyclical Argument’ Recycled.” Phronesis 27, no. 3 (1982), 207-222. While Gallop has shown that the Cyclical Argument is both cast aside and subsumed by the Final Argument in something resembling a Hegelian Aufhebung (217), the connection between the Final Argument and the Recollection Argument is rooted in the dianoetic intermediates (note the emphasis on sense perception beginning at Phd. 74b4; cf. 74c8, 75b5, 75c1, 75c4, and 75c7, particularly ἐκ τῶν αἰσθήσεων at 75a6-7 and 75a11) upon which both depend. This reliance is not accidental: in order to answer Cebes, Socrates must “busy himself with the cause of generation [γένεσις] and corruption” (Phd. 95e10-96a1) and this means that the Forms must be forced to explain Becoming, on which see Guardians in Action, section §3.

and Boston: Brill, 2003), especially 229-231.

83 Based on Grg. 486d2-487e3, I have named this kind of pedagogy “basanistic,” since it tests the student’s grasp of the true teaching, much as a “true/false” question does. In addition to “Reading Order of Plato’s Dialogues,” section §2, and Plato the Teacher, section §8 (where an analysis of R. 347d2-d8 is used to introduce the concept), see Guardians in Action, sections §2 and §18, and Guardians on Trial, sections §1 and §7.


85 For the multiple expressions—some singular, some plural—for both “the three” of the Final Argument and for “equality” in the Recollection Argument, see Rist, “Equals and Intermediates,” 29-30. I regard the resulting confusion as productive in accordance with maieutic pedagogy. We need only ask if “equality” presupposes at least two things that are equal, and whether “three” counts three non-numerical monads.

86 See Guardians on Trial, section §16.


89 See Guardians on Trial, sections §13 and §14.


91 For the relationship of Phd. and Cra., see Guardians on Trial, section §15.
Plato’s *Phaedo* on rational suicide

Araújo, Carolina

λύσει μ’ γάμα χαιρετάς, ἵπταν ἐγὼ θελω.

Euripides, *Bacchae*, 498

Plato’s *Phaedo* is the groundwork for the philosophical discussion on suicide, a most urgent philosophical problem in times of assisted euthanasia laws and suicidal bombers. The text presents two analogies (the body as a sentinel and human beings as god’s possessions – 62b1-8), which formed the basis for the theistic arguments against suicide in Augustine and Aquinas. It also introduces an exception clause to this general rule – until god sends a necessity like the one now put upon us (πρὶν ἀνάγκην τῶν θεῶν ἔπιπέμψῃ, ὡσπερ καὶ τὴν νῦν ἡμῖν παροῦσαν - 62c7-8) – which was interpreted by philosophers such as Epictetus and Olympiodorus as a defense of suicide justified by some special circumstances. The aim of this paper is to argue that Plato’s *Phaedo* depicts Socrates’ death as a rational suicide justified not by circumstances but by a strict conception of the self. I set myself to answer four questions: (1) how can Socrates’ death on Plato’s account be considered a suicide?; (2) how can Socrates forbid suicide in general and consider his suicide moral?; (3) why was Socrates’ suicide rational? and (4) why is Socrates’ suicide not a kind of suicide justified by circumstances?

1. Socrates’ death was a suicide

Suicide is a polemical philosophical concept. Spinoza, for example, has shown it to be an inconsistent concept because it implies a deceptive duplication of oneself. The problem of the self is important for the argument I want to give; therefore, in order to respond to Spinoza and develop a consistent concept, I suggest a more restricted definition of suicide. For the purpose of this paper suicide is defined as an intentional act in which the agent produces the causes of his own death. At first sight this may seem incompatible with the main circumstance of Socrates’ death: the execution of a death penalty. However, as the *Crito*, 44b5-c5 and the *Phaedo* 98e5-99a4 both show, death was not his only alternative and, as Plato’s *Apology*, 32b5-e1 testifies, civil disobedience had already been Socrates’ choice at least twice in his life. Moreover, the *Phaedo* does not focus on the injustice of this death penalty; it rather emphasizes Socrates’ extraordinary serenity and how his end was fearless and noble (ὡς ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως ἐτελεύτα - 58e4-5). As I am about to argue, Plato’s focus in this dialogue is Socrates’ *eudaimonia* at death (58e3).

2. Socrates’ suicide is moral

Socrates’ point against suicide in the beginning of the dialogue refers specifically to the cases in which violence to oneself is involved (τὸ μὴ θεμιτὸν εἶναι


3 See Cholbi, M. *Suicide: the philosophical dimensions*. Broadview, 2011.


The controversial passage 62a-7, in which Socrates supposedly says that prohibition of suicide is a law to all human beings without exception, once carefully understood, actually states that human beings are not allowed to commit suicide without the external intervention of a benefactor (ἄλλον δεῖ περιμένειν εὐεργέτην – 62a7), an agent who will turn killing into an act of piety (μὴ ὅσιον αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοὺς εὖ ποιεῖν – 62a6-7). As long as suicide is based on the necessity sent by god (62c7), it is not a homicide (see 62c1-4) because its purpose is not destructive, it is not an act of violence (61d4) but rather a benefit to the killed (ἑαυτοὺς εὖ ποιεῖν -62a7). Socrates’ death, as one moment of his usual «obedience to the god» (ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἡγοῦμαι ἡμοίους τε εἶναι τῶν κύκνων – 85b4-5), shall not be considered impious or immoral.

The justification for this apparent paradox is to be found in Socrates’ understanding of death. Death, according to Plato’s Phaedo, is separation of body and soul in two senses: as an immediate act, the phenomenon of death (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλαγήν - 64c4-5), and as a process of distinction, the exercise of death (λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος; 67d4-5). The connection between these two senses is not metaphorical; it is based on a very specific concept of death as accomplishment of one’s true self through separation. In identifying his self to the soul, Socrates’ claims throughout the Phaedo are that his death is not his destruction (see for example 115c6-116a1); it is not even the destruction of his body, which will remain (αὐτὸ καθ› αὑτὸ τὸ σῶμα γεγονέναι - 64c6). Dying is the preservation of self-identity of these two substances.

Many are the critics who have seen this kind of argument as absurd. Dorter, for example, concludes: «the arguments are all equally fallacious since their principle assumes the presence of an attribute after the substance has ceased to exist». In response, I would say that the Phaedo denies this notion of an individual as a substance of attributes, and defends an identity constituted by a set of attributes that are non-corporeal, the self as a kind of hexis that is preserved, even when the composite has ceased to exist, for example in memory or in intellect. The problem of the self is therefore both an epistemological and a practical challenge for human life: to discover our true being requires rigorous intellectual examination (ὅς ἂν μάλιστα ἡμῶν καὶ ἀκριβέστατα παρασκευάσηται αὐτὸ ἐκαστὸν διανοηθῆναι περὶ ὅν σκοπεῖ, αὐτὸς ἄν ἐγγύτατα τοῦ γνῶναι ἐκαστὸν – 65e2-5) and the acquisition of phronesis (65a9), i.e., the psychological state, a hexis, a disposition, in which we cease to err and rest on our own identity (ὅτανπερ αὐτὴ καθ› αὑτὴν γένηται καὶ πέπαυταί τε τοῦ πλάνου καὶ περὶ ἐκείνα ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως ἔχει - 79d4-5). Described as the only true virtue, because it promotes indifference to death by eliminating fear and desire (69a9-10), phronesis is a disposition in which the two substances, body and soul, have already been separated in a human being (see κεκαθαρμένος at 69c6). In arguing that Socrates’ death was a moral suicide, I claim that, because of his phronesis, it is non-violent: it does not destroy the body and does not threaten his permanent disposition, the Socratic self. The divine necessity present in Socrates’s death (62c7) is his phronesis, the fact that he is a true Bacchant, and not a mere thyrsus bearer (69c8-d1), or, in other words, the fact he knows who he is and he is who he is.

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7 Miles, M. Plato on suicide. Phoenix, 55 (2001), 244-258 claims that the moral prohibition of suicide is not inconsistent with the non-moral preference for death; I take it that any justification of both under the account of a greatest good will imply on inconsistency.


10 See also Cebes’ objection in 70b1-4: ὡς ἔστι τε ψυχὴ ἀποθανόντος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τῶν δύναμιν ἔχει καὶ φρόνηται.

11 Therefore the god’s necessity is neither a coercion nor, as Duff suggests, a limitation to Socrates’ intention (Duff, R. A. Socratic Suicide? Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 83 (1982-1983), 35-47).
3. Socrates’ suicide is rational

Before we proceed it is important to dismiss the impression that Socrates’ suicide was a choice of pure religious fanaticism. There is abundant evidence in the Phaedo that the acknowledgment of the «necessity sent by god» must be a rational act. 12 For instance, Socrates claims that it is in reasoning that reality becomes manifest (Ἕρ' οὖν οὐκ ἐν τῷ λογίζεσθαι ἔπερ ποι ἄλλοθι ἰγνωται τί τῶν ὄντων; 65c2-3) and that misology is the worst enemy to be combatted (ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐφ' ὅτι ἂν τις μείζον τούτοι κακὸν πάθην ἢ λόγους μισήσας - 89d3-2). He also says that whatever he does is based on a rational choice about what is best (ὡς μέντοι διὰ ταύτα ποιῶ ἢ ποιῶ, καὶ ταύτα νῦ πράττων, ἀλλ' οὖ τῇ βελτίστου αἱρέσει – 99a7-b1).

The strict notion of self-identity as a permanent disposition discussed in the previous section is not enough to justify Socrates’ decision to die. It does not prevent him from going on living as the person he was, indifferent if he was dead or alive.13 His rational motivation for the act of suicide is to be found in his understanding of causality (αἰτία) and agent responsibility (αἴτιον).14 For Socrates, a real αἰτία is an account that justifies why it is best for something to exist, to come to be or to perish (εἰ οὖν τις βούλοιτο τὴν αἰτίαν εὑρεῖν περὶ ἕκαστου ὅπη γίγνεται ἢ ἀπόλλυται ἢ ἔστι, τούτο δὲν περὶ αὐτοῦ εὑρεῖν, ὅτι βελτίστον αὐτῷ ἔστιν ἢ εἶναι ἢ ἄλλο ὀτιϊν πάσχειν ἢ ποιεῖν – 97c-6d1), i.e., a cause is what accounts for being qua its best disposition (βελτίστον αὐτὰ ὀυτῶς ἔχειν ἐστίν ὧσπερ ἔχει – 98a9).15 On the other hand, the agent truly responsible for some effect, the αἴτιον, is the one without which there would be no responsibility (τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὀντι, ἄλλο δὲ ἐκείνο ἀνεύ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἃν ποτ' ἐφ' αἴτιον – 99b3-4). Socrates clearly does not agree with his executioner in that the rulers are the ones responsible for his death (γιγνώσκεις γὰρ τοὺς αἰτίους, ἄλλα ἐκείνους – 116c7-8). In his view what happened was that the Athenians did what seemed to be best to do, and Socrates did what seemed to him the best to do (τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας λέγειν, ὅτι, ἐπειδὴ Ἀθηναίοις ἔδοξε βέλτιον εἶναι ἐμοῦ καταψηφίσασθαι, διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καθῆσθαι, καὶ δικαίωτερον παραμένοντα ἡν ἂν κελεύσωσιν· – 98e1-5). Both agents decided according to what they thought was best (see also υπὸ δόξης φερόμενα τοῦ βελτίστου – 99a2) and they were both responsible for their choices.

Up to this point there could still be doubts about whether to describe Socrates’ death as a death penalty or as a suicide, but Socrates does not leave the things there. He presents himself as the agent who decided to die (τῇ τοῦ βελτίστου αἱρέσει – 99b1) and not simply to place his muscles and bones in Megara or Beotia (πάλαι ἂν ταῦτα τὰ νεῦρα καὶ τὰ ὀστᾶ ἢ περὶ Μέγαρα ἢ Βοιωτοὺς ἦν – 98e5-99a1). If the account of causes in the Phaedo16 aims at specifying what is the major factor responsible an event (99b3-4), it concludes that the decision of the Athenians was a concurrent

12 Against Warren, J. Socratic suicide. JHS, 121 (2001), 91-106, I would argue that the necessity sent by the gods cannot be a simple sign (62c2), as Socrates’ dream about making poetry (60e1-3).

13 I understand that all other motivations he mentions in what he considers to be his apology (63b1-69e4), such as meeting with the gods and the wise (63b5-c4, 68a1-6) or being able to acquire a full wisdom (66e6-67a6) are only hopes to whose truth Socrates is not willing to commit himself (see the recurrence of ἐλπίς in 63c1, 63c5, 68a1, 68a8).

14 “Aition’ is just the neuter of the adjective ‘aitios’ which originally meant ‘culpable, responsible, bearing the blame’, whereas the ‘aitia’ is the accusation, what somebody is charged with having done such that he is responsible for what happened as a result”. Frede, M. «The original notion of cause». In:_____ Essays in Ancient Philosophy. Minneapolis, 1987. p. 129.

15 Granting Sedley’s thesis, that a Platonic cause is something responsible for X, and that how the effect is achieved is secondary, it is the conception of what is best that justifies for Socrates’ death (Sedley, D. «Platonic causes», Phronesis, 43 (1998), 114-132).

16 In aiming since his youth at knowing the cause for something to come to being, to perish or to exist (ὑπερήφανοι γὰρ μοι ἐδόκει εἶναι, εἰδέναι τὰς αἰτίας ἑκάστου, διὰ τί γίγνεται ἕκαστον καὶ διὰ τὶ ἀπολλυται καὶ διὰ τί ἔστι - 96a9-7), Socrates, although disappointed with Anaxagoras, understands that the intelligence is the cause of everything (97c1-3, see for his understanding: τῆς αἰτίας περὶ τῶν ὄντων κατὰ νοῦν ἐμαυτῷ, 97d7), because intelligence would establish a good order in which everything is disposed for its best.
factor, a *sunaitia*, and Socrates was the ultimate responsible agent of his own death. And he justifies his choice based on justice and beauty (ei μὴ δικαιότερον ὑμιν καὶ κάλλιον εἶναι πρὸ τοῦ φεύγειν τε καὶ ἀποδιδάσκειν ὑπέχειν τῇ πόλει δίκην ἣντιν ἄν τάττῃ. - 99a2-4), i.e., if real causes describe what is best for any entity, if human beings aim at what is best for them (97d1-4), dying was the best for Socrates’ being.

4. Socrates’ suicide is not justified by circumstances

Suicide justified by circumstances is a rational choice between future prospects possible in a specific moment of life.17 The most relevant example of this case can be found Xenophon’s *Apology*, 6.1-7.5, according to which Socrates decided to die because old age would make living not worthwhile. Some interpreters have understood Plato’s point in the *Phaedo* to be the same as Xenophon’s and they have read the ἀνάγκη sent by the god as a case of suicide in circumstances of coercion, very similar to the one defended and performed by Seneca18, in which a misfortune presses for a specific decision about the value of life. However, we cannot fail to notice that, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates describes his present situation as not one of misfortune (οὐ συμφορὰν ἡγοῦμαι τὴν παροῦσαν τύχην – 84e1). Neither can we dismiss Socrates’ distinction between courage facing death due to cowardice or due to *phronesis* (68d2-e1). In his defense of true virtue, Socrates claims that the choice for death justified by fear of a greater evil is false courage (69b6-c3; see also 62e2-3). The real cause of the moral suicide cannot be the relief from pain or the unworthiness of life or any other fear. Socrates’ moral suicide therefore does not allow any scapist argument and it should not be attributed to coercive circumstances.

Socrates’ suicide was a choice based on arguments about the self. I opened this paper mentioning Spinosa’s thesis that suicide as self-killing is metaphysically impossible because it implies a false duplication of oneself. He claims that the desire for self-killing cannot come from the essence of the agent that kills. Plato’s *Phaedo* agrees with Spinosa to the extent that the destruction of the self is impossible and that in this description suicide would be a logical mistake. However Plato’s *Phaedo* presents a different description of suicide as the soul’s decision to distinguish itself from the body. This singular description was the reason why we began with a more prudent concept of suicide, in which death was not described as destruction and in which agent causation played an important role. Against Spinosa, Socrates provides a much more reasonable description of the act of suicide as separation, while still claiming that the killing of the self is impossible. Moreover, in identifying the self with the soul, Socrates can give an account of suicide that is not pathological, neither in the sense of an acratic ruling of passions over reason, nor in the medical sense in which we today tend to classify attempts of suicide.

It is Socrates’ concept of the self that marks the singularity of the *Phaedo* as an extraordinary death scene, and a good conclusion for it would be Cioran’s famous quote: «Le suicide est paroxisme de la salut”19 Socrates’ happiness reflects the integrity of his notion of self, which is independent of his body. This of course answers Nietzsche’s wrong assumption that Plato’s *Phaedo* depicts Socrates as considering life a disease.20 Both his life and his death were completely healthy, a health for which to thank Asclepius.

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17 Plotinus, *Enn*. I, 9, 11-14 argues that if the wise man perceives that he is beginning to loose his sense, he will consider this as a necessity that must be chosen according to circumstances, and according to the general rule. Cicero’s formula is: “when he sees in prospect a majority of things contrary to nature” (De fin., III, 18, 60). The arguments are very similar to the contemporary arguments for legitimation of assisted suicide (see Bradley, B. *Well being and death*. Oxford, 2009).


Abstract

This paper argues that Plato’s *Phaedo* depicts Socrates’ death as a rational suicide justified by a strict conception of the self. It begins defining suicide as an intentional act in which the agent produces the causes of his own death and proceeds by arguing that the *Phaedo* does not focus on the issue of the death penalty but rather on Socrates’ *eudaimonia* at death. It claims that the controversial passage 62a1-7 allows an exception to the prohibition of suicide in cases in which there is no violence (61d4) and which constitute a benefit to the killed (62a7). This exception is possible because Socrates rejects the understanding of death as destruction, and presents his own conception of death as the preservation of beings through separation. In identifying the self with the soul, Socrates considers it a type of disposition that is preserved when it has ceased to exist, even if only through memory and intellect. The self is not a given to human beings, but a challenge to them, and *phronesis* is the virtue of those who are able to understand and live up to their selves.

In arguing that Socrates’ death was a moral suicide, this paper states that, because Socrates is *phronimos*, there is no violence in his death: it does not destroy the body and does not threaten his permanent disposition, the Socratic self. Moreover, it argues that Socrates’ death was rationally justified by his understanding of causality (αἴτια) and agent responsibility (αἴτιον). Socrates presents himself as the agent who decided to die (τῇ τοῦ βελτίστου αἱρέσει – 99b1) and not simply to place his muscles and bones in Megara or Beotia (98e5-99a1). If the account on causes in the *Phaedo* aims at specifying what is the major factor responsible for an event (99b3-4), it concludes that the decision of the Athenians was a concurrent factor, a *sunaitia*, and Socrates was the ultimate responsible agent of his own death. Finally, this paper claims that Socrates’ death was not a suicide justified by circumstances. In these cases, a rational choice between future prospects possible in a specific moment of life is involved. This is not the case of the *Phaedo*, which is not a circumstance of misfortune (84e1) and which argues that the real cause of the moral act cannot be the relief from pain or the unworthiness of life or any other fear (68d2-e1, 69b6-c3; see also 62e2-3).

The paper concludes by showing that the description of the act of suicide as separation that we find in the *Phaedo* is a much more reasonable description than the usual and paradoxical notion of self-killing. Moreover, in identifying the self with the soul, Socrates can give an account of suicide that is not pathological, neither in the sense of an acratic ruling of passions over reason, nor in the medical sense in which we today tend to classify attempts of suicide. Finally, for claiming that the killing of the self is impossible, and that suicide can be rationally justified, the *Phaedo* opens a promising perspective on the contemporary discussion about justifiable suicide.

Résumé

Cet article soutient que le *Phédon* de Platon présente la mort de Socrate comme un suicide rationnel justifié par une stricte conception de « moi ». Il commence pour définir le suicide comme un acte intentionnel dans lequel l’agent produit les causes de sa propre mort; en suit il argumente que le *Phédon* ne se concentre pas sur la question de la peine de mort, mais plutôt sur le *eudaimonia* Socrate en mourant. Il considère que le controversé passage 62a1-7 permet une exception à l’interdiction du suicide dans les cas où il n’y a pas de violence (61d4) et qui réalisent un bénéfice pour les tués (62a7). Cette exception est possible parce que Socrate rejette une compréhension de mort comme destruction, et présente sa propre conception de
la mort comme la préservation des êtres par séparation. En identifiant le « moi » avec l’âme, Socrate le considère comme un type de disposition qui est conservée même quand il a cessé d’exister dans un corps, bien qu’il soit à travers la mémoire et l’intelligence. Le « moi » n’est pas un donnée aux êtres humains, mais plutôt un défi pour nous, et la phronesis est la vertu de ceux qui sont en mesure de comprendre et de vivre leur « moi ».

En faisant valoir que la mort de Socrate était un suicide moral, cet article indique que, parce que Socrate est phronimos, il n’y a pas de violence dans sa mort: il ne détruit pas le corps et ne menace pas son caractère permanent, le « moi » de Socrate. En outre, il soutient que la mort de Socrate était rationnellement justifiée par sa compréhension de la causalité (aiρετα) et de la responsabilité de l’agent (αίτιον). Socrate se présente comme l’agent qui a décidé de mourir (τῇ τοῦ βελτίστου αἱρέσει - 99b1) et non pas simplement de placer ses muscles et ses os en Megara ou Béotie (98e5-99a1). Si l’argument sur les causes dans le Phédon vise à préciser ce qui est le principal facteur responsable d’un événement (99b3-4), il conclut que la décision des Athéniens était un facteur concurrent, une sunaitia, et Socrate était finalement l’agent responsable de sa propre mort. Enfin, cet article affirme que la mort de Socrate n’était pas un suicide justifié par les circonstances. Dans ces cas, il y a un choix rationnel entre les perspectives possibles d’avenir dans un moment précis de la vie. Ce n’est pas le cas de la Phédon, qui n’est pas une circonstance de malheur (84e1) et qui affirme que la véritable cause d’un acte moral ne peut pas être le soulagement de la douleur ou l’indignité de la vie ou un autre cas de peur (68d2-e1, 69b6-c3, voir aussi 62e2-3).

L’article conclut en montrant que la description de l’acte de suicide que l’on trouve dans le Phédon, celle de la séparation, est une description beaucoup plus raisonnable que la notion habituelle et paradoxale de la mort de soi. En outre, parce que il identifie le « moi » avec l’âme, Socrate peut rendre un compte du suicide qui n’est pas pathologique, ni dans le sens d’une victoire acratique des passions sur la raison, ni dans le sens médical dans lequel on a la tendance aujourd’hui à classer les tentatives de suicide. Finalement, pour prétendre que le meurtre de soi est impossible, et que le suicide peut être rationnellement justifiée, le Phédon ouvre une intéressante perspective pour la discussion contemporaine sur le suicide justifiable.
El anonimato de Platón
Un examen sobre la figura del alocutario anónimo en el Fedón

Arbe, Rodolfo

Introducción

Los estudios sobre el anonimato en Platón inaugurados por L. Edelstein (1962) y P. Plass (1964) han tenido un giro relevante a partir del trabajo de M.-L. Desclos (2001). El aporte consiste en incorporar en los análisis del anonimato elementos de la narratología. De esa manera la autora pudo examinar el caso del alocutario anónimo presente entre la audiencia del Cármides, Lisis, República y Parménides, entre otros diálogos. En el presente trabajo nos proponemos retomar esta línea de lectura para intentar esclarecer la identidad del alocutario anónimo que junto a Equécrates escucha la narración de Fedón. En 58d existen dos referencias a la presencia de al menos un personaje más entre los interesados en oír el relato de las últimas horas de filósofo.

Equécrates: Esfuérzate en relatarnos (hêmîn) todo eso lo más precisamente posible, de no ser que tengas algún apremio de tiempo.
Fedón: Bueno, tengo un rato libre, e intentaré haceros (hymîn) el relato. Porque el evocar el recuerdo de Sócrates, sea hablando o escuchando a otro, es para mí lo más agradable. (Fedón 58d)

El uso de los pronombres personales en plural dan cuenta de la presencia de al menos otro interesado, además de Equécrates, en conocer detalladamente las últimas conversaciones de Sócrates. Sin duda, el lector del diálogo se identifica con ese grupo de interesados, tal como apunta Desclos (2001); de alguna manera, al final del proceso comunicativo nos encontramos nosotros, los lectores. Sin embargo, antes de pensar la relación entre el relato de Fedón y la lectura del texto es necesario tener en cuenta el entrecruzamiento de oralidad y escritura que forma parte del contexto en el cual se sitúan los diálogos platónicos. El uso de la escritura como herramienta para tomar registro de la palabra hablada se hace eco en la distancia que separa al escritor de los acontecimientos alrededor de la muerte de Sócrates. Creemos que la figura del alocutario anónimo fundamenta el nexo entre la narración oral y su escritura. En el marco de la historia que presenta el diálogo, Equécrates está junto a otro personaje anónimo escuchando directamente las palabras de Fedón. Es menester tener en cuenta un aspecto que caracteriza específicamente al Fedón, a saber, la explícita referencia a la ausencia de Platón (59b) en el momento de la muerte de Sócrates. Esto reafirma el carácter narrativo por medio del cual el propio autor del diálogo tomó contacto con las últimas palabras del maestro. Entre la audiencia de Fedón podemos distinguir dos tipos de narratarios. Por un lado, Equécrates que se caracteriza por tomar la palabra, incluso interrumpiendo en dos oportunidades el narrador (88c; 102a). Estas dos interrupciones, además de ser relevantes para organizar los momentos del diálog, ponen en evidencia la existencia de dos niveles narrativos. Y por otro lado, un narratario silencioso, cuya escucha le impide interrumpir la narración. El aporte de la narratología nos permite analizar esa distancia que separa el acto enunciativo de Fedón y lo acontecido alrededor de
Sócrates a partir de la noción de nivel narrativo. En los términos de la narratología, la conversación entre Fedón y Equécrates se ubica en el nivel extradiegético, mientras que el diálogo entre Sócrates y sus interlocutores está inmerso en el plano diegético o intradiegético. Fedón le narra el diálogo de Sócrates a Equécrates y a un alocutario anónimo. ¿Acaso no podemos pensar que el escritor Platón se hace presente en el diálogo por medio de la figura del alocutario anónimo? ¿Cómo se entiende que nosotros, los lectores, tomamos contacto con la narración de Fedón sin tener en cuenta la mediación del escritor? O dicho de otro modo, si, en la ficción de la historia, Platón estuvo ausente de las últimas conversaciones de su maestro, ¿acaso no tuvo que habérselas contado alguien a partir de lo cual escribió el diálogo? A propósito del uso de la escritura como herramienta para fijar el testimonio de un relato resulta pertinente traer a colación una referencia a la escritura de diálogos socráticos expuesta en el Teeteto (143b5-c5). Allí, la letra platónica revela el proceso (ficticio, seguramente) de composición de un diálogo. Recordemos que Euclides es presentado como el escritor que tomó nota de la narración socrática sobre el diálogo que el filósofo mantuvo con Teodoro y Teeteto, pero aclara que optó por eliminar las fórmulas que hacen referencia a la mediación del narrador (“dijo”, “afirmó”, etc.) para evitar la molestia de ir intercalando las palabras de Sócrates con esas expresiones; por esa razón, lo escribió sin las marcas narrativas. Si analizamos la forma del Fedón a la luz de esta revelación del Teeteto es lícito pensar la posibilidad de que en este caso el escritor del diálogo haya preferido transcribir las palabras del narrador tal como fueron dichas. Al situarse en el mismo nivel narrativo que Fedón, el alocutario silencioso puede ser interpretado como el encargado de dar testimonio escrito de lo narrado, tal como aquellos escritores (syngrapheis) encargados de tomar nota de los relatos históricos.

**Escribir los diálogos**

A la hora de pensar los diálogos platónicos y su relación con los acontecimientos que describen existen a grandes rasgos dos alternativas: o considerarlos “trazos escritos” (traces écrites), es decir, el testimonio real de una conversación oral que habría tenido lugar antes de su paso a la escritura, o interpretarlos como una obra de ficción que fue compuesta por su autor y diseñada con alguna finalidad. A favor de esta última alternativa nos inclinamos junto a todos los hermeneutas actuales de la obra platónica, dado que existen innumerables razones para no aceptar que los diálogos retratan conversaciones reales que tuvieron lugar en un determinado espacio y tiempo. Sin embargo, cualquier lector de los diálogos se asombra por la cantidad de elementos realistas que nos hacen creer y ver las imágenes allí descriptas. Tomemos, por ejemplo, el relato de las últimas palabras de Sócrates antes de que la cicuta haga su efecto.1 Con un alto grado dramático la letra platónica nos transporta a esos últimos momentos del filósofo, convirtiéndonos en testigos anónimos de ese penoso acontecimiento. En el marco de la ficción de la historia Platón se encuentra ausente. Por esa razón, al comienzo del diálogo se deja en claro que Fedón es el narrador de la historia, mientras que Equécrates y un alocutario mudo son los narratarios, es decir, aquellos a los cuales va dirigido el relato. A propósito de esta situación narrativa que enmarca el diálogo, nos permitimos traer a colación un famoso interrogante que desveló a muchos hermeneutas: ¿dónde está Platón en el diálogo? Los esfuerzos por responder esta pregunta hicieron que se originen los estudios sobre el anonimato de Platón, ese ocultamiento por detrás de los dialogantes que le impide al autor hablar en su propio nombre.

Nuestro trabajo se inscribe en estos estudios sobre el anonimato en Platón

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1 Cf. Fedón 117c-118b
e incorpora elementos de la narratología, siguiendo con el camino abierto por Desclos (2001) al introducir en la investigación la figura del alocutario mudo. La interpretación de la autora concibe a este alocutario anónimo como un modo que tiene el autor de incluir al lector en el diálogo, de manera tal, que junto a Equécrates estarían los lectores escuchando el relato de Fedón. Esta posición sugiere una estructura dialógica que ubica al lector en un co-locutor y lo invita a tomar la palabra, constituyendo un dialogismo que no debe ser buscado solamente entre los personajes del diálogo, sino también entre el lector y los escritos (Desclos 2001:93). Esta lectura ha sido desarrollada por la autora, quien se inclina por considerar a los diálogos como ficticios siguiendo la distinción establecida más arriba, e interpretándolos como bellas imágenes, tal como sugiere la buena mímesis. Nuestra posición retoma el carácter ficcional de los diálogos, cuya verosimilitud se sostiene en la coherencia interna del relato, por eso nos preguntamos: ¿Acaso no es lícito pensar que más que el lector es el mismo autor Platón quien se hace presente en el relato a través de la figura del alocutario anónimo? ¿De qué otro modo se puede justificar la explícita ausencia del autor en los acontecimientos con el consecutivo testimonio del mismo? La propia ficción del diálogo invita a pensar al autor Platón como un intermediario entre el relato de Fedón y los lectores. A diferencia de otros diálogos, en el Fedón se retrata un acontecimiento que tuvo realmente lugar y que Platón estuvo ausente. ¿Cómo explicar que Platón tome conocimiento de lo sucedido aquel día sin es por medio del relato de alguien? Es más probable pensar, siguiendo la historia del relato y su correlativa verosimilitud, que Platón escuchó de Fedón lo sucedido en las últimas horas del filósofo, a que el autor haya querido incluir al lector entre los alocutuarios anónimos.

El testigo

Como habíamos dicho, el relato de un diálogo sobre un acontecimiento que realmente tuvo lugar nos pone frente a la alternativa de considerarlo un testimonio legítimo o una construcción ficticia. Ante esta situación Desclos (2003) se inclina por la segunda opción, interpretando a los diálogos como “bellas imágenes”:

Imagen más que “trazos escritos” de diálogos. En este segundo caso, en efecto, se presupone que estos diálogos han tenido realmente lugar, (...) y que Platón no sería más que el estenógrafo más o menos infiel de una práctica socrática oral. (Desclos 2003:205)

Es interesante resaltar la figura del estenógrafo, palabra con la cual podría traducirse el término “syngrapheus”, aquel encargado de tomar nota de testimonios, describir o escribir acontecimientos históricos. Según nuestra interpretación, Platón se hace presente en el diálogo bajo la figura del alocutario anónimo y mudo, al modo de un “syngrapheus” que toma nota de lo narrado.

El nombre “syngrapheus” proviene del verbo “syngrapho”, cuyo significado a propósito del raconto de acontecimientos pasados consiste en, según Loraux (1986:145), ordenar por escrito, organizar los acontecimientos en una totalidad. Este término ocupa un lugar relevante dentro de la historiografía al encontrarse en la introducción de la Guerra del Peloponeso de Tucídides. Allí el historiador comienza diciendo: “Tucídides de Atenas ha tomado por escrito (xynégraphe) la guerra del Peloponeso y de los atenienses”. Este uso del término según Loraux sugiere lo siguiente:

(...) xyngrapho señala que la guerra ha pasado toda entera en el relato, sin olvido, sin selección, sin que ningún sujeto haya operado ningún recorte (...) desde la primer frase le da cuerpo a la tensión de aquí en adelante abierta entre el sujeto todo poderoso que instituye reuniendo, y la intención de Tucídides de una escritura.

que se ocultará (effacerait) ella misma como acto productor (145-146)

Este sentido del término que instituye un sujeto, y al mismo tiempo lo oculta
con el objetivo de lograr el efecto de una exposición transparente es lo que creemos
que opera en la figura del alocutario anónimo como syngrapheus. No consiste
simplemente en contar cómo se desarrolla un acontecimiento, sino más bien
producirlo por escrito al narrarlo (Loraux 1986:144). Algo parecido es lo que sucede
en el Teeteto (143b-c-5), donde se deja en evidencia el proceso de composición de
un diálogo socrático. Recordemos el pasaje:

Euc.- Aquí tienes el libro, Terpsión. Ahora bien, al escribir la conversación, no
la expongo como Sócrates cuando me la contó a mí, sino como él mismo dialogaba
con los que habían tenido lugar la discusión. Estos, según dijo, eran Teodoro, el
géométra, y Teeteto. Así es que, para evitar en la transcripción la molestia de ir
intercalando las fórmulas que acompañan las afirmaciones de Sócrates, tales como
“yo decía” o “yo dije”, o las del que contestaba, como “asintió” o “no estuve de
acuerdo”, escribí el relato tal y como Sócrates conversaba con ellos, suprimiendo
esas expresiones (Teeteto 143b-c)

Esta revelación sugiere que Euclides lleva a palabras lo narrado por Sócrates,
dando lugar al diálogo escrito. La particularidad de este hecho reside en que el
escritor se oculta y presenta el diálogo de modo directo como si no hubiese mediador
entre el narrador y el lector. La omisión de las partículas “yo dije” o “asintió” hacen
que el escritor permanezca oculto y se elimine la figura del receptor-escritor en pos
de una lectura ligera.

En el caso del Fedón asistimos a una ficción, cuya propia coherencia interna
necesita justificar el conocimiento por parte de Platón sobre lo ocurrido aquel día en
que murió Sócrates. La figura del alocutuario mudo permite dar cuenta del paso a
la escritura de aquel relato. Platón es el narrador implícito que pone frente a los ojos
de los lectores las últimas horas del filósofo. Si hay algo que caracteriza a los diálogos
socráticos son los detalles narrativos que permiten ver cómo si fuese una imagen
lo narrado, como si alguien hubiese escrito lo que Fedón le narró a Equécrates. Ese
alguien es el alocutuario mudo, nexo entre la palabra hablada y la palabra vista.

Luego de todo lo dicho hasta aquí, la antigua dicotomía entre la interpretación
de los diálogos como “trazos escritos” de lo dicho realmente y la ficción compuesta
se derrumba. Creemos que esa sensación de que alguien, cual “estenógrafo” tomó
nota de lo dicho en los diálogos debe incorporarse dentro de la consideración de
los diálogos como ficciones. El Fedón es un relato fictacional que incorpora el recurso
“realista” del transcriptor o escriba, propio de la época, para dotar de más realidad
al diálogo y generar así la sensación de que Platón pone por escrito lo que escuchó
de Fedón junto a Equécrates, oficiando de mediador entre el acontecimiento y los
lectores.

Conclusion
La ficcionalidad de los diálogos se sostiene sobre recursos estilísticos que los
dotan de realidad. El hecho de que el autor Platón se reconozca ausente de lo narrado
lo ubica ficticionalmente en el rol de narratario. Creemos que es posible interpretar
la figura del alocutario mudo como la presencia del escritor en la ficción de la
historia. De este modo, se justifica la ausencia de Platón en el acontecimiento de la
muerte de Sócrates y su posterior conocimiento sobre el hecho. Dado el contexto de
entrecruzamiento entre oralidad y escritura, el autor Platón es el mediador entre el
relato de Fedón y la vista del lector que asume el rol de narrador implícito en cada
lectura a voz alta.

La influencia de las narraciones historiográficas en la escritura platónica puede
advertirse en la consideración de un alocutario mudo que funciona narrativamente como un *syngrapheus* del acontecimiento. En este sentido podemos afirmar que el Platón de los diálogos se presenta como el primer historiador de la filosofía, en la medida que se inscribe como testigo auditivo dentro de la ficcionalidad de los diálogos, produciendo por escrito lo narrado.

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Describir el Más Allá. Consideraciones sobre el mito del Fedón

Bernabé, Alberto

1. Presentación

El propósito de esta ponencia es presentar una serie de reflexiones sobre el relato escatológico del Fedón (107c-115a)\(^1\), con objeto de clarificar lo posible su sentido y su función en el marco del diálogo. En el tiempo de que dispongo no cabe hacer un estudio exhaustivo, de modo que me limitaré a profundizar en una serie de puntos. Comenzaré por examinar el momento de la discusión en que la narración se inserta y cómo se introduce (§ 2). Pondré también de manifiesto que, pese a que el relato no se atribuye a una fuente expresa, hay una serie de referencias a lo largo del diálogo que definen con claridad el ámbito en el que Platón lo sitúa. Es también importante para contextualizarlo una referencia en la que Sócrates relativiza el valor del relato (§ 3).

Asimismo señalaré la recurrencia a lo largo del diálogo del tema del riesgo, κίνδυνος (§ 4), qué sentido tiene y cómo afecta a la presentación del mito.

En cambio, no profundizaré en los detalles de la descripción de la tierra, limitándome a un apunte sobre sus orígenes literarios y su propósito (§ 5). Asimismo me limitaré a aludir la cuestión del mayor o menor énfasis que Platón pone en los diversos detalles de su descripción escatológica frente al que pone en otras semejantes de otros diálogos, porque he tratado la cuestión ampliamente en otro lugar\(^2\).

Mi exposición se centrará especialmente en los aspectos relacionados con el destino de las almas en el Más Allá (§ 6). Teniendo en cuenta que el contenido del relato platónico sobre este aspecto es bastante diferente de los que se exponen en la corriente mayoritaria de la tradición griega, pasará revista a los principales presupuestos ideológicos y religiosos que lo configuran, tratando de rastrear la presencia de estos fundamentos en la tradición religiosa o filosófica anterior a Platón, en especial en textos cuyo valor para el estudio de los misterios en la Antigüedad ha sido últimamente puesto de relieve, como el Papiro de Derveni\(^3\) o las laminillas órficas de oro publicadas en fecha más reciente\(^4\). En los comentarios del diálogo, especialmente los antiguos, se ha insistido en que una gran mayoría de estos elementos son órficos, mientras que hay otra línea de investigación que prescinde de la tradición para considerarlos simplemente creaciones platónicas\(^5\). Por ello trataré (§ 7 y 8) de hacer un balance ponderado de las analogías y diferencias que existen entre lo que se narra el Fedón y lo que encontramos en textos significativos

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3 Sobre Papiro de Derveni; ediciones Kouremenos-Parássoglou-Tsantsanoglou (2006); Bernabé (2007a); Ferrari (CHS); Bernabé-Piano (2016); Comentarios: Laks-Most (eds.) (1997); Jourdan (2003); Betegh (2004); Tortorelli (2006); Bernabé (2007); Papadopoulu – Muellner (2014).


de tradiciones religiosas y literarias anteriores, como Homero, Hesíodo o los órficos.

Para terminar, presentaré unas conclusiones (§ 9) sobre motivaciones del mito, hasta qué punto continúa alguna de estas tradiciones y en qué medida no lo hace, y qué consecuencias tiene lo que en él se cuenta respecto a la situación de Sócrates y la de sus discípulos (114d-115a) en el cuadro de la “transposición” de la tradición –utilizando el conocido término de Diès⁶– que ha llevado a cabo Platón, de forma que podamos poner de manifiesto cómo la ha utilizado muy libremente, para edificar una grandiosa creación original, transmitida en un texto enormemente rico y muy alejado de sus modelos.

2. **Momento de la discusión en que el relato se inserta y cómo se introduce este**

El relato no tiene límites precisos; de ahí que los autores modernos hayan polemizado sobre el punto preciso en el que empieza, y que tal polémica sea de dudosa utilidad⁷. Una vez que la discusión sobre el alma ha llevado a la conclusión de que esta es inmortal. Sócrates (107c) introduce un nuevo aspecto [[T 1]]:

Ahora bien, amigos, es justo que reflexionemos sobre lo siguiente, que, si el alma es inmortal, requiere naturalmente cuidado no solo por este tiempo que llamamos “vida”, sino por todo él⁸.

Es importante llamar la atención sobre la expresión ἐν τῷ καλοῦμεν τὸ ζῆν, que traslúcce que lo que llamamos vida no es la verdadera vida, ya que esta sería la que vive el alma liberada del cuerpo. Es este un tema ampliamente desarrollado por los órficos y con reflejos en Eurípides, al que en otro lugar cita el propio Platón⁹. Y continúa su razonamiento [[T 2]]:

Si la muerte fuera la separación de todo, sería para los malos una suerte verse libres al morir del cuerpo y de su maldad a la par que del alma¹⁰.

El uso de una oración condicional irreal (imperfecto con ἄν) significa que la idea de la muerte como separación de todo se considera imposible y por tanto, falsa¹¹; el filósofo contrapone esta propuesta a otra: νῦν δ’ ἐπειδὴ ἀθάνατος φαίνεται οὖσα, donde νῦν no es temporal, sino indicación del retorno del discurso al ámbito de lo verdadero¹², frente a la opción anterior, planteada como irreal e imposible, por lo que φαίνεται οὖσα no significa en este contexto “parece ser” sino “es manifiestamente”. Así que debemos traducir [[T 3]]:

Pero de hecho, en cambio, dado que el alma es manifiestamente inmortal…

A partir de esa premisa, tomada como indiscutible, la cuestión que se plantea es la necesidad de que el alma se haga la mejor y la más sensata posible¹³. La discusión sobre la inmortalidad del alma es así llevada al terreno moral. Dado que la muerte no es una separación de todo, el alma portadora de maldad no se libera de esa maldad al morir. Lo que se explorará ahora será qué consecuencias tiene este hecho. En este **punto se introduce** el mito, pero sin autoría expresa, con dos ambiguoos λέγεται, el

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10 εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἦν ὁ θάνατος τοῦ παντός ἀπαλλαγῇ, ἔρμαιον ἂν ἦν τοῖς κακοῖς ἀποθανοῦσι τοῦ τε σώματος ἀμ’ ἀπιλάχθαι καὶ τῆς αὐτῶν κακιας μετά τῆς ψυχῆς.
11 No comparto, por tanto, la apreciación de Pender (2012: 205) de que “it seems to me that Socrates is sensitive to Simmias’ remaining doubts”. Una irreal en griego implica una negación absoluta de la posibilidad enunciada.
13 107d βελτίστην τε καὶ φρονιμωτάτην γενέσθαι.
primero de los cuales enuncia la cuestión general (107d) [[T 4]]:

Porque el alma se encamina al Hades sin llevar consigo nada más que su educación y su crianza, lo que en verdad se dice (λέγεται) que beneficia o perjudica al máximo a quien acaba de morir al comienzo de su viaje hacia allí14.

El segundo, en cambio, λέγεται δὲ οὕτως, introduce una explicación más minuciosa. Más adelante, otros dos λέγεται (110b, 113b) recuerdan que todo el discurso es supuestamente reflejo de algo que se dice, de un relato tradicional, y mantienen la falta de concreción respecto a la fuente de este relato15. La misma falta de concreción se muestra poco después cuando Sócrates se refiere a ritos tradicionales de este mundo que permiten imaginar el escenario ultramundano (τῶν ὁσίων τε καὶ νομίμων τῶν ἐνθάδε 108a). Resulta curiosa la falta de adscripción del mito a una fuente, extraña en los mitos platónicos, que suelen ser atribuidos a una autoridad específica. Ello podría explicarse o bien porque se da por supuesto que el ámbito de referencia es conocido por quienes lo oyen o más bien porque, pese a que el mito es en gran medida construcción platónica y altera profundamente sus posibles antecedentes tradicionales, como tendremos ocasión de ver, el filósofo trata con gran habilidad de presentar lo que dice, por medio de los reiterados λέγεται, como si fuera propio de una tradición conocida y habitual16, lo que, por un lado, le exime de precisar su origen concreto y por otro le permite conferirle al relato una cierta garantía de verdad comúnmente admitida. Esta práctica, por otra parte, es bastante habitual en los autores griegos17.

Con todo, pese a que no se especifica el autor del relato, hay una serie de referencias anteriores del diálogo que orientan sobre los modelos religiosos e ideológicos en los que se basa18. Vamos a pasar revista a las más significativas.

1) En 61d Sócrates enuncia la posibilidad de ocuparse de los relatos sobre la ida al Hades de los difuntos [[T 5]]:

Tal vez es de lo más conveniente para quien va a emigrar allí, ponerse a examinar y a relatar mitos acerca del viaje a ese lugar19.

Lo más probable es que “mitos” tenga aquí el sentido de “relatos tradicionales”. La frase, aparentemente aséptica, es toda una declaración metodológica sobre la forma en que la cuestión de la escatología se aborda en el Fedón, a través de dos vías, la indagación filosófica y el relato mítico20.

2) Poco más adelante (62b), y ante la pregunta de Cebes sobre por qué no es lícito suicidarse, Sócrates hace una referencia expresa a la doctrina de los “círculos secretos” (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις), esto es, el ámbito de los misterios, lo que, según el escolio, la indagación filosófica y el relato mítico21.


14 οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο ἔχουσα εἰς Ἀιδοῦν ἡ ψυχὴ ἔρχεται πλὴν τῆς παιδείας τε καὶ τροφῆς, ἃ δὴ καὶ μέγιστα λέγεται ὕφελεν ἢ βλάπτειν τὸν τελευτήσαντα εὐθὺς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ἐκείσε πορείας.


17 Por citar un par de ejemplos, Protágoras en Pl. Prot. 316d (= Orfeo, fr. 806 Bernabé; a partir de ahora se citará OF seguido del número de fragmento) afirma que los sofistas son tan antiguos como Orfeo y Crisipo en Cic. ND 1.41 (1077 Arnim) trata de encontrar antecedentes estoicos en los autores más antiguos, cf. Bernabé (2011a).


19 καὶ γὰρ ἴσως καὶ μάλιστα πρέπει μέλλοντα ἐκείσε ἀποδημεῖν διασκοπεῖν τε καὶ μυθολογεῖν περὶ τῆς ἀποδημίας τῆς ἐκεί, ποιαν τινὰ αὐτὴν οἰόμεθα εἶναι.


21 (OF 429 I, cf. la bibliografía citada en la edición), ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἐν τινι φρονεῖται οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ δεῖ δέχεται ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ διίδειν οὐδ᾽ ἀποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τὲ τῆς μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ πρόοιδος διδασκεῖ; cf. Schol. Pl. Phaed. 62b (10 Greene, OF 429 II) ἐνεπιθέθη τὸ πρῶτον πρόβλημα, τὸ μὴ δὲν ἔξαγεν λατάνον· οὐ δεῖκε ψευδήμονα μνημοσύναικον ἐξ
Pues bien, el relato que se cuenta en los círculos secretos sobre eso, que estamos bajo una especie de custodia los hombres y uno mismo no debe liberarse ni escapar, me parece algo grande y no fácil de entrever.

La expresión “no fácil de entrever” apunta a una interpretación simbólica del mito, idea en la que volverá a incidir más adelante (69c)\textsuperscript{22}.

3) En 63b, Sócrates declara [[T 7]]:

Pero sabed bien ahora que espero llegar junto a hombres buenos, y eso no lo aseguraría del todo; pero que llegaré junto a los dioses, amos muy excelentes, sabed bien que yo lo afirmaría por encima de cualquier otra cosa. De modo que por eso no me irrito en tal manera, sino que estoy bien esperanzado de que hay algo para los muertos y, como se dice de antiguo (πάλαι λέγεται), mucho mejor para los buenos que para los malos\textsuperscript{23}.

Pese a que también aquí Sócrates utiliza el mismo ambiguo λέγεται, el uso de πάλαι con λέγεται evoca claramente un παλαιὸς λόγος, la fuente a la que en otros textos platónicos\textsuperscript{24} se le atribuyen doctrinas sobre el alma y que mayoritariamente se interpreta como una tradición órfica\textsuperscript{25}.

4) En 67c, Sócrates se refiere a la esperanza en el destino futuro de los que tienen la mente preparada, como purificada\textsuperscript{26} [[T 8]], afirmación que va precedida de otras referencias a la purificación en 67a. Aunque luego volveré sobre este particular (§ 6.4), recuerdo ya que la κάθαρσις es un requisito para la salvación característico de los misterios.

5) Pero hay un detalle aún más interesante. Sócrates (67b) señala como una máxima aceptada la expresión: “al que no es puro no le es lícito acercarse a quien es puro” [[T 9]]\textsuperscript{27}, que Casertano señala como expresión popular probablemente tomada de los ritos\textsuperscript{28}, pero que encuentra un excelente paralelo en un texto de Alejandro Polihístor que atribuye estas opiniones a Pitágoras [[T 10]]\textsuperscript{29}:

Las (almas) impuras no pueden acercarse unas a otras ni a aquellas (las puras), pues las Erinías las atan con ligaduras irrompibles.

Un texto cuyas semejanzas con la doctrina de los démones en el Papiro de Derveni he puesto de relieve en otro lugar\textsuperscript{30}.

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\textsuperscript{22} Bernabé (2011: 41-42). Cf. 69c.

\textsuperscript{23} εὔελπίς εἰμι εἶναί τι τοῖς τετελευτηκόσι καί, ὥσπερ γε καὶ πάλαι λέγεται, πολὺ ἄμεινον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἢ τοῖς κακοῖς.

\textsuperscript{24} Pl. Phd. 70c, cf. infra; Lg. 715e, con Schol. ad loc. (317 Greene, OF 31 III-IV); sobre el cual, cf. Casadesús (2002); Ep. VII 335a (OF 433 I), cf. asimismo Bernabé (2011: 39-40); Casertano (2015: 283).

\textsuperscript{25} La referencia homérica a la suerte de Menelao (Od. 4.561-564) aludida por Rowe (1993: 133) para considerar que πάλαι se refiere a una tradición tan antigua como Homero no es adecuada a este contexto. La suerte de Menelao es excepcional, como la de Aquiles, ya que ambos son héroes, y desde luego no tiene que ver con la purificación, mientras que la alusión platónica parece ser a un texto en el que se habla en general de los seres humanos, como Sócrates, y considera la purificación un requisito, i. e. los textos de los misterios.

\textsuperscript{26} δός ἢγεῖταί οἱ παρεσκευάσθαι τὴν δίανοιαν ὅπερ χειραβαρμένην.

\textsuperscript{27} μὴ καθαρὰ γὰρ καθαρὸν ἐφάπτεσθαι μή σὲ θεμιτὸν ἣ.

\textsuperscript{28} Casertano (2015: 294).

\textsuperscript{29} Diogenes Laertius 8.31 (FGH 273 F 93 = Phythagorici B 1a DK): τὰς δ’ ἀκαθάρτους (sc. ψυχὰς) μὴ’ ἐκείναις (sc. τὰς καθαρὰς) πελάζειν μὴ’ ἀλλῆλαις, δείοθαι δ’ ἐν ἄρρητοις δεσμοῖς ὑπ’ Ἐρινύων.

\textsuperscript{30} Bernabé (2014: 42)
6) En 67c añade (67c) [[T11]]:

¿Pero es que no viene a ser una purificación eso que desde antiguo se dice en la sentencia “el separar al máximo el alma del cuerpo” y el acostumbrarse ella a recogerse y concentrarse en sí misma fuera del cuerpo, y a habitar en lo posible, tanto en el tiempo presente como en el futuro\(^{31}\), sola en sí misma, liberada del cuerpo como de unas cadenas?\(^{32}\)

Es claro que πάλαι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ λέγεται evoca otra vez un παλαιὸς λόγος (el uso de presente en λέγεται excluye que Sócrates se esté refiriendo a lo dicho anteriormente en el propio diálogo; ya que en ese caso se esperaría imperfecto). En cuanto al contenido, es claro que “purificación” en boca de Sócrates evoca la de los misterios, pero no significa lo mismo. La de los misterios es ritual, aquella de la que habla Sócrates es filosófica. Y a continuación alude a la idea bien conocida como de raigambre órfica del encierro del alma en el cuerpo.

7) En 69c vuelve a dar indicaciones, esta vez mucho más claras, sobre el mismo marco de referencia [[T12]]:

Y existe incluso el riesgo de que los que instituyeron las teletai no sean gente inepta, sino que en realidad se indique de forma simbólica desde antaño que quien llegue al Hades no iniciado y sin haber cumplido las teletai “yacerá en el fango”, pero el que llegue purificado y cumplidas las teletai, habitará allí con los dioses. Pues en efecto, como dicen los de las teletai, son “muchos los portadores de tirso, pero los bacos, pocos”, y estos, en mi opinión, no son otros sino los que han filosofado correctamente\(^{33}\).

No voy a profundizar en este pasaje, que he estudiado detenidamente en otro lugar\(^{34}\). Baste con señalar que Sócrates considera la posibilidad de que quienes establecieron las teletai pueden tener parte de razón, si bien solo si su afirmación sobre quiénes disfrutarán de una estancia privilegiada en el Hades se interpreta simbólicamente, en el sentido de identificar los βάκχοι\(^{35}\) con οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς.

Las teletai (un término que carece de una traducción que exprese adecuadamente su contenido)\(^{36}\), son ritos en los que la relación que los seres humanos establecen con la divinidad no se basa, como en el caso de los rituales cívicos, en rendir culto a los dioses, sino en buscar en tales prácticas una solución a los propios temores del participante, al miedo a la enfermedad, a la muerte, y a lo que ocurre después de ella. Los griegos atribuyen mayoritariamente las teletai a Orfeo, y una actividad fundamental de tales ritos era la purificación (καθαρμός, κάθαρσις). La idea de que la telete y la purificación den acceso a habitar con los dioses en el Hades es ajena a la tradición homérica y hesiódica y a las creencias más extendidas en época de Platón. En cambio, esta afirmación es explícita en los documentos que reflejan con mayor fidelidad creencias órficas en la Antigüedad, las laminillas de oro, el alma que llega ante

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31 “I.e. after death”, Rowe (1993: 144); cf. d 4 θάνατος ὀνομάζεται, nueva alusión a la muerte como verdadera vida, cf. § 2.

32 κάθαρσις δὲ εἶναι ἄρα οὐ τοῦτο συμβαίνει, ὅπερ πάλαι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ λέγεται, τὸ χωρίζειν ὅτι μάλιστα ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ἐθίσαι αὐτὴν καθ’ αὑτὴν πανταχόθεν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος συναγείρεσθαί τε καὶ ἁθροίζεσθαι, καὶ οἰκεῖν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν παρόντι καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐπείτη μόνην καθ’ αὑτὴν, ἐκλυομένην ὥσπερ [ἐκ] δεσμῶν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος; cf. la bibliografía citada en OF 434 y 576.

33 καὶ κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οἱ τὰς τελετὰς ἡμῖν οὗτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοί τινες εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι πάλαι αἰνίττεσθαι ὅτι ὃς ἂν ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς Ἅιδου ἀφίκηται ἐν βορβόρῳ κείσεται, ὁ δὲ κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ἐκείσε ἄμφοιμος μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσει. Εἰσίν γὰρ δὴ, φασιν οἱ περὶ τὰς τελετὰς, “ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δὲ τε παῦροι·” οὗτοι δ᾽ εἰσίν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δόξαν ὁποῖοι ἢ οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς. Cf. la bibliografía citada en OF 434 y 576.

34 Bernabé (2016).


Perséfone se presenta diciendo “vengo pura y de entre puros” [[T13]]37. Y se afirma explícitamente la divinización del alma del iniciado [[T14]]38:

Salve, tras haber tenido una experiencia que nunca antes tuviste.
Dios has nacido, de hombre que eras.

8) En 70c, Sócrates vuelve a incidir en la cuestión [[T15]]:

En efecto, hay un antiguo relato del que nos hemos acordado, que (las almas), llegadas de aquí, existen allí y que de nuevo vuelven aquí y nacen de los muertos39.

Ahora se menciona, ya claramente, un παλαιὸς λόγος (que Olimpiodoro considera “órfico y pitagórico”)40 y hay una referencia expresa a la transmigración, frente a la alusión anterior, que se limitaba a la existencia de premios y castigos en el Más Allá. Tras la argumentación filosófica, Sócrates retoma el argumento en 72d [[T16]]:

sino que en realidad se da el revivir y los vivientes nacen de los muertos y las almas de los muertos perviven41.

Como apoyo de la hipótesis, Cebes presenta la idea del conocimiento como reminiscencia, que solo sería posible si el alma es inmortal y existe la transmigración, en un desarrollo que se prolonga hasta 77c. Si la idea de la transmigración es órfica y pitagórica42, la reminiscencia, en cambio, no lo es en absoluto, sino que pertenece del todo al pensamiento platónico.

9) En 80b se argumenta sobre la inmortalidad del alma y se llega a la conclusión de cuáles son las afinidades del alma y del cuerpo [[T17]]:

El alma es lo más semejante a lo divino, inmortal, inteligible, uniforme, indisoluble y que está siempre idéntico consigo mismo, mientras que, a su vez, el cuerpo es lo más semejante a lo humano, mortal, multiforme, irracional, soluble y que nunca está idéntico a sí mismo43.

La distinción entre un alma (ψυχή) semejante a lo divino y un cuerpo (σῶμα) mortal y perecedero está de nuevo en la estela órfica, como lo muestra, entre otros testimonios, un fragmento literal (OF 425) [[T18]]:

El alma de todos es inmortal, mas los cuerpos, mortales44.

10) Siguiendo con el Fedón, en 80d vuelve a anunciarse que determinadas almas –entre ellas la del propio Sócrates– estarán en compañía de los dioses [[T19]]:

Por lo tanto, el alma, lo invisible, se marcha hacia un lugar distinto y de tal clase, noble, puro, e invisible, hacia el Hades en sentido auténtico45, a la compañía de la divinidad buena y sabia46.

37 ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά (OF 488.1 489.1 490.1).
38 (OF 487) Lámina de Turios s. IV a. C. χαῖρε παθὼν τὸ πάθημα τὸ δ᾽ οὔπω πρόσθ᾽ {ε} ἐπεπόνθεις | θεός ἐγένετο εἰς ἀνθρώπου.
40 Olympiod. in Pl. Phaed. 10.6 = 145 Westerink (OF 428 II).
42 ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἄρα, τὸ ἀιδές, τὸ εἰς τοιοῦτον τόπον ἔτερον ὁμοίωμενον γενναῖον καὶ καθαρὸν
43 Es decir a “lo que no se ve” (Α-όδής). Cf. Rowe (1993: 191), quien cita el juego de palabras homérico Il. 5.844 s., cuando Atenea se pone el gorro de Hades para hacerse invisible ante Ares; cf. además Enache (2008).
44 ἡ δὲ ψυχή ἀρα, τὸ ἀιδές, τὸ εἰς τοιοῦτον τόπον ἔτερον ὁμοίωμενον γενναῖον καὶ καθαρὸν
Y cuando Sócrates insiste en la misma idea, vuelve a atribuirla a los iniciados en los misterios (81a) [[T20]]:

¡y al llegar allí está a su alcance ser feliz, apartada de errores, insensateces, terrores, pasiones salvajes, de todos los demás males humanos, como se dice de los iniciados en los misterios, para pasar de verdad el resto del tiempo en compañía de los dioses?47

11) A continuación se desarrolla la idea de la transmigración de las almas en diversos animales, que se basa en la idea órfica de la transmigración48. Pero en 82b volvemos a encontrar una alusión significativa [[T21]]:

Sin embargo, a la estirpe de los dioses no es lícito que tenga acceso quien haya partido sin haber filosofado y no esté enteramente puro, sino tan solo el amante del saber49.

Descontando la alusión a la filosofía, que es una clara “transposición” platónica, la terminología θεῶν γένος y καθαρῷ recuerda las láminas de Turios [[T22]]:

Vengo de entre puros, pura, reina de los seres subterráneos, Euclo, Eubuleo, dioses y demás démones, pues también yo me precio de pertenecer a vuestra estirpe bienaventurada50.

12) En 82d, Sócrates vuelve a hacer referencia a la idea del cuerpo prisión (adaptación platónica de la órifica del cuerpo-sepultura) [[T23]]:

Conocen, pues, los amantes del saber - dijo- que, cuando la filosofía se hace cargo de su alma, está sencillamente encadenada y apresada dentro del cuerpo, y obligada a examinar la realidad a través de este como a través de una prisión51.

A esta alusión a la teoría del cuerpo-prisión le sigue inmediatamente otra a la liberación (83a) otro concepto característico del orfismo52.

Después de que en 85e Simias introduzca la teoría del alma armónica y en 87a Cebes plantee la posibilidad de una mayor perdurabilidad del alma, como alternativas a la teoría de la inmortalidad del alma enunciada por Sócrates, aparecen significativamente en 90d y 91a alusiones al riesgo, a las que ya me he referido. Tras la discusión sobre la inmortalidad, se introduce por fin el mito, en un contexto en donde hallamos una última referencia interesante

13) 107d [[T24]] ἄλλη ἀποφυγὴ κακῶν οὐδὲ σωτηρία, en la que se usan dos conceptos claros de la tradición mistérica, la huida del mal y la salvación. Como ejemplo de lo primero, puede citarse el eslogan que encontramos en los ritos iniciáticos presididos por la madre de Esquines [[T25]]:

Y levantándose después de la purificación exhortando a que dijeran “he huido del mal, he encontrado algo mejor”53.

En cuanto a la idea de salvación, puede citarse el imperativo “sálvame” (σῷσον) de un papiro órfico en que se refleja una telete54. [[T26]]

Una acumulación tan significativa de alusiones deja claro que el ámbito de  

47 οἷ ἀφικομένῃ ὑπάρχει αὐτῇ εὐδαίμονι εἶναι, πλάνης καὶ ἀνοίας καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν τῶν ἄνθρωπείων ἀπηλλαγμένη, ὥσπερ ἄλλες τῶν λοιπῶν χρόνων μετά θεών διάγουσα;  
48 Cf. por ejemplo, OF 338 y 339.  
49 εἰς δέ γε θεῶν γένος μὴ φιλοσοφήσαντι καὶ παντελῶς καθαρῷ οὐ θέμις ἀφικνεῖσθαι ἀλλ' ἢ τῷ φιλομαθεῖ.  
50 ἔρχομαι ἐκ καθαρῶν καθαρά, χθονίων βασίλει, | Εὖκλε καὶ Εὐβουλεῦ καὶ θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες ἄλλοι· | καὶ γὰρ ἔγων ὑμῶν γένος εὔχομαι ὄλβιον εἶναι.  
52 Cf. por ejemplo OF 348, 350.  
54 Papiro de Gurob, OF 578 col. 1 5 y 1 22.
referencia al que alude el λέγεται socrático es a los ritos mistéricos, in primis, los órficos. Platón va preparando a lo largo del diálogo la eschatología final, que descansa sobre la relación entre iniciación (entendida como filosofía), los premios en el Más Allá y la transmigración de las almas, todo lo cual es una clara trasposición filosófica de conceptos órficos.

3. Referencia en la que Sócrates relativiza el valor del relato
Por otra parte, es importante para contextualizar el mito, una referencia en la que Sócrates relativiza el valor del relato (108d) [[T27]].

demstrar que (los relatos sobre la forma de la tierra) son verdaderos me parece demasiado difícil, … y seguramente, ni yo sería capaz de hacerlo, ni, si supiera, me bastaría con mi vida, Simias, por lo extenso del relato. Con todo, la forma que estoy convencido que tiene la tierra y sus regiones, nada me impide contártelo.

El autor presenta así su narración como una elaboración literaria, personal, basada en las grandes descripciones de la poesía, Hesíodo, Orfeo y luego Píndaro, pero también en competencia con ellas. Y no le atribuye categoría de certeza, sino que le da el valor de una especie de metáfora de la realidad: el hecho de que los hombres de bien tendrán un destino distinto.

4. Recurrencia a lo largo del diálogo del tema del riesgo
En un trabajo anterior señalé cómo se reiteran en el diálogo las referencias al riesgo (κίνδυνος, κινδυνεύω) referidas en su mayoría precisamente a la creencia expresada en el pasaje, por lo que el riesgo no puede ser sino de que sea equivocada la posibilidad de que el alma de los hombres de bien tenga un destino privilegiado. En la frase del pasaje de 69c ya citado en § 2, κινδυνεύουσι καὶ οί τάς τελετάς ἡμῖν ούτοι καταστήσαντες οὐ φαῦλοι τινες εἶναι, es claro que κινδυνεύω significa "es posible", pero la reiteración de los términos κίνδυνος y κινδυνεύω a lo largo del diálogo implican que en este caso se connota también la idea de riesgo. Y ello sucede porque se involucran dos asuntos "arriesgados": la referencia a una práctica ritual para apoyar una argumentación filosófica, y el recurso a un método de interpretación de los textos (el método alegórico), que presenta amplios márgenes de descontrol. El climax de esta recurrencia es 114d [[T28]]:

Pero que existen esas cosas o algunas otras semejantes en lo que toca a nuestras almas y sus moradas, una vez que queda claro que el alma es algo inmortal, eso me parece que es conveniente y que vale la pena correr el riesgo de creerlo así –pues es hermoso el riesgo.

Podemos concluir que esta insistencia en el riesgo sugiere que Sócrates está

55 Bernabé (2013: 113).
56 ως μέντοι ἀληθῆ, χαλεπώτερόν μοι φαίνεται … καὶ ἄμα μὲν ἐγὼ ἰδών οὐδ’ ἂν οἶς τε ἐηθ, ἄμα δὲ, εἰ καὶ ἡπιστάμην, ὁ βίος μοι δοκεῖ ὁ ἐμός, ὡς Σιμμία, τῷ μήκε τοῦ λόγου οὐκ ἐξαρκεῖν. τὴν μέντοι ἰδέαν τῆς γῆς οἵαν πέπεισμαι εἶναι, καὶ τοὺς τόπους αὐτῆς οὐδὲν με κωλύει λέγειν.
57 Bernabé (2016).
58 Pl. Phd. 64a κινδυνεύουσι γὰρ όσοι τυγχάνουσιν ὀρθῶς ἁπτόμενοι φιλοσοφίας λεληθέσθαι τοὺς ἄλλους ὅτι οὐδέν ἄλλοι ἀπετρέθησαν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκων τινας καὶ τεθνάνων, ἀκολούθησαν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀμέλες καὶ ἄτοκος οὐδέν με κωλύει λέγειν. ἀλλὰ τόδε γ’, ἔφη, ὦ ἄνδρες, δίκαιον διανοθῆναι, ὅτι, εἴπερ τῇ ψυχῇ ἄθανατος, ἐπεμελείας δὴ δεῖται οὐχ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ψυχῆς τοῦ ἄθανατος λόγων οὐδέν με κωλύει λέγειν, ἀλλὰ τὀν γοῦν βέλτιστον τῶν ἄριστών λόγων ἑπάτομον ἀκολούθησαν, 90c κινδυνεύουσα τοῦ ὁσπερ ἄτραπος τις τὰς ἐκφέρειν ἡμᾶς, εἰ μὴ τὸς δύναται ἄσφαλέστερον καὶ ἀκινδυνότερον ἐπὶ ἐκείστερον ῥήματι, ὁ δὲ τοῦ παντὸς ἐπὶ τοῦ παντὸς ἐπὶ τοῦ παντὸς, ὥσπερ ἀργοτέρον διαπλεῦσαι τὸν βίου, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐν τῷ καλῶν κινδυνεύεις οὐδέν τῶν ἐκφερομένων ἡμᾶς, 91a ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶναι, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶναι, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶναι, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶναι, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶναι, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶναι, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ παρόντι περί τοῦ ὃς καὶ ἁμώς εἶ

59 ως μέντοι ἢ ταῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαῦτα ἢ τοιαὐ
preocupado por si se ha equivocado y por el riesgo de no lograr la salvación, si bien afirma que merece la pena arrostrar tal riesgo.

5. **Sentido de la descripción de la tierra**

Como he indicado al principio, no profundizaré en los detalles de la descripción de la tierra. Me limito a señalar que se trata de un intento de situar en un mapa los lugares infernales, en competencia con dónde los situaba la poesía épica anterior. Las simas de la tierra y el Tártaro, así como los cuatro ríos que los recorren, descritos en 111d-113d configuran una geografía infernal que se origina en Homero⁶⁰ y se hace más compleja en los textos órficos⁶¹, pero que es trascendida y presentada de un modo literariamente mucho más brillante por Platón⁶². Todo ello le permite al filósofo sacar de su absoluta otredad el mundo de los muertos homérico para encuadrarlo en una geografía “real”, como parte del mundo, relacionada con las demás⁶³. La descripción platónica permite así distribuir las almas buenas y malas en el espacio que ha diseñado, describir zonas de transición que expliquen cómo las almas pueden volver a la vida, y crear un sitio alto privilegiado como sede de las almas mejores.

La situación del relato platónico está excelentemente expresada por Guthrie⁶⁴:

> combinando elementos tradicionales procedentes de Homero y los maestros de la teletai con la creencia popular y teorías científicas jonias y pitagóricas, Platón ha creado un cuadro maravilloso, no solo del mundo de los muertos, sino también de toda la geografía interior y exterior de la tierra.

Por último cabe señalar que Sedley⁶⁵ ha argumentado convincentemente que toda la descripción se asienta en el postulado socrático de que el orden del mundo obedece a un diseño inteligente destinado a servir de base para que las almas alcancen diversos estados de purificación y que las almas filosóficas logren su liberación del cuerpo (**disembodiment**), esto es, se trata de una introducción a una teleología cosmológica.

6. **Aspectos relacionados con el destino de las almas en el Más Allá**

6.1. **Premisa**

Trataré de señalar brevemente los presupuestos ideológicos y religiosos que se toman en consideración para configurar el mito, así como lo que hay en ellos de tradicional frente a las diferencias del relato platónico con sus modelos.

El supuesto previo necesario para la elaboración de toda la escatología del *Fedón* es la inmortalidad del alma, sobre el cual no voy a insistir, dado que ya me he referido a él anteriormente. Sí aludiré a algunos detalles relevantes del relato.

6.2. **Los guías en el Más Allá**

En diversos momentos del relato, Sócrates se refiere a unos guías que conducen al alma por el Más Allá. Así en 107d habla de un δαίμων que actúa como ἡγεμών [[T30]]:

> Se cuenta eso de que, cuando cada uno muere, el daimon de cada uno, el que le ha tocado en suerte en vida, ese intenta llevarlo hacia un cierto lugar, en donde es preciso que tras haberse congregado, sean sometidos a juicio para marchar hacia el Hades en compañía del guía aquel al que le está encomendado dirigirlos de aquí

⁶⁰ *Od.* 10.513-514.
⁶¹ *OF* 341 II y IV, 342.
⁶⁵ Sedley (1989).
hasta allí. Y una vez que allí les toca lo que les era debido y permanecen el tiempo que es debido, de nuevo en sentido inverso los reconduce otro guía a través de muchos y amplios periodos de tiempo.

Por ello añade que el camino no es simple, “pues, de serlo, no se necesitarían guías” (107e ἡγεμών, 107d, 113d ὁ δαίμων). Más adelante (108c) menciona que “quien ha pasado la vida pura y moderadamente encontrará allí a dioses como compañeros de viaje y guías”. Y en 113d vuelve a referirse a un δαίμων de cada difunto responsable de llevarlo a la región infernal que le corresponde.

Las láminas de oro no mencionan démones que guíen las almas. En cambio, tiene importantes puntos de contacto con la platónica la demonología presentada en el Papiro de Derveni, que contiene un comentario anónimo sobre unos versos atribuidos a Orfeo, precedidos de la descripción e interpretación de un ritual órfico. En col. 3.4, de acuerdo con la última reconstrucción de las primeras columnas del papiro debida a Valeria Piano “hay un demon para cada uno, benévolo”, que Tsantsanoglou compara con el citado por Sócrates en Rep. 617d, y con el pasaje de Heraclit. B 119 D.-K., según el cual el carácter de un hombre es su daimon, que puede estar criticando la idea contenida en el papiro. En la continuación de la línea del Papiro de Derveni posiblemente se lee: ‘o bien otro vengador’, y más adelante, en ll. 5-7 se mencionan “los démones subterráneos … asistentes de los dioses”.

Como señala Piano, el papiro hace referencia a un demon personal, y a otros démones asistentes de los dioses, lo que apunta a la naturaleza ambivalente del δαίμων que, de acuerdo con la conducta del sujeto en vida, puede ser benéfico o maléfico. Por ello en la misma la columna se hace referencia a las Erinis y a Dike, que castigan a los malvados (ἐξώλεας) en el Más Allá. Piano reconstruye la secuencia: “que, como servidores de los dioses, castigan según la justicia a los malvados”.

Poco después, en el mismo papiro, los démones vuelven a ser mencionados (col. VI 2-3) [T31]

El encantamiento de los magos puede alejar los démones que son un obstáculo. Los démones obstaculizan como almas que toman venganza. Por tal motivo hacen el sacrificio los magos, como si pagaran una pena.
Otros textos no órificos mencionan démones que tienen funciones similares a las descritas por Platón. Se trata, pues, de una tradición que precede y sigue a Platón, pero los démones personales y los que tienen funciones de acompañante en el Más Allá parecen ser desarrollos en el seno del orfismo: remito a un artículo anterior sobre el tema78.

6.3. Alusiones a un juicio al que se ven sometidas las almas

Como en Gorgias y en República79, se hallan en el Fedón alusiones a un juicio de las almas en el Hades para decidir sobre su destino ultramundano. Pero, a diferencia de la amplitud con que se desarrolla este aspecto en los dos primeros diálogos citados, en el Fedón es apenas aludido: ni se especifican los jueces ni la naturaleza del juicio, solo se señala que se trata de un juicio sobre la actuación moral del sujeto en vida [[T32]] [[T33]]:

(107d) el demon de cada uno ... intenta llevarlo hacia un cierto lugar, en donde es preciso que tras haberse congregado, sean sometidos a juicio.

(113d) una vez que los difuntos llegan a la región adonde a cada uno le conduce su demon, comienzan por ser juzgados los que han vivido bien y piadosamente y los que no80.

El juicio no se encuentra en los textos órificos antiguos, ni parece tener cabida. En las laminillas, como la de Hiponion (OF 474 c. 500 a. C.), el alma del difunto se enfrenta a unos guardianes de la fuente de Mnemósine, ante los que tiene que pronunciar unas determinadas palabras que le facilitan por sí mismas el acceso al lugar privilegiado del Más Allá. Nada se dice de la calidad moral de la actuación en vida del difunto.81 En cuanto a otras tradiciones, Minos aparece en Homero como juez (Od. 11.568), pero solo de las disputas entre los muertos. En Píndaro (Ol. 2.59-60) se alude por primera vez a un juicio de las almas en el Hades, pero todo parece indicar que es Platón el autor de la creación de un canon de jueces infernales. La aparición de estos en poemas órificos recientes como el transmitido por el Papiro de Bolonia (OF 717) parece ser debida, precisamente, al influjo de Platón.

6.4. Efectos del juicio

Las almas sufren un trato distinto, acorde al resultado del juicio, lo que se expresa de modo muy vago en 107e [[T34]]:

Y una vez que allí les toca lo que les era debido y permanecen el tiempo que es debido, de nuevo en sentido inverso los reconduce otro guía a través de muchos y amplios períodos de tiempo82.

De esta primera aproximación se desprenden solo dos datos: que hay determinados efectos de la sentencia que obedecen a la necesidad de reparación y la necesidad de que las almas pasen en el Hades un plazo de tiempo establecido antes de volver al mundo. No obstante, el relato socrático precisa mucho más los efectos del juicio en 108b: [[T35]]

Y cuando llega allí donde las demás, al alma impura y que ha cometido acciones como haber estado ligada a muertes injustas, o haber cometido otros delitos por el estilo, que son hermanos de estos o acciones que resultan ser propias de almas hermanas, a esa todas le huyen y se alejan de ella y no quiere ni acompañarla en

78 Bernabé (2013: 114).
79 El juicio se alude asimismo en Pl. Ep. 7.335a (OF 433 I); Lg. 959b
80 ὁ ἑκάστου δαίμων ... ἄγειν ἐπιχειρεῖ εἰς δή τινα τόπον, οἱ δὲ τοὺς συλλεγέντας διαδίκασαμένους. || ἐπειδὰν ἀφίκωνται οἱ τετελευτηκότες καὶ πρῶτον μὲν διεδικάσαντο οἳ τε καλῶς καὶ ὁσίως βιώσαντες καὶ οἱ μή.
82 τυχόντας δὲ ἐκεῖ ἣν δὲν τυχεῖν καὶ μεινάντας ὁν χρή χρόνον ἄλλος δεύρο πάλιν ἡγείμων κοιμίζει ἐν πολλαῖς χρόνον καὶ μακραίς περιόδοις.
el viaje ni guiarla; esa vaga errante y se halla en una completa indigencia hasta que pasan ciertos períodos de tiempo, al pasar los cuales se ve arrastrada por la necesidad hacia la morada que le corresponde. En cambio, la que ha pasado la vida pura y moderadamente, tras encontrar allí a dioses como compañeros de viaje y guías, habita el lugar que le es adecuado.

En este segundo pasaje, hallamos una mayor especificación de las razones por las que un alma es premiada o por las que es castigada. Las premiadas lo son por una vida de pureza y moderación (καθαρῶς τε καὶ μετρίως). Las castigadas lo son expresamente por su impureza (ἀκάθαρτον), pero se presupone a contrariis que también lo son por su falta de moderación; asimismo se menciona un ejemplo del tipo de delitos que produce tal impureza: la relación con muertes injustas. Con ello, la justicia es también un requisito que se valora. El premio consiste en encontrar a dioses como compañeros de viaje y guías. El castigo es un considerable espacio de tiempo en soledad. Se dice expresamente que cada alma ocupa un lugar que le es adecuado (πρέπουσαν … προσήκοντα), con lo que se insiste en la idea de reparación. El filósofo se muestra aún impreciso con respecto a estos lugares, que son considerados diferentes, pero cuya naturaleza no detalla, como tampoco precisa la duración de la estancia en soledad. Solo después de la larga descripción de geografía infernal y de una nueva referencia (vaga) al juicio, específica aún más en 113d-114c: distingue cinco tipos que no son presentados en gradación; diríamos que, calificándolos del mejor, 1, al peor, 5, son presentados en el orden 3, 5, 4, 2 y 1. La razón es claramente que el autor quiere dejar a los filósofos en el punto climático de la enumeración y situar a los que alcanzan un peor destino en el centro. En concreto, la distribución es la siguiente:

a) Quienes parece que han vivido moderadamente (3 en la gradación, 113d οἳ μὲν ἄν δόξωσι μέσως βεβιωκέναι) se purifican en el Aqueronte, pagando las penas de sus delitos, y reciben honores cada uno según su mérito.

b) A los que se estima que son incurables a causa de la magnitud de sus faltas es decir, los que han cometido sacrilegios, asesinatos injustos y cualquier tipo de crímenes por el estilo (5 en la gradación, 113e οἳ δ' ἄν δόξωσιν ἀνιάτως ἔχειν διὰ τὰ μεγέθη τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων) los arrojan al Tártaro, de donde nunca saldrán.

c) Los que parece que han cometido faltas remediables, pero graves (4 en la gradación, 113e οἳ δ' ἄν ἰάσιμα μὲν μεγάλα δὲ δόξωσιν ἡμαρτηκέναι ἁμαρτήματα, normalmente fruto de raptos de cólera) también van al Tártaro, pero no para siempre, sino que se liberan cuando persuaden a sus víctimas.

d) Los que se estima que se distinguieron por su santo vivir (2 en la gradación, 114b οἳ δὲ δὴ ἄν δόξωσι διαφερόντως πρὸς τὸ ὁσίως βιῶναι) ascienden a la superficie para llegar a la morada pura y establecerse sobre la tierra.

e) Los que se han purificado suficientemente en el ejercicio de la filosofía (1 en la gradación, 114c τούτων δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ ἠλεκτρικὸς καθηράμενοι) viven completamente sin cuerpo para todo el porvenir y van a parar a las moradas más hermosas, que el autor se abstiene de describir.

83 ἀφικομένην δὲ ὅθιπερ αἱ ἄλλαι, τὴν μὲν ἀκάθαρτον καὶ τι πεποιηκυῖα τοιοῦτον, ἢ φύσεως ἄδικων ἡμέμον ἢ ἄλλα ἀττα ταὐτα ἐγκαμμενρα, ἢ τοῦτων ἀδελφα καὶ ἀδελφων ψυχων ζήσα ζηγάναι ὑπαττα, ταυτίνην μὲν ἁπάν ζεύγευς τε καὶ ἑπεκτρέπεται καὶ οὕτω συνεμπόρως οὕτω ἡμερῶν ἔθελε γίγνοντα, αὐτή δὲ πλανᾶται ἐν πάσῃ ἐξομήνῃ ἀπορίᾳ ἑώς ἂν ἄποι ὅτι ἰχνον γένονται, ἀν ἐλάχιστων ὑπ' ἀνάγκης φέρεται εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἀφανῶ τῃς τοῦτος βιῶναι αὐτὴ δὲ πλανᾶται ἐν πάσῃ ἐχομένῃ ἀπορίᾳ ἑώς ἂν δὴ τινες χρόνων γένονται, ἀν ἐλάχιστων ὑπ' ἀνάγκης φέρεται εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ἀφανῶ τῃς τοῦτος βιῶναι, ὡς τοῦτος περιεχόμενος ὑπ' ἀνάγκης ἀφανῶ τῃς τοῦτος συνεμπόρως καὶ ἡμερῶν ἡμερῶν συνεμπόρως, ἀφανῶ τῃς τοῦτος ἀκτής ἀττα τοῦτη ἀττα τοῦτη προσήκοντα.


85 καὶ οἳ μὲν ἄν δόξωσι μέσως βεβιωκέναι, πορευθέντες ἐπὶ τὸν ἄχρονο, ἀναβάντες ἀ δὴ αὐτῶν ἄδικα ἡμοῖρα ἐστιν, ἐπὶ τοῦτων ἀφικομένοιν εἰς τὴν λίμνην, καὶ ἕκει ὅτι οἰκοῦσι τε καὶ καθηράμενοι τοῦτος τοῦ ἄκαθαρτος διδοτε δίκας ἀπολύονται, εἰ τις τῇ ἡδίκηκε, τοῦ τε ἐνεργείαν τεμας φέρονται κατά τῇ ἄμιαν ἔκαστος.
Los contenidos de estos textos presentan cierta semejanza con algunos de ámbito órfico. Me referiré a dos especialmente relevantes: el primero es el testimonio que encontramos en el propio Fedón y al que ya me he referido86 [[T36]]: quien llegue al Hades no iniciado y sin haber cumplido las teletai “yacerá en el fango”. pero el que llegue purificado y cumplidas las teletai, habitará allí con los dioses. Pues en efecto, como dicen los de las teletai, son “muchos los portadores de tirso, pero los bacos, pocos”. 
y el segundo, es un fragmento órfico literal (OF 340) [[T37]]: Quienes han sido puros bajo los rayos del sol, una vez que han fallecido, alcanzan un destino más grato en el hermoso prado, cabe el Aqueronte de profunda corriente. (...) Los que obraron contra la justicia bajo los rayos del sol, réprobos, son descendidos junto al llano del Cocito, al gélido Tártaro87.

En los apartados que siguen resumiremos las analogías y las diferencias que se obtienen de la comparación de los textos, resumiendo algunos aspectos referidos y ampliando otros, incluso con algún testimonio nuevo relevante para este propósito.

7. Analogías puestas de relieve en la comparación
1) La suerte del alma en el Más Allá se decide en correspondencia con acciones llevadas a cabo en este mundo: a diferencia de lo que ocurre en Homero y en la tradición mayoritaria griega, las almas no concurren a un Hades igualitario ni tienen todas la misma suerte, sino que, por el contrario, unas tienen un destino privilegiado y otras, uno peor, en correspondencia con lo que hayan hecho en vida.
2) En consecuencia, hay espacios distintos en el Hades como destino para los premiados y los castigados, siendo el Aqueronte el premio de los primeros y el Tártaro el de los segundos.
3) La purificación (κάθαρσις) es un requisito para obtener el destino privilegiado. Este principio se encuentra reiteradamente en el ámbito órfico. Por ejemplo en las laminillas de oro, en las que el iniciado debe pronunciar ante Perséfone una fórmula que le permitirá acceder a un lugar privilegiado (citada en § 2).
4) También la justicia es aludida por Platón y por los órficos como requisito para obtener una suerte privilegiada en el Más Allá. Está claro que en un pasaje de Leyes88 Platón recoge una imagen órfica de la justicia, como puso de manifiesto Burkert89, cuando demostró que la frase platónica: “no deja de seguirlo Justicia, vengadora de las infracciones de la ley divina” era una paráfrasis de un fragmento órfico: “Lo siguió de cerca Justicia de múltiples castigos (πολύποινος), de todos protectora”90. Y en el fr. OF 34 se contraponen los puros a los que han sido injustos, lo que implica que el cumplimiento de la justicia es uno de los componentes de la pureza tal como la entienden los órficos.
5) El alma maldita se caracteriza por su soledad en el Más Allá, mientras que la purificada parece estar en compañía de otras. Aunque no puedo desarrollar aquí el tema, esta compañía es definida en las laminillas órficas como “tíaos de los iniciados” al que acudirá el mista para estar en compañía de los demás iniciados91

Laminilla áurea de Feras (OF 493a.2): Envíame al tíasos de los iniciados.
Lámina de oro de Turios (OF 487.2): Dirígete al tíasos de la derecha teniéndolo todo bien presente

6) El texto platónico menciona transmigración y plazos de tiempo en el Más Allá, no siendo incompatibles unos con otros. En los testimonios presentados no se menciona esta circunstancia, pero en otros textos órficos sí que se encuentra. Siempre son imprecisos, ya que las fuentes dan números muy diversos92.

7) Platón desarrolla el principio de que hay determinados δαίμονες, unos personales, otros guardianes del Hades, en correspondencia con el panorama que se presenta en el Papiro de Derveni.

8. Diferencias puestas de relieve en la comparación

1) Con respecto a los requisitos necesarios para obtener el lugar de privilegio, entre los órficos estos son predominantemente rituales: el difunto debe haber sido iniciado, haber cumplido las teletaei y estar purificado, condiciones que lo convierten en un βάκχος. Basta con declararlas para ser aceptado en el Más Allá. Para Platón los requisitos son morales e intelectuales. Se habla de castigados por haber cometido acciones como homicidios o sacrilegios y de premiados por haber vivido δώσια; la purificación es la práctica de la filosofía y los verdaderos βάκχοι son los filósofos. Es especialmente significativo que en 67c, cuando hace referencia a la esperanza en el destino futuro que tienen los que tienen la mente preparada, como purificada (ὅς ἡγεῖταί οἱ παρεσκευάσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν ὥσπερ κεκαθαρμένην), Sócrates no usa "alma" (ψυχή), sino "mente" (διάνοια), porque la concepción cognitiva del alma predomina en esta parte del diálogo93.

2) Mientras que los órficos establecen un destino claramente dualista (los que chapotean en el barro / los que viven con los dioses), Platón matiza mucho más, creando una especie de “purgatorio avant la lettre” entre cinco situaciones posibles.

3) El juicio de las almas no existe en ámbito órfico antiguo.

4) La posición de absoluta preeminencia de los filósofos es naturalmente una intervención platónica.

Pero no es menos cierto que es imposible prescindir de la tradición mistérica o religiosa para explicar muchos de los aspectos del mito platónico. En otros casos, la tradición es compleja, y no ayuda demasiado a determinarla la deliberada imprecisión platónica, como por ejemplo, las alusiones a los períodos de tiempo que las almas deben pasar en el mundo inferior (107e ἐν πολλαῖς χρόνου καὶ μακραῖς

92 En Pl. Phdr. 248e las almas que han perdido su privilegio pasan por un período de diez mil años antes de poder regresar al universo supraceleste. Solo las de los filósofos pueden hacerlo al cabo de tres mil años. En Resp.615e se señala que el viaje subterráneo de las almas condenadas dura mil años. La creencia órfica no es fácil de reconstruir (puede que variara a lo largo del tiempo o incluso que fuera diferente según lugares). Hdt. 2.123 (OF 423) atribuye a los egipcios la teoría asumida “por algunos griegos” de que el ciclo de reencarnaciones dura tres mil años. Pindaro fr. 133 Maehl. (OF 443) sostiene que Perséfone acepta “al noveno año” el cumplimiento del castigo por su antiguo duelo, momento a partir del cual las almas vuelven hacia el sol de arriba. En cambio en la Ol. 2.68-69 (OF 445) dice que cuantos tuvieron el valor de mantener su alma libre de injusticias “tres veces en cada sitio” a lo largo de tres vidas en la Tierra y otras tres en el Hades, se ganan el privilegio de acceder, por “el camino de Zeus”, a la Isla de los Bienaventurados. Por último, Procl. in Pl. Remp.2.173.12 Kroll = OF 346, al explicar el plazo de mil años que Platón señala en la República, nos informa de que Orfeo lleva a las almas durante trescientos años desde los lugares subterráneos y las prisiones de allí a su génesis. Quizá esta divergencia obedece a que no son números exactos, sino indicaciones genéricas de períodos largos de tiempo. No comparto la idea de Edmonds (2004: 218n. 179) de que la idea de reencarnación y la idea de tormento en el Más Allá no forman parte de un sistema coherente. Cf. Bernabé (2007b).

93 Hackforth (1955: 52 n. 1).
9. Conclusiones

Todas las referencias a la escatología en el *Fedón* están enfocadas en la inminencia de la muerte de Sócrates y el deseo del filósofo de transmitir a sus discípulos y amigos la tranquilidad con que afronta el destino que le espera. Platón construye una compleja cosmología para crear una geografía “real”, y como parte del mundo, un espacio adecuado a la matizada compensación que propone que reciban las almas por su comportamiento durante la vida, con regiones diversas para recibir diversos premios o castigos, zonas de transición que expliquen cómo las almas pueden volver a la vida, y con un lugar privilegiado como sede de las almas mejores, las de los filósofos, la del propio Sócrates. Para ello se basa tanto en cosmologías “científicas” de la época (un tema en el que no he podido entrar aquí), como en descripciones infernales homéricas y órficas, con la pretensión de darle una cobertura sólida, solvente, a las descripciones más vagas propias de la tradición literaria.

En este marco sitúa una escatología basada en dos principios fundamentales: la transmigración de las almas y la existencia de premios y castigos, no contradictoria con la primera. Las almas pueden ser condenadas a castigos en el Más Allá y, después, a volver a la tierra a vivir una nueva vida. Al término de la vida son juzgadas, pero este aspecto no es detallado en este diálogo. Annas94 considera que el filósofo no ha combinado con éxito el tema del juicio de la almas y el de la reencarnación, pero como he afirmado en otro lugar95, pienso que el énfasis en la transmigración y el mínimo interés por el juicio obedecen al propósito que la escatología tiene en el diálogo, esto es, a la justificación de las esperanzas que Sócrates tiene sobre su destino después de la muerte. El juicio es impreciso porque es obvio que una vida como la de Sócrates podría afrontar no importa qué juicio y, de haberlo, solo puede recibir el mayor de los premios; por ello es recurrente en el diálogo la idea de que un castigo para Sócrates es inconcebible. Por el contrario, la idea de la transmigración es fundamental para poner de relieve que la mejor suerte que cabe a un alma es abandonar el cuerpo96.

Por otra parte, Sócrates debe hacer ver a los discípulos, que lamentan su muerte inminente, la gran paradoja de que él va a verse inmediatamente liberado de la verdadera prisión, la del cuerpo, mientras que ellos no son conscientes de que van a seguir prisioneros de sus cuerpos y de las miserias de la vida97.

Si hemos de contestar a la pregunta ¿hasta qué punto es órfica esta escatología? diríamos que Platón ha reiterado la conexión con los misterios y el orfismo a lo largo de todo el diálogo; ha empleado tonos órficos en algunos detalles de su descripción ultramundana, como son algunos elementos de la “geografía infernal”, o la presencia de Adrastea98, y se ha basado en mayor medida en la explícita relación de transmigración, premios y castigos, que son complementarias en la medida en que la vuelta a la vida en este mundo son oportunidades añadidas para almas que no han conseguido liberarse en su vida anterior. La insistencia en remontar el discurso a un παλαιὸς λόγος órfico obedece a una estrategia platónica excelentemente definida por Casertano99: “consiste en presentar la propia concepción revolucionaria de la filosofía como la consecuencia más coherente de los antiguos discursos”. Asimismo procede del ámbito órfico la descripción de las funciones de los démones, pero sobre todo ello ha operado lo que llamamos la “transposición platónica”, no solo por la brillantez y espectacularidad del

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94 Annas (1982: 127ss.).
95 Bernabé (2013: 119-120).
97 Casadesús (2008: 1268).
98 Adrastea no aparece en Hesíodo y sí, en cambio, en la tradición órfica, cf. *OF* 77, 208-211.
cuadro trazado, sino por el perfeccionamiento del esquema órftico, que estaba basado en una perspectiva ritualista, para convertirlo en una perspectiva moral, en la que la ética en el comportamiento y la iniciación filosófica son las condiciones para acceder a la situación privilegiada en el otro mundo.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

1. Presentation

The purpose of this paper is to present a series of reflections on the eschatological myth of Phaedo (107c-115a) in order to clarify its meaning and function in the dialogue. My presentation will focus on issues related to the fate of the souls in the Afterlife. I will review the main ideological and religious assumptions that form the Socratic discourse, trying to trace its presence in the religious or philosophical traditions that came before Plato. It was believed that a large majority of these elements were Orphic, while another line of research ignored the tradition to simply consider them Platonic creations. It is for this reason that I will try to do a weighted balance looking at the similarities and differences that exist between what is being narrated in Phaedo and what has been found in significant texts of previous literary and religious traditions, such as Homer, Hesiod, or the Orphics.

To finish, I will present some conclusions on the motivations of the myth. I will consider to what extent the myth continues some of these traditions and, on the other hand, to what extent it does not. In addition, I will discuss the consequences derived from what is said in the myth about the situation of Socrates and his disciples, in the framework of the “transposition” of the tradition that has been carried out by Plato. In this way, we can highlight how he used it very freely in order to build a magnificent original creation transmitted in a very rich text that is far from its models.

2. The moment of the dialogue in which the story is inserted and how it is introduced

Once the discussion of the soul has led to the conclusion that it is immortal, Socrates (107c) introduces a new aspect: the care that the soul requires. The expression ἐν ζῆν means that what we call life is not real (true life is the one lived by the soul freed from the body). The theme had already been developed by the Orphics and Euripides. Continuing his reasoning: ἀν, the use of an unreal conditional sentence (an imperfect with ἄν) means that the idea of death as a separation from everything is considered impossible and therefore, false. From this premise, taken as indisputable, the discussion on the immortality of the soul is taken to the moral terrain in order to explore the implications of the fact that the soul is not free from evil when it dies. At this point the myth is introduced, but without explicit authorship, with two ambiguous λέγεται (followed by two others later), which reminds the reader that the whole dialogue is supposedly a reflection of a traditional story. The fact that an author is not identified could be explained either because it is assumed that the reference is known by those who hear the story, or rather because, although the myth is largely a Platonic construction, the philosopher is trying to present what he says as if it came from a known tradition. However, there are a number of references before the dialogue that hint at the religious and ideological models on which it is based. Let’s enumerate them:

1) 61d Methodological statement on how the issue of eschatology is addressed in Phaedo: through philosophical inquiry and myth.
2) 62b The prohibition of suicide is based on a reference to ἐν ἄπορρήτως; i.e., to the Mysteries.
3) 63b [[T 7]] Hope in a happy destination for some of the dead is referred to πάλαι ... λέγεται, an expression that evokes παλαιὸς λόγος (i.e. an Orphic text).

4) 67c [[T 8]] Socrates is referring to the hope for the future fate of those who have the mind purified. The κάθαρσις is a requirement for salvation typical of the Mysteries.

5) 67b [[T 9]] Socrates points as an accepted maxim the expression: “someone who is not pure is not allowed to approach someone who is pure.” A similar idea is attributed to Pythagoras in the [[T 10]] and has parallels in the Derveni Papyrus.

6) 67c [[T11]] The text alludes to the Orphic idea of the confinement of the soul as something that is said of old (πάλαι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ λέγεται); it evokes παλαιὸς λόγος (an Orphic text). The purification referred to by Socrates is philosophical, but it is based on the ritual of the Mysteries.

7) 69c [[T12]] Symbolic interpretation of teletai and purification (καθαρμός, κάθαρσις). The idea that the telete and purification give access to the soul to dwell with the gods in Hades is Orphic [[T13]] [[T14]].

8) 70c [[T15]] Reference to a παλαιὸς λόγος (which Olympiodorus considered “Orphic and Pythagorean”) in which transmigration is affirmed. It insists on the idea 72d [[T16]].

9) 80b [[T17]] The distinction between the soul (ψυχὴ) as being similar to the divine, and the body (σῶμα) as being mortal is also an Orphic idea [[T18]].

10) 80d [[T19]] Once more it is mentioned that certain souls – among them that of Socrates himself – will be in the company of the gods. When Socrates insists on the same idea (81a) [[T20]], he attributes it again to those initiated into the Mysteries.

11) 82b [[T21]] Only the philosopher (the truly purified) shall dwell with the gods. The terminology θεῶν γένος and καθαρῷ remind that found on the tablets of Turios [[T22]].

12) (82d) [[T23]] References to the idea of the body as a prison (Platonic adaptation of the Orphic idea of the body-burial) and its release (83a) are another concept typical of Orphism (cf. OF 348, 350).

13) (107d) [[T24]] Allusion to the avoidance of evil and salvation, two concepts found in the Mystery tradition. Cf. the parallels in [[T25]] and [[T26]]. Consequently, it is clear that the scope of reference alluded to by the Socratic λέγεται is connected to the Mystery rites, in primis, the Orphic ones.

3. Reference in which Socrates downplays the value of the story
In 108d [[T27]] the author presents his story as a literary creation, based on tradition, but also in competition with that tradition. And he does not attribute a category of certainty, but it gives it the value of a kind of metaphor of reality.

4. The recurrence along the dialogue regarding the issue of risk
In a previous paper I pointed out how recurrent are the references to risk in the dialogue, which suggest the fear that the possibility that the souls of good men have a privileged destination might be wrong. The climax of this recurrence is the allusion to the “beautiful risk” in 114d [[T28]].

5. Sense of the description of the earth
There is an attempt to locate on a map the places of Hell, in competition with where they were situated in previous epic poetry. It is an infernal geography that originates in Homer and becomes more complex in the Orphic texts, but it is presented by Plato in a much brighter way. Such description allows to distribute the good and bad souls in the cosmos, describing transition areas to explain how souls
can come back to life, and to create a privileged place for the best of souls. Cf. the definition of Guthrie [[T29]] and the proposal by Sedley that the whole description is an introduction to a cosmological teleology.

6. Aspects related to the fate of the souls in the afterlife

6.1. Premise: I will try to point out the ideological and religious preconceptions of the myth, and what elements are based on tradition. The necessary presupposition is the immortality of the soul, on which I will not insist. Other relevant details of the story are:

6.2. The guides in the Afterlife: in [[T30]] and other passages, Socrates refers to guides that lead the soul through the Afterlife. The golden tablets do not mention the daemons to guide souls. Instead, the daemonology of the Derveni Papyrus has many points of contact with the Platonic one. In PDerv. col. 3.4 (reconstruction of Valeria Piano) there is a reference to a personal daemon, and to other daemones that assist the gods, which suggests that, according to the subject’s behavior in life, the δαίμων can be benevolent or malevolent. It is for this reason that in the same column there is a reference to the Erinyes and Dike, who punish the wicked in the Afterlife, and about δαίμονες that “as servants of the gods, they punish the wicked according to justice.” Cf. [[T31]]. It is a tradition that precedes and follows Plato, but the personal daemons and those that accompany the soul in the Afterlife seem to have been developed within Orphism.

6.3. Allusions to a judgment to which the souls are subjected to: Unlike what happens in Gorgias and The Republic, this is barely mentioned in Phaedo [[T32]] [[T33]].

The judgment is not originally Orphic. In the gold tablets, the soul of the deceased speaks a few words before the guardians of the source of Mnemosyne, which will facilitate access to a privileged location in the Afterlife. Nothing is said about the moral quality of the performed life of the deceased. As for other traditions, Minos appears in Homer as judge (Od. 11.568), but as the judge of disputes among the dead. In Pindar (Ol. 2.59-60) there is an allusion for the first time to a judgment of the souls in Hades, but everything points out that Plato is the author of the creation of a canon of judges of Hell. Their appearance in later Orphic poems seems to be due to the influence of Plato.

6.4. Effects of judgment: the souls suffer a different treatment, according to the outcome of the trial, which is expressed in a vague way in 107e [[T34]] and in a more detailed way in 108b [[T35]].

The souls are rewarded by leading a life of purity and restraint. The ones to be punished are expressly done so by their impurity (and presumably by their lack of moderation). As examples of crimes that produce impurity, the text mentions unjust deaths, so justice is also a requirement. The reward is to find the gods as travel companions and guides. The punishment is solitude. Plato specifies the punishments (113d-114c) only after he describes the infernal geography and makes a new (vague) reference to judgment. The distribution of the souls is as follows:

a) Those who have lived with restraint are purified in the Acheron.

b) The incurable are thrown into Tartarus, whence they will never come out from.

c) Those who have committed faults that can be remedied but that are still serious go to Tartarus, but they are released when they convince their victims.

d) Those who have lived piously rise to the surface, the pure abode.

e) Those who have been purified by philosophy live forever as spirits.

The contents of these texts have similarities with some of the Orphic ones. [[T36]], [[T37]]
7. Analogies highlighted in the comparison

1) In the Afterlife, some souls have a privileged destination and others one much worse, depending on the actions that they carried out in this world (not in the majority of the Greek literary tradition since Homer).

2) There are different spaces for those who are rewarded (Acheron) and those who are punished (Tartarus).

3) Purification is a prerequisite to achieve a privileged destination.

4) Justice is also alluded to by Plato and the Orphics as a requirement to obtain a privileged position in the Afterlife. In Lg. 715e, Plato includes an Orphic image of justice, and in OF 340, the pure souls are opposed to those who have done evil against justice.

5) The damned soul is characterized by its loneliness in the Afterlife, while the purified soul seems to be in the company of others. This company is defined in the Orphic tablets as “Thiasus of the initiates” [[T38]] [[T39]].

6) Transmigration and timelines in the Afterlife are not incompatible. They are always imprecise.

7) Plato presents a theory of the δαίμονες, similar to what is found in the Deverni Papyrus.

8. Differences highlighted in the comparison

1) The requirements to achieve a privileged position among the Orphics are through ritual. It is only necessary to declare them to be accepted in the Afterlife. For Plato the requirements are moral and intellectual. It is significant that in 67c, Socrates does not use “soul” (ψυχή), but “mind” (διάνοια).

2) While the Orphics clearly establish a dualist destination, Plato creates a kind of “purgatory avant la lettre” among five possible situations.

3) The judgment of the souls does not exist in the Orphic sphere.

4) The position of preeminence of the philosophers is a Platonic intervention.

9. Conclusions

The references to eschatology found in Phaedo are focused on the imminent death of Socrates and his desire to convey to his friends the tranquility with which he faces death. Plato constructs a complex cosmology to create in a part of the world an adequate space to deal with the recompense received by souls for their behavior during life, with various regions to receive rewards or punishments, transition areas to explain how souls can come back to life, and a privileged place to host the best of souls, those of the philosophers. In order to develop this idea, he uses on the one hand “scientific” cosmologies of the time (a topic that has not been developed here), and on the other poetic Homeric and Orphic descriptions of Hell, to give a reliable coverage to the descriptions present in the literary tradition.

Phaedo’s eschatology is based on two fundamental principles: the transmigration of souls and the existence of a system of rewards and punishments, which is not contradictory to the first. Souls can be sentenced to punishments in the Afterlife, and then return to earth to live a new life. At the end of their life they are judged again, but this aspect is not discussed thoroughly in Phaedo. Pace Annas I think the emphasis on transmigration and the minimal interest in judgment are connected to the purpose that eschatology has in the dialogue, that is, the justification of Socrates’ hope that he will have a good destination after his death. The judgment is imprecise because it is obvious that a life like Socrates’ could face any trial. On the contrary, the idea of transmigration is essential to highlight that the best fate that befits a soul is for it to leave the body.
Socrates must make his disciples see, who lament his imminent death, the paradox that he will be freed from the real prison, the body, while they are not aware that they will continue to be prisoners from the miseries of life.

In answer to the question as to what extent this eschatology is Orphic, we would say that Plato has reiterated the connection with the Mysteries and Orphism throughout the entire dialogue; he has used Orphic tones in some details of his otherworldly description, and he has based these to a greater degree on the explicit relationship between transmigration, rewards, and punishments. The insistence to trace the dialogue to an Orphic παλαιὸς λόγος is due to a Platonic strategy excellently defined by Casertano: “it consists in the presentation of the revolutionary conception of philosophy as the most coherent consequence of ancient discourses.” The description of the functions of the daemons also comes from the Orphic tradition. The Platonic “transposition” has transformed these components, not only for the brilliance and magnificence of the layout, but for the improvement of the Orphic scheme, which was based on a ritualistic perspective. Plato turned it into a moral perspective, in which ethical behavior and philosophical initiation are the conditions necessary to access a privileged state in the Afterlife.

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“Le debemos un gallo a Asclepio”. El carácter político de la muerte de Sócrates en el Fedón

Bieda, Esteban

“Sócrates se nos aparece como el primero que supo no sólo vivir, sino, lo que es mucho más, morir”

F. Nietzsche, El origen de la tragedia §15

I. Introducción
Mucho se ha escrito acerca del posible significado de las últimas palabras de Sócrates en el Fedón. Una de las razones de tal multiplicidad de interpretaciones estriba en la tragedia (y, por ello mismo, riqueza) de todo grupo de “últimas palabras”: resulta imposible preguntar a quien las dijo qué quiso decir. En el presente trabajo nos proponemos retomar el enigma de la deuda con Asclepio a fin de rescatar cierto matiz político presente en el parlamento final de Sócrates. Para ello, nos detendremos en la concepción socrática del nacimiento y de la vida en tanto fenómenos eminentemente políticos para, a partir de allí, repensar el status de su muerte en esa misma clave. Finalmente, intentaremos relacionar el carácter político de la muerte con la referencia al dios Asclepio.

II. Nacimiento, vida y muerte en la pólis
Hacia el final del Critón, las leyes de Atenas personificadas dicen:

¿No te dimos nosotras la existencia (ἐγεννήσαμεν), y por medio de nosotras tu padre tomó en matrimonio a tu madre y te engendró (ἐφύτευσεν) a ti? [...] Puesto que naciste, fuiste criado y educado (ἐγένου τε καὶ ἐξετράφης καὶ ἐπαιδεύθης) gracias a nosotras, ¿podrías decir que no eres, ante todo, descendiente y esclavo nuestro? (Crit. 50d; 50e).

Sin leyes que regularan su nacimiento o le permitieran rendir la δοκιμασία,

1 ὁ Κρίτων, τῷ Ἀσκληπίου quien en 59b10 se ha dicho que estaba enfermo, φόειλουμεν ἄλκτρμαι quién en 59b10 se ha dicho que estaba enfermo, μαῖνθοντα quien en 59b10 se ha dicho que estaba enfermo, ὑώνα × ἄλλα ἀπόδοτε καὶ μή ἀμελήσητε (Fed. 118a7-8).
2 En este sentido, ya muerto Sócrates, en vano pregunta Critón ὅρα εἰ τι ἄλλο λέγεις (118a9).
3 Por estrictas razones de espacio no nos detendremos exhaustivamente en las diversas interpretaciones que se han dado de las últimas palabras de Sócrates en el último siglo. Para una lista abreviada de trabajos sobre el tema, remitimos a la Bibliografía al final del trabajo.
4 Cf. Aristóteles, Const. de los Atenienses XLV.1-2 y Critón 51d. Si bien los testimonios al respecto son escasos, este examen habría consistido fundamentalmente en certificar que la edad del aspirante a ciudadano fuese la adecuada (dieciocho años) y que sus padres fuesen ambos ciudadanos atenienses; luego de esto, el joven quedaba a cargo de ciertos celadores, instructores y maestros que los instruían en
Sócrates no hubiese sido un ateniense.  

Así como el nacimiento no es un fenómeno biológico, sino político, lo mismo ocurre con la vida: “no se debe tener mayor estima por el vivir (τὸ ζῆν) que por el vivir bien (τὸ ἐὖ ζῆν)” (Crit. 48b). “Bien” (ἐὖ) significa “bella/noblemente” (καλῶς) y “con justicia” (δικαιῶς), de modo que la vida propiamente humana es aquella que se ordena a lo justo y noble. La ley y la justicia están, pues, por delante de la vida biológica: para que el hombre permanezca hombre es más importante obedecer la ley, vivir una vida moral y justa, que seguir vivo.  

Esta distinción entre ζῆν y ἐὖ ζῆν concuerda con el carácter fundamentalmente político de la misión socrática en Atenas. Como se detalla en Apología 28a-34b, Sócrates dedicó su vida a interrogar a sus conciudadanos, exhortándolos a filosofar, pero no para que especularan sobre la naturaleza en general, sino para que se preocuparan por la virtud, la verdad y el alma, dejando de lado los negocios y las riquezas. La ética socrática se resume, así, en una sentencia que reafirma que la vida humana no es su devenir biológico: “la vida sin investigación no es digna de ser vivida (βιωτός) para un hombre” (Ap. 38a). Todo hombre debe vivir su vida autoinvestigándose con vistas a desterrar el error y, abrazando la verdad, poder obrar de manera virtuosa en la ciudad. El adjetivo βιωτός no es de carácter biológico, sino moral, pues retoma la triada “bien”, “noble/bellamente”, “con justicia” que comentamos más arriba. La vida sólo es vivible, así, en el marco de la πόλις. Y es el diálogo cooperativo entre ciudadanos lo que condice, eventualmente, a la felicidad general:

Por lo tanto, señores atenienses, estoy ahora lejos de hacer mi defensa en asuntos militares. Tras dos años de servicio militar, el joven regresaba a la ciudad como ciudadano.  

5 Esto no ha sido, probablemente, una novedad estrictamente socrática, sino característica de ciertos grupos intelectuales del último cuarto del siglo V a.C. En esta línea, Eurípides hace decir a Meneceo, hijo de Creonte, que “la patria es la que me engendró (πατρίς ἥ μ᾽ ἐγείνατο)” (Fenicias 996). De manera similar, Ifigenia grita a su madre: “Me engendraste para todos los griegos, no para ti sola” (Ifigenia en Áulide 1386). Esta concepción de la politicidad del hombre en tanto hombre se condensa de manera contundente en la definición aristotélica: “el hombre es un animal político por naturaleza (ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον)” (Pol. 1253a2-3).  

6 Cf. Ap. 28b y 37c. En el Gorgias se explica esta idea en detalle: “ciertamente, el vivir determinada cantidad de tiempo no debe preocupar al que es verdaderamente hombre, ni se debe tener un excesivo amor a la vida; al contrario, […] se debe examinar cómo se vivirá del modo más excelente durante el tiempo que se viva” (512d ss.).  

7 En un fragmento del Protréptico, el joven Aristóteles sentencia: “Es sin dudas propio de esclavo aferrarse al vivir y no al vivir bien”, (frag. 53, Düring). Las resonancias socrático-platónicas del fragmento vienen dadas no sólo por el pasaje citado, sino también por lo que sigue: “Sin dudas, es propio de esclavo aferrarse por vivir y no por vivir bien, y que él mismo siga las opiniones de las mayorías y no considerar digno que las mayorías sigan las de él mismo, y también buscar las riquezas sin tener ningún cuidado en absoluto por las cosas nobles” (B53; cf. B103). A la distinción entre vivir y vivir bien, se suman la preocupación por la opinión de las mayorías y la búsqueda desenfrenada de riquezas sin tener ninguna clase de cuidado de sí (ἐπιμέλεια) como lista casi literal de las preocupación socráticas en el Crit.  

8 Cf. Apología 29d-3.  

nombre de mí mismo, como alguien podría creer; más bien, la hago en nombre de ustedes, no sea cosa que, tras votar en mi contra, se equivoquen en relación con la donación que les ha hecho el dios (Ap. 30d-e).

Para explicar su misión filosófico-política, Sócrates apela a una analogía militar: al igual que un general en la batalla, el dios Apolo determinó su puesto (τάξις) en la organización de la ciudad, τάξις que, al igual que en una batalla, no apunta al bien particular de cada soldado, sino al éxito del conjunto (28d-29a). Como veremos en el apartado siguiente, Asclepio, el hijo de Apolo, opera, según Platón, de la misma manera, al administrar la salud con vistas a que cada ciudadano pueda cumplir con la función que le fue asignada en virtud de su rol en la ciudad.

Ahora bien, si el nacimiento y la vida son fenómenos fundamentalmente políticos más que fisiológicos, algo similar cabría esperar acerca de la muerte:10

Quizás alguien podría preguntar: “¿no te avergüenzas, entonces, Sócrates, de haber realizado una actividad tal, por la cual es posible que ahora mueras?” Pero yo le respondería con un argumento justo: “no hablas correctamente, amigo, si crees necesario que un hombre que cuenta con cierto mérito, mediano o pequeño, calcule el riesgo de vivir o de morir, y no que sólo deba examinar, toda vez que actúe, si acaso realiza cosas justas o injustas, propias de un hombre bueno o malo. (Apología 28b-c)

Ahora bien, ¿qué rastros hay de todo esto en el Fedón? Ante todo, moralizar la muerte, politizarla, des-biologizarla, supone la incursión de lo humano en ella. Y para Sócrates, “humano” es sinónimo de elección. Así como Aquiles es referido en el pasaje de Apología recién citado a propósito de su decisión de ir a Troya, incluso a sabiendas de que iba a morir allí, Sócrates también opta por tomar la cicuta antes que realizar la acción inmoral de escapar. En el corazón argumental del Fedón, discutiendo acerca de la naturaleza de las causas, Sócrates hace referencia a su decisión:

10 Ante todo, cabe recordar que, si bien Sócrates afirma desconocer qué es la muerte (Apología 29a-b), especula acerca de ella lo siguiente: “Estar muerto es una de dos cosas: o bien el que ha muerto es algo así como una nada y no tiene ninguna sensación de nada, o bien, según se dice, <estar muerto> es precisamente cierta clase de cambio y mudanza de morada por parte del alma, desde este lugar de aquí hacia otro”, Apología 40c. La primera alternativa anula la posibilidad de moralizar la muerte por cuanto la asimila a un estado anestésico y, de allí, de virtual inactividad. Poco se le dedica a analizar esta opción frente a la segunda, asimilable a lo que sostendrá el propio Platón en diálogos posteriores. Lo que más nos interesa de esta segunda alternativa es que el carácter positivo de migrar hacia ese “otro lugar” radica, entre otras cosas, en la posibilidad de ser juzgado por Minos, Radaman- tis, Éaco y Triptólemo, jueces del Hades que imparten la justicia real, aquella que no siempre coincide con la de los hombres. En el Gorgias (523a ss.), estos jueces juzgan a los hombres por la calidad de su alma, es decir: por el modo en que se han comportado en la vida corpórea desde un punto de vista estrictamente moral. Esto hace que la muerte, identificada con la antesala de este juicio divino, adquiera, también, cierto matiz moral. Otra de las ventajas de migrar hacia el Hades consistiría en la posibilidad de interrogar a Odiseo o a Sísifo, hombres tradicionalmente tenidos por sabios, para aprender de ellos. De este modo, luego de la muerte Sócrates podría continuar con su misión elénctica.
Mientras que a los atenienses les pareció que era mejor votar en mi contra, por eso también a mí, a mi vez, me ha parecido mejor quedarme sentado aquí y más justo soportar la condena que ellos me impusieron permaneciendo <en este lugar>.

(Fedón 98e)

El objetivo de la decisión socrática no es la autoconservación biológica, sino la justicia. Al igual que Aquiles, Sócrates podría haber optado por huir si hubiese antepuesto la vida biológica a la nobleza moral. No hacerlo trae como consecuencia la opción por la muerte, pero una opción especial, ni remotamente parecida al suicidio, pues en su caso se elige la muerte por la positiva: Sócrates no busca no vivir, sino morir-bien como corolario necesario de una vida bien-vivida. Optando por la muerte en pos de conservar la virtud y evitar la vergüenza, Sócrates se hace digno de su propia muerte.

Este tópico ya había sido abordado en el Fedón. En 61d ss. Sócrates afirma que el filósofo debe ser “digno de cierta clase de muerte (ἄξιος οἵου θανάτου)” (64b8). La muerte es cualificada (οἷος); al menos una de esas cualidades se relaciona con la dignidad moral (ἄξιος) de quien está a punto de morir.

Sin embargo, en este punto ocurre algo que podría atentar de lleno contra nuestra línea de lectura: la decisión de morir no está en nuestras manos, sino que depende del dios que cuida (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, 62b7) de nosotros, sus posesiones (κτήματα, 62b8). Como dijimos, en Ap. 28d-29a Sócrates explica a los jueces que el dios le ha asignado un puesto especifico (τάξις) en la ciudad, mismo puesto que en Critón 51b afirma que le han asignado las leyes. Al igual que en la guerra, no hay que abandonar la posición por ninguna razón hasta que el general así lo disponga. Esta τάξις está directamente relacionada con una función a desempeñar; en el caso de Sócrates, la misión de filosofar y de mejorar moralmente a sus conciudadanos. En el Fedón este puesto es insinuado mediante el sustantivo φρουρά (62b4), sustantivo poco usual en el corpus que no remite exclusivamente a una prisión, sino también a un puesto de vigilancia del que no es lícito desertar y en el que quien fue asignado a ocuparlo cumple una función determinada. Sólo el dios puede determinar el abandono de la φρουρά, abandono que sólo se dará cuando el filósofo sea “moralmente digno” (ἄξιος) de abandonarla. Ahora bien, ¿cuándo una muerte es digna? Y, más aún, ¿qué tiene que ver el dios Asclepio con todo esto?

III. Asclepio en República y en Fedón

Si bien el culto oficial a Asclepio no se vinculaba con la curación de enfermedades psíquicas sino físicas, lo cierto es que en el corpus platónico el dios de la medicina tiene un status especial, distinto al tradicional: un status político.

En República III (405d ss.) Asclepio es considerado un político (πολιτικόν, 407e3; cf. Laques 195c-e), es decir, una divinidad preocupada por la salud del colectivo de ciudadanos antes que por la de cada individuo en particular. Esto explica, por ejemplo, que el dios no cure cuerpos completamente enfermos con tratamientos extendidos en el tiempo, que encuentran en los fármacos un medio para hacer la vida “larga y miserable” (μακρὸν καὶ κακόν, 407d6). Asclepio no cura a quien no es capaz de vivir conforme los períodos establecidos de tiempo, pues eso “no es ventajoso ni para él mismo ni para la ciudad” (οὔτε αὐτῷ οὔτε πόλει λυσιτελῆ, 407e1-2; cf. 408b). La inutilidad política del enfermo crónico se debe a que cada ciudadano tiene asignada una función (ἔργον τι ἑκάστῳ προστέτακται, 406c4) en la ciudad, función que, en caso de tener que someterse a tratamientos crónicos,

11 Cf. Critón 51b donde se habla de esta misma τάξις pero asignada por la ley.
no podrá cumplir: “si no cumple su función (ἔργον), no es conveniente que viva” (407a1-2). De estas premisas resulta la posición eutanasica de Asclepio que, atento a los intereses del todo, sabe cuándo es políticamente beneficioso eliminar alguna de las partes (407e). El “puesto” del que se hablaba en Apología y Critón (τάξις; cf. προστέτακτα en Rep. 406c4) se asimila, en República, con la función política de cada ciudadano (ἔργον). El criterio seguido por Asclepio para curar es político: la vida y la muerte de cada ciudadano dependerá de la utilidad que la ciudad pueda obtener en uno u otro caso.

Volviendo al caso de Sócrates, si fue un Asclepio como el descripto en República quien le permitió vivir dignamente –es decir: cumpliendo con su función política en la ciudad–, podría ser ese mismo Asclepio quien en Fedón le permite ser “digno de cierta clase de muerte” (ἀξιός οἵου θανάτου, 64b8). Desde un punto de vista fisiológico, esta muerte consiste en la suspensión de las funciones vitales debido a la cicuta; desde un punto de vista moral y humano, eso ocurre producto de la condena injusta por parte del pueblo ateniense. A los setenta años de edad, su utilidad política ya no es vivir, sino morir condenado injustamente por cumplir con su misión. Morir no es, así, una mala noticia, pues su muerte oficiará como catalizador de quienes continuarán su gesta filosófica. En Fed. 84e ss. Sócrates se compara con los cisnes:

Según parece, ustedes creen que, en relación con la adivinación, soy peor que los cisnes, que, cuando perciben que deben morir, habiendo cantado también en momentos anteriores <de su vida>, en ese momento cantan más y de modo más bello, contentos porque habrán de ir junto al dios del que son servidores. (Fedón 84e-85a)

Los cisnes –aves de Apolo14, padre de Asclepio– tienen un poder mántico como el que Sócrates se arroga para sí mismo. Dicha mántica se vincula puntualmente con el momento adecuado para morir:

A continuación, deseo profetizarles algo, condenadores míos, pues ya me encuentro en esa etapa <de la vida> en la que los hombres están en mejores condiciones para hacer profecías: cuando van a morir. Les digo […] que justo después de que muera recibirán un castigo mucho más severo que el que me han impuesto a mí matándome. En efecto, ustedes han armado todo esto creyendo que no tendrían que responder por su modo de vida, pero les ocurrirá todo lo contrario: muchos serán los que los examinen –a los cuales yo hasta ahora retenía, aunque ustedes no lo percibían–. Y cuanto más jóvenes sean, más severos serán, y ustedes más se irritarán. (Ap. 39c-d)

Con su muerte injusta, Sócrates consuma su misión política al oficiar como catalizador de quienes continuarán su gesta filosófica y, así, inaugura el socratismo como movimiento que irá más allá de su vida biológica.15

Asclepio es el partero de la πόλις, quien hace que los ciudadanos nazcan y se mantengan vivos en pos de la existencia y el funcionamiento de la ciudad. Sócrates, partero de las almas de los ciudadanos con vistas a la πρᾶξις virtuosa, tuvo en Apolo y en su hijo Asclepio a sus generales. La ofrenda del gallo también responde, pues, al hecho de que el dios lo ha mantenido lo suficientemente sano como para poder llevar

13 cf. Leroux 2004 ad loc.
adelante su misión, incluso más allá de su muerte. Pero tal salud, como dijimos, es siempre política, no biológica.

IV. Conclusión: las últimas palabras

Así como el último canto de los cisnes es mayor y más bello, las últimas palabras de Sócrates tienen el mismo carácter. Además de agradecer al dios por haber garantizado la salud política de su misión, Sócrates da su último mensaje a los allí presentes, mensaje que condensa, en una sola palabra, el sentido de dicha misión.

Critón, le debemos un gallo a Asclepio. Pues bien, ¡páguenselo! Y no se descuiden… (108a7-8).

El carácter intersubjetivo que la misión socrática adquiere con la muerte del maestro se ve reflejado en la primera persona del plural que refiere a la deuda: “debemos (ὀφείλομεν)”, todos nosotros. Ahora bien, el momento de retribuir esa deuda y estar a la altura de la herencia recibida ya no incluye a Sócrates –que estará muerto–, sino tan sólo a sus discípulos. La segunda persona plural en modo imperativo da cuenta de esta orden: “páguenselo” (ἀπόδοτε). Sin embargo, la palabra fundamental, que condensa la totalidad de la vida filosófica socrática, es la que, según Platón, fue pronunciada última entre las últimas. Manteniendo persona y número (segunda del plural), cambia, sin embargo, el modo: ya no se trata de la orden fría del imperativo, sino de la exhortación característica del subjuntivo. Un Sócrates moribundo exhorta a sus discípulos a que “no se descuiden” (μὴ ἀμελήσητε). Si la filosofía socrática tuvo como objetivo central persuadir a los ciudadanos atenienses de que cuidaran su alma antes que su cuerpo (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, Ap. 29e3 et passim), su exhortación final retoma esta idea. Tal exhortación no se refiere, pues, simplemente a la deuda con Asclepio, sino a la totalidad de la vida de sus discípulos frente a la misión que tienen por delante tras su muerte.

Abstract:

Much has been written in the last hundred years about the possible meaning of the last words of Socrates in the Phaedo (118a7-8): “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Well, make the payment <you all>! And do not be neglectful… (ὦ Κρίτων, τῷ Ἀσκληπίου οἶκος ἀλεκτροίπτερον ὑποθέτω). One of the reasons for such a multiplicity of interpretations lies in the tragedy (and, as a result, wealth) of any group of “last words”: it is impossible to ask the person what they mean. Being a riddle whose answer will always be temporary and speculative, the existence of different interpretations should not imply truth in some and falsity in others. Even if we could be confident enough that Socrates actually said these words, we must recognize that what he may have meant with them is unrecoverable. It is for this reason that our observations to some of the classical interpretations do not seek to dismiss them as possible, but to show the nuances that each one gives to the final exhortation of Socrates, as well as some weaknesses that may inevitably occur. In this paper we propose to take up the enigma of Asclepius’ debt in order to rescue some political nuance present in the final speech of Socrates. To do this, first we will review briefly the main interpretations that have occurred in the last century, not with the intention to refute them, but to take account of the contribution that our own interpretation intends to make to the discussion. Second, we stop at the Socratic conception of birth and life as essentially political phenomena.
to, from there, rethink the status of his death in the same key. Just as birth is not a biological phenomenon, but political, so does life: “one should not have greater esteem for living (τὸ ζῆν) than for living well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν)” (Crit. 48b). “Well” (εὖ) means “beautifully / nobly” (καλῶς) and “righteousness / with justice” (δικαίως), so that the properly human life is one that is directed to the just and noble. The law and justice are therefore more important than biological life: in order to remain human, it is more important to obey the law and live a moral life, than just keeping alive. Finally, we will try to relate the political nature of death with the reference to the god Asclepius as considered in Republic in order to read again the last words of Socrates in the Phaedo.

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‘To act and to be acted upon’ in the *Phaedo*: is there any kind of interactionism between soul and body?

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§ 1. Introduction

Plato says a number of times that in the active-passive relation, the immaterial is the active ingredient and the material the passive one of such relation. In the *Phaedo* it is pretty clear that the soul is what sets the body in motion (79e-80a; 98c-e). But Plato seems to point out that both the soul is able to act upon the body and the body upon the soul. One might think that it is not entirely clear how the soul and body, despite being so different as regards their nature, are related to each other. My claim is that in the *Phaedo* Plato suggests that some form of interactionism between soul and body is possible, and that in connection with that issue he advances the view (widely developed by Aristotle), according to which there is a sort of ‘co-dependence relation’ between soul and body. Moreover, such ‘co-dependence’, I hold, can be explained due to the fact that soul and body share a common feature: both of them are capacities, and thus they are able to act and to be acted upon.

The paper proceeds as follows: in the next section (§ 2) I discuss some passages in the *Phaedo* where Plato shows the power of the soul over the body as well as that of the body over the soul. When discussing those passages, I will underline the sense in which I think Plato appears to endorse a certain kind of interactionism. I will also indicate how the fact that both the soul and the body can be understood in terms of capacities is helpful for seeing why Plato –unlike other Ancient philosophers (such as the Stoics)– need not affirm that both *relata* are bodies for them to enter into a mutual causal relation. Finally, in § 3 I provide some brief concluding remarks.

§ 2. Soul and body as moving and moved factors

The view that the soul is the origin of motion is almost a commonplace in Plato. It even constitutes one of the basic premises of the famous argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedrus* (245c). Sometimes Plato speaks of one’s soul as what is able to use and rule over the body, and because of its ability to rule, Plato says, the soul is ‘more valuable’ than the body (i.e. the active is more valuable that the passive). In the *Phaedo* the argument to show the priority of the soul over the body

1 This issue is treated again by Plato in the *Laws* 898e-899a.
2 According to Plato, ‘capacities’ (or ‘powers’: δυνάμεις) are the kind of thing in virtue of which ‘we –and anything else that can [do something]– are able to do whatever we can do,’ (*Republic* 477c1-2: ἡμεῖς δυνάμεθα ἃ δυνάμεθα καὶ ἄλλο πάν ὁτι περ ἄν δύνηται). Plato’s examples are psychological powers (sight and hearing). This characterization of δύναμις also may be applied to the body, which can be understood as a disposition able to affect the soul and receive the soul’s action. In the *Theaetetus* 185e6-7 Plato asserts that while the soul examines some things alone and through itself –τὰ μὲν αὐτὴ δι’ αὑτῆς – there are other things which it examines through the capacities or powers of the body –τὰ δὲ διὰ τῶν τοῦ σώματος δυνάμεων--; this passage should be compared to *Phaedo* 79c2-d1).
3 Cf. *Alcibiades I* 129e-130c, and the *Laws* 896c1-3 (ψυχὴν μὲν προτέραν γεγονέναι σώματος ἡμῖν, σῶμα δὲ δεύτερον τε καὶ ύστερον, ψυχὴς ἀρχούσης, ἀρχόμενον κατὰ φύσιν). For the distinction between soul and body, see *Phaedo* 78c–79d.
runs thus (79e-80a): (i) when soul and body are present in the same thing, nature 'ordains' (ἡ φύσις προστάτει; 80a1) the latter to be a slave and to be ruled (τῷ μὲν δουλεύειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι), and the former to be the master and to rule (τῇ δὲ ἄρχειν καὶ δεσπόζειν). (ii) The soul, in being incorporeal and dealing with the unchanging, is like the divine. (iii) But the divine is able to rule and to lead by nature, while what is mortal is able to be ruled and to be enslaved (δοκεῖ σοι τὸ μὲν θεῖον οἷον ἄρχειν τε καὶ ἠγεμονεῖν περιφύκεναι). (iv) If this is so, the soul is like the divine and the body like the mortal.

There are some interesting points arising from this passage: in what sense can it be said that the soul 'rules and leads what is mortal, the body'? It appears to be easy to answer this question: I move my arm because I have decided to do that. In Plato's ontological map, deciding is a psychological item, so the soul is able to set one's own body in motion because the movement of one's body depends upon one's psychological state. This is what to rule over one's own body means: the body does not move by itself.4

The other interesting point (which is closely related to what has just been pointed out) is that Plato holds that to rule belongs to the nature of the soul, and to be ruled to the nature of the body. Once again, one might easily understand this to mean that a body by itself (i.e. without a soul) is motionless, that is, the body cannot move itself and cannot set another thing in motion, either. In other words, 'setting something in motion' does not belong to the body's nature.5 But the most appealing point is that, even though Plato provides this argument in favor of the soul as the moving principle, he explicitly allows that the soul can be affected by the body as well. In fact, the soul as a whole is dragged away (ἔλκεται; 79c6) by the body. So even though the soul uses the body to examine something (either through seeing or hearing, or through any other sense), thus reminding us that the soul is that which is active, Plato asserts that the soul can be affected by the body. But if we are to accept his claim that the active role belongs to the soul, not to the body, how is it possible that the soul is dragged away by the body? Moreover, the soul itself (due to the harmful influence of the body) wanders (πλανᾶται), becomes confused and dizzy, 'as if it were drunk' (79c7-8: ταράττεται καὶ εἰλιγγι ὥσπερ μεθύουσα).6 To be sure, the cause of the soul's being in such a state is the body, but this introduces a tension, because the active role is supposed to belong to the soul, not to the body.

At this point my suggestion is that Plato advances an idea, widely developed by Aristotle, according to which there is a sort of 'co-dependence relation' between soul and body. Although the view that the active factor is the soul is not new in Plato 4 In the already cited passage of the Laws it is clear that the body contains no principle of change in itself, and that change occurs (both in the single body and in the cosmos) thanks to the existence of a self-moving soul. See also Phaedo 98c-e, where Socrates argues that the true causes (98e1: τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας) of his being seated is not that he is composed of bones and sinews (or the fact that his bones are hard and are separated by joints, etc.). The real or true causes are rather that, since the Athenians thought (or decided) that it was better to condemn Socrates, he also thought it was better to remain seated, and to suffer what the Athenians decided (98e2-4: Αθηναίοις ἐξοδε βέλτιον εἶναι … διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ ἐμοὶ βέλτιον αὐτοδοκεῖ ἐννάδε καθῆσαι). Socrates does what he does because of his choice of what is best (99b1: τῇ τοῦ βελτίστου αἱρέσει), so the real cause of his remaining seated on his bed was both what the Athenians and he thought. Of course, thinking is a psychological item, so Socrates' soul 'ruled' over his body.

5 This fits well with the normative character of nature as described in Phaedo 81a. See also Phaedrus 245c-d; Laws 895e-896a (cited and commented on by Casertano 2015: 401-402).

6 See also Phaedo 66a5-6: ὡς ταράττοντος (i.e. σώματος) καὶ οὐκ ἔως τὴν ψυχήν κτήσασθαι ἀλήθειαν τε καὶ φρόνησιν ὅταν κοινωνή.
(it goes back to the *Alcibiades I*, and of course it is present in other dialogues too), the passage in the *Phaedo* is particularly important for my purposes here: the soul uses the body (τῷ σώματι προσχρῆται; 79c3) to examine what it examines, and it does that through seeing or hearing, or through any other sense (διὰ τού ὄραν ἢ διὰ τοῦ ἀκούειν ἢ δι’ ἄλλης τινὸς αἰσθήσεως; 79c3-4). This means that the body is the *instrument* of the soul, so the preeminent place of the soul is clear.

These lines of the *Phaedo* should be parallel with a former passage where Plato states that nothing we hear or see is accurate (65b): when the soul attempts to examine something together with the body, the soul is (or can be) deceived by the body. This passage belongs to the first section of Plato’s argument aimed at making plausible the view that the separation of the soul from the body is indispensable to avoid being deceived by the body; but the state that one would be in when one leaves aside the body can apparently be obtained with death. But Plato is cautious enough to neutralize our concern with regard to the requirement to be dead in order to gain some wisdom, because he warns us that, even though the soul cannot be completely separated from the body while the person is still alive, there is a way in which we can come closest to knowledge: this manner would consist in having no communion or association with the body (67a3-4: ἐγγυτάτω ἐσόμεθα τοῦ εἰδέναι, ἐὰν ὅτι μάλιστα μηδὲν ὁμιλῶμεν τῷ σώματι μηδὲ κοινωνώμεν) ‘beyond what is absolutely necessary’ (ἐὰν μὴ τάσα ανάγκη). In fact, examining something together with the body is what we do in so far as we are alive. Of course, Plato is aware that one can get rid of one’s body just ‘as far as one can’ (65c8: καθ’ ὅσον δύναται; see also 66b-d); his argument for suggesting this is that the soul reasons best when none of the senses troubles it (neither hearing, nor sight, pain or pleasure, and so on). Indeed he assumes that the senses are embedded in the body, so maybe the solution is to develop a technique to neutralize the influence of the body upon one’s soul and what is associated to it (this is the way in which one eventually can get rid of one’s body ‘as far as one can’). But even within this framework, where Plato heavily believes in the necessity of releasing one’s soul from communion with the body in order to get ‘what it is in itself’, he reminds us of the importance of sense-perception as a previous step to attain what is ‘truly real’ through the argument of recollection. That is to say, perceptual experience turns out to be at least a necessary condition of knowledge.

In a very well-known and commented section of the *Phaedo* Socrates (Plato) maintains that there are two kinds of beings or ‘realities’ (δύο εἴδη τῶν ὄντων), one visible and the other unseen (79a6-7). The former never stays in the same condition, and the latter does. So if the soul is something unseen or not visible (τὸ μὲν ἀιδές; οὐχ ὁρατόν), one should assume that it is more similar (ὁμοιότερον) than the body to the unseen (79b16). Now if the soul (along with the Forms) belongs

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7 *Alcibiades I* 129c5-e5; 130a1. See also *Phaedrus* 245e5 ff., and *Laws* 896c-897d; 898c-899a.
8 A release and separation of the soul from the body”; 67d4: θάνατος ὀνομάζεται, λύσις καὶ χωρισμός ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σῶματος). See also 66e2-4: we will have wisdom when we are dead, not when we are alive.
9 As already observed by others, Plato does not say that nothing perceptual is real or significant: ‘perceptual experience’ is relevant to evoke the Forms, as held by Plato himself, *Phaedo* 75a (Dixsaut 1991: 97-99; Rowe 1993:197, and more recently Vigo 2009: 58-61, Trabattoni 2011: XLIII-XLV; 86, n.98; 87, n.100, and Casertano 2015: 316-317; 332. For a similar view –although in a different context– cf. *Theaetetus* 186b-c).
10 Although the soul is said to be invisible, this does not mean that it is identical to the invisible. Plato just states that it is ‘more similar’ than the body to the unseen. As observed by Casertano (2015: 326), this seems to imply that both the soul and the body share the feature of being invisible, and that the body is less invisible than the soul. This helps to understand how those souls that cannot get rid easily of the corporeal are, to some extent, ‘visible’ (*Phaedo* 81c11-d2). What is always in the same
to the kind of thing which is ‘unseen’ and thereby must remain always in the same state or condition, one might wonder how it is possible that the soul undergoes changes (such as experiencing disturbance, being defiled, and bewitched by the body, i.e. by its desires and pleasures, as Plato clarifies; 81b4-5), ‘so that the soul thinks (δοκεῖν) nothing is true except the corporeal (i.e. what one can touch, see, drink, eat or use for sexual satisfaction; 81b5-6). If the soul is akin to what stays in the same state (79d), how is it possible that the soul sometimes wanders (when ‘being dragged by the body’; 79c6), and sometimes is at rest from its wandering (when it examines what it examines alone by itself, that is, when it can get rid of the influence of the body; 79d)? Plato makes it clear that the soul remains in the same condition because it is ‘in touch’ (ἅτε τοιούτων ἐφαπτομένη; 79d6) with things that are immortal and unchanging. And that ‘affective state’ (πάθημα) is called ‘wisdom’.\(^{11}\)

This passage clearly indicates that wisdom should be seen as the state in which one’s soul is unaffected by the body. Indeed the soul can change, since it can be in a state of ignorance or of wisdom (the passage from ignorance to wisdom, one might assume, is a change). Plato’s claim that the soul stays in the same condition cannot mean that it undergoes no change at all; the type of change that the soul does not undergo is the change that implies destruction.

Now the main thrust of the problem I am dealing with is this: if by their very nature soul and body are so radically different, how is it possible to assert that soul and body can be acted upon by each other? That the soul acts upon the body is quite clear since it is what sets the body in motion. But the soul also is acted upon by the body, since when it is under the body’s influence it wanders, gets confused, and is disturbed. According to the *Phaedo* 79c-81c, all the changes that the soul experiences because of the action of the body are for the worse: the soul is dragged by the body into things that never remain in the same condition (even though, the soul, in being akin to what is unseen and staying in the same condition, should be associated with what is unchanging), which means that it wanders, becomes

\(^{11}\) Plato also says that the soul can be in touch with things having instability (i.e. bodily things; 79c8), and, because of this, it is dragged by the body into what never stays in the same state. Of course, when this happens, there is no knowledge or wisdom. On this topic see *Republic* 508d (cited by Dixsaut 1991: 353, n.163), where Plato argues that when the soul rests entirely on (ἀπερείσηται) things that are illuminated both by truth and what is, it understands, knows, and manifestly has comprehension (ἐνόησέν τε καὶ ἔγνω αὐτὸ καὶ νοῦν ἔχειν φαίνεται). But when it rests on ‘what is mixed with obscurity’ (i.e. on what comes into being and perishes; τὸ γιγνόμενόν τε καὶ ἀπολλύμενον), it opines and is dimmed. As is clear, the passage depicts the strong contrast between knowledge and opinion, but it is helpful in order to see why in the *Phaedo* 79d6 the soul’s state is wisdom when it is not in touch with what is changing. As noted by Dixsaut (1991: 109), with regard to the soul, ‘all depends on the nature of the objects to which it applies. If it turns to a world of perpetual becoming, it will be subject to a permanent alteration’. Dixsaut conveniently reminds of *Republic* 611c ff. where Plato compares the embodied soul to the case of the sea god Glaucus. See also Rowe 1993:186.
confused and dizzy. But this is possible because the soul that is liable to undergo such changes is an embodied soul pertaining to a weak person, one might suspect, someone who is unable to deal properly with his or her body. The embodiment of this soul cannot be ‘pure’.

To be sure, the fact that one's soul is embodied does not necessarily mean (not even in the Phaedo, where the ascetic position is so strong) that one's soul is subject to be affected in a bad way. When an individual dies, Plato argues, his or her soul can be separated from the body either in a pure or in an impure condition. The former is the case of a soul that has spent its life (i.e. the individual's life) 'not associated with the body at all' (80e3-4: οὐδὲν κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ). Of course, when Plato asserts that such soul did not spend its life associated with the body 'at all', he should mean that such a soul has not been subject to the governance of the body and its negative influence (irrational desires, for example).

By contrast, a soul is in an impure condition when it separates itself from the body, because it has been coupled with it, served it, loved it, and so on. Indeed there is a sense in which any soul (both the one that is in a pure and in an impure condition when leaving the body) has been associated or coupled with the body. Plato says that to examine something through the body is to do so through sense-perception (79c-d); by contrast, whenever the soul examines something alone by itself it apparently gets rid of any contact with what is corporeal and thereby, one might assume, one is not concerned at all with sense-perception. But that cannot be the case, because Plato endorses the view that we can come closest to knowledge ‘while having no communion with the body beyond what is absolutely necessary’.

The ‘Platonic knower’ to some extent has to deal with his or her body; Plato's point, I guess, is that the body should not rule over the soul. Otherwise one cannot have ‘wisdom’. Thus not even the wise person can remove the body from his own life, and this is so because one's soul (at least while one is still alive) is mingled with it. But Plato's intention clearly is to point out that the soul that is in a pure state when leaving the body is the one that has not been ruled by the body and its desires (in this picture the body, as explicitly stated by Plato, is seen as an evil; 66b5-6: ἡ ψυχή μετὰ τοιούτου κακοῦ, i.e. τὸ σῶμα).

All of this constitutes a very well-known story for the readers of Plato's Phaedo. I have listed all these striking details (related to the life of one's soul when it is still associated with the body) to remind, once again, that Plato has no problem at all in advancing the claim that body and soul, in spite of being two items so different in nature, can (casually) relate to each other. One might tend to suppose (as Aristotle did) that soul and body are able to causally affect each other because there is some commonality (κοινωνία) between them. But Plato, as convincingly argued by John Dillon, did not regard relations between soul and body as constituting a real

12 See also Phaedo 66a-7: ‘the body disturbs the soul, and whenever it associates with it, it does not allow the soul to acquire both truth and wisdom.’ The body is a hindrance for philosophy, it causes confusion and turmoil, overwhelms us, and so on (66d-e).
13 As stated in Phaedo 65e-66a, the person who is able to attain ‘what it is’ (i.e. ‘the one who will come closest to the knowledge of each thing’; 65e4) is the one who addresses each thing with his thought alone ‘as far as possible’, without trusting sight in his thinking nor dragging any other sense along with his reasoning. This is the way in which a knower will be separated as far as possible (ἀπαλλαγεὶς ὅτι μάλιστα) from his eyes and ears, and, so to speak, ‘from his whole body’ (σύμπαντος τοῦ σώματος), this way avoiding that the soul becomes confused by the body (66a3-6).
14 At Physics 247a6-9 Aristotle states that the perceptive soul is altered by perceptible things, implying this way that the soul and its bodily mover are in spatial contact. See also De anima 407b17-19.
problem. In the *Phaedo* Plato appears to take for granted that such relations obtain, and that those relations can be taken to be causal relations: the soul makes the body move, and the body makes the soul change. Despite the radical difference between soul and body, he does not see any problem in asserting that those souls whose states or conditions are impure (because of having spent their lives coupled with what is bodily) continue to be somehow 'attached' to the body when they separate from the body. In fact, when this kind of souls are separated from the body, they cannot get rid easily or completely of the corporeal, as it is shown by those 'shadowy phantoms or apparitions' (σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα) of souls (the ones that 'have been seen around tombs and graves'; 81c11-d2). But if the soul is more similar to the invisible than to the visible, it just can be seen because there still is something visible attached to it. This is the case of those souls that have not been able to detach from the body in a 'pure way', which should mean that they have not properly or strictly separated from the body.

Now if the soul is able to act upon the body and the body upon the soul, one might think that Plato had in mind what contemporary philosophers call 'interactionism', i.e. the view that material (body) and immaterial (soul) things within a certain psychophysical unity have causal influence on each other. Such an interactionism must be conceived of in dualistic terms, that is, as the interaction of two things radically different in kind. There is no doubt that Plato sees no problem in admitting that soul and body are associated; apparently, he sees no problem in maintaining that they have mutual causal relations, either. And although he does not say that there must be a commonality between them in order to explain the manner in which they affect each other, we can attempt to find something which is 'common to soul and body'.

§3 Concluding remarks

At the outset of my presentation I suggested that if soul and body can be regarded as capacities, maybe one could find a commonality that is shared by both of them. The link between soul and body should be sought in what is common to them, and I believe that such a common factor is that both soul and body can be regarded as capacities, as they are able to act and to be acted upon. To some extent, this explains that they are 'interconnected': when the soul acts upon the body, the body is able to receive the soul’s action, and *vice versa.*

If both the soul and the body are able to act and be acted upon, both of them turn out to be very plastic notions that should not necessarily be understood as entirely foreign to each other. In Aristotle this is quite clear; but it is not less clear in Plato, who in a well-known passage of the *Sophist* states that all that has the capacity of acting and of being acted upon ‘really is’ (247e3). If this is so and if the soul is the active item in the active-passive relation, one might assume that even in Plato there is a certain co-dependence relation between soul and body. After all, it is Plato who asserts that there is no active without passive or passive without active (*Theaetetus* 157a5-6). However, this commonality between soul and body (i.e. the capacity of acting 15 Dillon 2009 and 2013.
16 Wong 2007: 169-170. The serious problem (for the anti-dualist) or what the dualist fails to explain is how it is possible that the immaterial and the material can act upon each other (see Kim 2001: 31-32. Gerson 2003: 123).
18 The expression 'common to soul and body' belongs to Plato (*Philebus* 33a), although it is not present in the *Phaedo.*
19 Gavray 2006: 40: « Décrire l’êtant par une capacité d’agir ou de subir …prsume déjà qu’il n’est pas figé et qu’il charrie une possibilité d’entrer en relation: subir, c’est toujours subir l’action d’un agent; de mème, agir, c’est forcément agir sur un patient. »
and being acted upon) does not explain how an immaterial entity sets the body in motion, or how a material entity is able to carry out a certain action on the soul. This is the task of Aristotle and other post-Aristotelian philosophers.

**RESUMEN**

En el *Fedón* es evidente que el alma es lo que pone en movimiento al cuerpo (79e-80a; 98c-e). Estudios recientes nos han recordado que Platón no parece haber considerado las relaciones entre cuerpo y alma como si constituyeran un problema (Dillon 2009; 2013). Este es un problema que aparece a partir de Aristóteles. De cualquier modo, el núcleo de mi presentación se centra en algunos pasajes del *Fedón* en los que no es claro (para mí) el modo en que puede decirse que alma y cuerpo, a pesar de ser dos cosas tan diferentes, se relacionan la una con la otra.

Lo que quiero sostener es que en el *Fedón* Platón sugiere que el interaccionismo entre alma y cuerpo es posible. De hecho, después de proporcionar un argumento a favor del alma como principio motriz, Platón da por sentado que el alma puede ser afectada por el cuerpo, y afirma que el alma como un todo es arrastrada (ἕλκεται; 79c6) por el cuerpo “hacia cosas que nunca se encuentran del mismo modo”. Así, aun cuando el alma usa el cuerpo para examinar algo (ya sea a través de ver u oír, o a través de cualquier otro sentido), recordándonos de esta manera que el alma es lo activo, Platón asegura que el alma puede ser afectada por el cuerpo. Pero si hemos de creerle que el papel activo pertenece al alma, no al cuerpo, ¿cómo es posible que sea arrastrada por el cuerpo?

Mi afirmación en este punto es que Platón adelanta una idea, ampliamente desarrollada por Aristóteles, según la cual hay una suerte de “relación de co-dependencia” entre alma y cuerpo. Sugeriré, además, que tal “co-dependencia puede explicarse gracias al aspecto común que alma (lo activo) y cuerpo (lo pasivo) comparten: ambos pueden considerarse como capacidades que, para desplegar sus poderes, necesitan del otro factor de la relación. De hecho, según Platón, no hay activo sin pasivo ni pasivo sin activo (*Teeteto* 157a5-6). Aunque esta tesis es explícitamente formulada recién en el *Teeteto*, es adelantada en el *Fedón*. 
Bossi, Beatriz

ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα: ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε ἡμεῖς 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; [you all] pay our debt and do not be careless' (Phaedo, 118 a 7-8).

Status Quaestionis

Socrates’ last words have been taken to mean that he owes a cock to Asclepius because he is thanking him for healing him of the sickness of life by the cure of death. This allegorical mystical interpretation, attested in antiquity in a scholium by Damascius, was popular in the Italian Renaissance (Pico della Mirandola, Ficino, Ricchieri) and in the Romantic period (Hamnn, Lamartine, Nietzsche), and is to be found in most modern scholarly treatment of the question1. It finds support on the disdain of the body which is something to flee from (65 d 1), because as long as our soul is fused with such an ‘evil’, we shall not attain truth (66 b 3-5). Excessive passion should be repressed. Scholars who agree on this allegorical Nietzschean reading2 include Burnet (1911), Del Re (1954), Bluck (1955), Tredennick (1959), Gill (1973), Dorter (1982), Rowe (1993), Grube (1997) and Nehamas (1998).

Apart from being paradoxical for Asclepius saves from death, not from life, in my view, the Nietzschean interpretation could be objected that:

a) Socrates never says that life is a disease or that death is its cure in the dialogue3;

b) the body may be an obstacle to knowledge if treated in excess, but it is equally essential to start the process of knowledge for human beings (74 a 12-b 6; d 9-e 4);

c) Socrates does not have a ‘personal debt’: he uses the verb in the first person plural: ‘we owe a cock to Asclepius’.

On the other hand, those who interpret the last words as referring to an actual debt include Wilamowitz (1920), Hackforth (1972) and Gallop (1975)4, while Gauthier took them to have no particular meaning, as he assumed that they are a mere deranged babbling as the result of too much poison5.

In a very comprehensive paper, following both Wilamowitz’s literary view (1920) that Socrates must express gratitude not for his own death but for someone

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2 The Gay Science, 340. The paradox is that both Socrates and Nietzsche shared the view that the best life is a philosophical one. See Dixsaut (1991) 409 note 382.
3 Minadeo (1971) 294 questions the thesis that Asclepius has something to do with healing someone of the body by means of death. Moreover, he observes that the image of the body as a disease of the soul (95 d 2-3) is an illustration of an argument destined to be confuted by Socrates.
4 For this summary I am partially following Madison's (2002) 421, note 2.
5 Gauthier (1955) 274-5. I agree with Gill (1973) 28 that Plato did not describe the process of the effects of the poison in Socrates's body faithfully, taking into account the real symptoms, but embellishing those features that illuminate the meaning of his argument in order to show how the centre of sensation and cognition visibly and gradually separates from its shell. If this is so, Gauthier’s thesis cannot be shared.
else’s rescue, and Clark’s suggestion (1952) that the one saved must be Plato. Most (1993, 108-110) argues that Socrates had a sudden clairvoyant vision and ‘announced’ that Plato had been healed and that a thank-offering must be made to Asclepius on behalf of all of them. The author also suggests that “Socrates seems almost to be designating Plato as his legitimate successor, as the custodian of his arguments” and that “if this or something like it, was indeed Plato’s interpretation of Socrates’ last words, then we cannot help but feel admiration for his tact and literary artistry” (110). In my view, there is no evidence in the dialogue for such a vision of Plato’s healing or for the idea that Plato was seriously ill, and in danger of dying. Such assumed ‘announcement’ remains equally cryptic to friends and readers. On the other hand, there are more important reasons to reject this interpretation. One cannot imagine Plato had conceived such a trick to be alluded in Socrates’ final words, as if the most important message to mankind from his Master at such a crucial point were to announce that he, Plato, had suddenly recovered health and was Socrates’s heir. In the first place, because Plato never thought that philosophy is a kind of possession to inherit (wisdom cannot be poured on anybody like a liquid into a vessel, if we are to recall the image at the beginning of the Symposium) but it is an activity one must strive for. Secondly, if that were Plato’s intention, rather than denoting ‘tact’ and ‘artistry’ it would denote arrogance and roughness: two attitudes that would conflict with the pedagogical project of the dialogue as a whole.

More recently Crooks (1998), following Mitscherling’s view (1985) that the last words constitute a deliberate anti-Pythagorean heresy, because the Pythagoreans forbade the sacrifice of cocks according to Iamblicus and Diogenes Laertius, claims that Socrates reacts against Simmias’ and Cebes’ ‘misology’ disease for which Socratism is the cure.

I agree about the need of a cure, and about Socrates’ encouraging the group to keep on exercising the life of inquiry as the course of therapy. The author thinks that the reference to Asclepius at 118 is an acknowledgement of ‘having met this need’: ‘the pathos of misology has been superseded’ (123). However, one could object, in the misology passage Socrates claims that they are not yet sound but must strive to attain soundness, his friends, for the sake of their whole life still to come, and he himself for the sake of death itself (90 d 8-91 a 1). This means that the ‘pathos’ of misology has not been superseded, and that Socrates cannot claim victory for his ‘therapy’ yet: his gratitude to Asclepius could not be attributed to this.

With regard to the Pythagorean ‘heresy’ Cumont has observed that the text does not say that Socrates had promised a cock ‘to be sacrificed’ but just that they owe a cock to the god; these animals were nourished in Asclepius’s temples for the cures, but perhaps also just to wake up the patients from their incubation therapy. If this were so, the text would not turn out to be anti-Pythagorean after all.

On the other hand, one may have the impression that the real Pythagorean who takes care of the soul is Socrates, in spite of his interlocutors’ assumed Philolaic connection. Plato may be appealing to their Pythagorean religious and scientific background to engender hope in his friends.

Collecting clues to explore the meaning of the debt to Asclepius

6 She takes the sacrifice as ‘a normal one for the recovery of a sick person’, and suggests that the plural should not be pressed (1952) 146. But Plato allows himself images, metaphors and the use of traditional customs for his own purposes.

7 Cumont (1943) 122: ‘Le désir exprimé ne précise même pas que le coq doive être sacrifié: il pourrait à la rigueur s’agir d’une simple offrande au dieu, qui utilisait en vue de guérirons cet oiseau, nourri dans ses temples’.

In this paper I would like to attempt to offer an alternative contribution to the understanding of Socrates' famous last words. In my view, we should attempt to understand Socrates's final words in the light of the *Phaedo* as a whole. This dialogue is about how to take care of the soul in order to lead a valuable life and get ready in the hope of immortality. I find it consistent with Plato's main purpose to assume that Socrates's final words refer to something essentially connected to psychic health in order to lead a good life, which naturally also implies physical care of the body. I do not expect to offer a completely new interpretation, as it may owe a lot to the work of many scholars, but to offer some light on this old riddle, which I am afraid we can never be sure to have deciphered perfectly well.

It is clear that the first clause ('Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius') refers neither to Socrates himself exclusively nor to a future favour he expects to get. When Socrates suddenly uncovers his head, as if he felt an urge, and says that they have a debt it is reasonable to think that he feels gratitude for something that has already been given and that it has been given not only to him, but also to his friends, for all of them are in debt. The verb basically means: 'give up' or 'give back', 'restore', 'return'. He commands them to make the offering to Asclepius as a return for something they have been given.

What could be the healthy gift conceded to all of them by the god of medicine? Needless to say, it cannot be physical health for that is not a common condition to Socrates, who is dying, and to his friends who are safe and sound. But physical health is not the only purpose of the god of medicine either.

Plato refers to Asclepius in the *Republic* (407 c- 409) where he says that this god taught medicine for those whose bodies are healthy in their natures and habits but have some specific disease, which he cured with drugs and surgery and then ordered them to live their usual life 'so as not to harm their city's affairs'. But he did not think he should treat someone who could not live a normal life, someone who were sick by nature and licentious, for he would not be profitable either to himself or to anyone else. Socrates agrees that this Asclepius was quite a 'statesman'. However, he complains that Pindar and the tragedians do not agree with this description that attributes the god sovereign criteria to act, for they say that Asclepius was bribed with gold to heal a rich man, who was already dying (and that he was killed by lightening for doing so). Socrates declares that this cannot be the case if he was the son of Apollo. At the end of the passage, he also claims that doctors treat the bodies with their souls, and it is not possible for the soul to treat anything well, if it is or has been bad itself.

If the god of Medicine decides who deserves treatment and who does not, according to the nature and moral habits of the patients, because he cares for the common good of the city as a whole, and cannot be bribed by any patient, his decisions concern more important issues than just technical treatments to recover physical health at all costs.

There is a passage in the *Phaedo* which, in a sense, seems to adumbrate the passage in the *Republic*. Socrates claims that in some circumstances and for some people it is better to die than to live and for people like this, it seems strange or difficult to understand that they cannot commit suicide. All the same, he says, there is probably a certain reasonableness about it. If we consider that 'the gods are the ones who take care of us, and that we, human beings, are one of their possessions' τὸ θεοὺς εἶναι ἡμῶν τοὺς ἐπιμελουμένους καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους 9 To consider Asclepius responsible for spiritual health 'in the next life' seems to be out of the historical context. In my view it is more plausible to assume that the God could have helped them to attain a certain healthy condition in *this* life.

9 To consider Asclepius responsible for spiritual health 'in the next life' seems to be out of the historical context. In my view it is more plausible to assume that the God could have helped them to attain a certain healthy condition in *this* life.

10 I agree with Most and Madison with regard to these two assumptions.
ἐν τῶν κτήματων τοῖς θεοῖς εἶναι (62 b 6-8), one should not kill oneself 'until a god sends some necessity upon him, such as has now come upon us' πρὶν ἀνάγκην τινά θεός ἐπιπέμψῃ, ὡσπερ καὶ τὴν νῦν ἡμών παροῦσαν (62 c 7-8).

In the passage of the *Republic* we happen to learn that the god who decides who is to be cured and who is to die, all things considered, is Asclepius. His decisions are not arbitrary, but reasonable for they take into account what it is best for the individual and for the common good. Here we are told that our lives belong to the gods, (but they are supposed to be wise and know more than we do), and last but not least, they are said to be good and to take care of us.

Both passages combined seem to suggest that it was Asclepius who has sent them the circumstance that makes necessary for Socrates to die, which means he is free from the charge of committing suicide or being impious (as he cannot run away and his daimon has not intervened to prevent him). However, Socrates does not meet the requirements he mentions in the passage of the *Republic* that incline Asclepius to put a man to death: he is not ill either in his body or in his soul, and on the other hand he thinks his life could be valuable for the city (and probably also for himself). However, he says that the god has sent them this necessary circumstance that they cannot avoid.

In my view, Plato wants to indicate that Socrates builds this argument (which expects to persuade Cebes) for he himself cannot understand why it is necessary for him to die. Therefore, he submits his reason to his piety. More importantly, the fact that Socrates needs to justify 'the necessity' of his death by the god's will, is a clear indication that he is neither really happy about his death nor grateful to the god for it, even when he is ready to accept it. He needs to justify his death as something necessary that the god allows for reasons he cannot grasp at this stage. It is the god the one who knows why and the one who takes care of human beings.

If this is so, can we assume that Socrates felt they had a debt to Asclepius for commanding his death? It does not seem plausible. On the other hand, the fact that Socrates thinks that Asclepius cannot be bribed indicates that Socrates cannot be asking Crito to make an offering in exchange for something he expects to attain in the near future. He finds he should say his prayer to the gods 'in order that his removal from this to that other place may be attended with good fortune' (117 c 1-3). This means, I suggest, that the final words are not a redundant prayer for his own good destiny in the near future.

Now it is time to explore the relation between physical health, which is what most people would expect from Asclepius, and psychic health, which, in Plato's view, also concerns to him. Asclepius is said to be able to bring others back to life from the

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11 In my view, the fact that the information about Asclepius's incorruptibility comes in the *Republic* does not prevent us from attributing this view to our Socrates in the *Phaedo* too. Socrates rejects a view of piety based on commercial deals also in *Euthyphro*, 14 e.

12 ἀλλ᾽ εὐχέσθαι γέ που τοῖς θεοῖς ἔξεστι τε καὶ χρή, τὴν μετοίκησιν τὴν ἐνθένδε ἕκεστε εὐτυχὴ γενέσθαι. Cumont (1943) 117; 120 observes that if read in the light of the Pythagorean tradition it would mean that Socrates prays for his soul so that she could cross the atmosphere in a silent journey guided by the gods, without being noticed by malicious spirits. He also emphasizes that the Pythagorean *dictum* that one should die in silence is due to the same motive and he adds that the word μετοίκησις taken in a schatological sense, is Pythagorean. Plato says that each person's daimon takes the soul to the place where it should be judged and once the judgement takes place, a guide takes her to Hades (107 d; 108 b). Bernabé (2011) 165-6 points out that in the Derveni Papyrus (col VI 1-4) disturbing revengeful demons that go with the souls to the Other World are mentioned.
brink of death and beyond. If this is so, he should have been an expert at initiating
the adept into the mysteries of the beyond and eternal health of the soul. Moreover,
the foundation of the Temple of Asclepius in the South of the Acropolis by 420 BC
contributed to make the cult of Asclepius grow as pilgrims flocked to this healing
places to be cured of their ills. Ritual purification would be followed by offerings or
sacrifices to the god (according to means), and the supplicant would then spend the
night in the holiest part of the sanctuary, for therapy would include interpretation of
dreams and visions by the priests. Now, if we take into account the wide range of
powers ascribed to the god of medicine, plus the claim that doctors 'heal with their
souls' and cannot act properly without having a good soul, on the one hand, and
the fact that ancient therapy included a combination of physical and psychological
treatments, we cannot separate physical health from the condition of the soul.

Moreover, Socrates seems to believe that bodily health follows psychic health.
Though the Charmides is a dialogue that belongs to Plato's first period, I do not find
any reason to believe that Plato's Socrates would have changed his mind about the
importance of a holistic approach to health. Socrates claims:

“For all that was good and evil, he said, in the body and in man altogether was
sprung from the soul, and flowed along from thence as it did from the head into the
eyes. Wherefore that part was to be treated first and foremost, if all was to be well
with the head and the rest of the body. And the treatment of the soul, so he said,
my wonderful friend, is by means of certain charms, and these charms are noble
arguments: by the use of such arguments is temperance engendered in our souls,
and as soon as it is engendered and present we may easily secure health to the head
and to the rest of the body also” (Charmides, 156 e 6-157 b 1).

In this dialogue Socrates attempts to play the doctor and to relieve Charmides's
headache by using enchantments. Analogously, in the Phaedo he thinks his friends
can comfort themselves with regard to their fear of dying by using enchantments.
However, in the context of our dialogue these enchantments seem to be something
different from rational arguments, but are more closely linked to certain emotional

13 Asclepius had a quite dramatic life: he was the son of Apollo and, according to the earliest ac-
counts, a mortal woman named Coronis. His mother was killed for being unfaithful to Apollo and
was laid out on a funeral pyre to be consumed, but the unborn child was rescued from her womb: he
himself was a resurected god. Or, alternatively, his mother died in labor and was laid out on the pyre
to be consumed, but his father rescued the child, cutting him from her womb. As he was so successful
at bringing dead people back to life, Zeus decided to kill him to maintain balance in the numbers of
the human population.

14 McPherran (2203) on the relation between Socrates's dreams and his devotion
to philosophy.

15 Health and diseases were thus seen as a balance of the whole person, keeping
a holistic view of man. As classical medicine was usually ineffective, in buildings
devoted to health (i.e. tà Asklepieia) the custom was to combine medicine (téchne)
with the practice of dreams (incubatio) and theurgical aspects: the sacred spring,
an odeîon or theatre, an ábaton for incubation and dreams, a temple devoted to the
gods of healing (Apollo, Asclepius, Amphiaraoes, etc.) were present together with
those health buildings where physicians practised medicine.

16 πάντα γὰρ ἐφὶ ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς ὡρμῆσθαι καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ τὰ ἄγαθα τῷ σώματι καὶ
παντὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, καὶ ἐκείθεν ἐπιρρεῖν ὁσπερ ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐπὶ τά ὁμάτα: δειν
οὖν ἐκεῖνο καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα θεραπεύειν, ἐπὶ μέλλει καὶ τὰς τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ
tά τοῦ ἄλλου σώματος καλῶς ἔχειν. θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφὶ, ὁ μακάρις,
ἐπηδαίεις τισιν, τὰς δ’ ἐπηδείς ταύτας τοὺς λόγους εἶναι τοὺς καλοὺς: ἐκ δὲ τῶν
tοιούτων λόγων ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς συφροσύνην ἐγγίγνεσθαι, ἢς ἐγγενομένης καὶ
παρούσης ῥάδιον ἡδὴ εἶναι τὴν ὑγίειαν καὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ σώματι πορίζειν.
powers of persuasion that could deal with our infantile fears. Socrates encourages his friends to sing charms to the child inside them every day until they charm away his fear: ἀλλὰ χρὴ ἐπάθειν αὐτῷ ἕκαστης ἡμέρας ἐως ἂν ἐξεπάθητε (77 e 10). And when Cebes asks Socrates where they would find a good singer of charms, since he is about to die, the Master replies:

“Hellas, Cebes,” he replied, “is a large country, in which there are many good men, and there are many foreign peoples also. You ought to search through all of them in quest of such a charmer, sparing neither money nor toil, for there is no greater need for which you could spend your money. And you must seek among yourselves, too, for perhaps you would hardly find others better able to do this than you.” That,” said Cebes, “shall be done” (Phaedo, 78 a 1-10).17

It is interesting to notice that Socrates urges them to operate as charmers to help one another at getting serenity and confidence, as he is trying to do in the dialoguer. We should also emphasize that the passage implies certain confidence in the group’s ability to deal with their fears.

The comparison between these two passages takes us to the view that we should not put too much pressure on the separation of physic and psychic health, for the god seems to be able to deal with both issues, and Socrates regards both aspects intimately related, though the description of the therapy of enchantments seems to be different when applied to a headache and to passion. Even if Socrates could be simply kidding when playing the doctor with Charmides, just to call the beautiful boy’s attention to interrogate him, in any case, Plato seems to have regarded Socrates’s enchantments as quite versatile to be applicable to cure physic and psychic disorders.

Even when Socrates has not described his task as a midwife yet, he is presented by Plato operating as such in many dialogues where he expects to induce knowledge from his interlocutors. And according to the testimony of the Charmides, the exercise of philosophy in order to attain a healthy moderate soul could be regarded as a ‘medical task’. Moreover, Socrates resembles Asclepius in two respects: he does not accept payment either, and he also chooses who is to be accepted for a second chance (at learning with him) and who is to be rejected, by following his daimon (Theaetetus, 150 e- 151 b).

Let us conclude this section by remarking some relevant partial results:

Socrates is convicted that the god (presumably Asclepius, the god of medicine and son of Apollo) has sent him necessary circumstances that took him to the verge of death, and he is persuaded that the god, being good and wise, knows why it has to be so, as he takes care of human beings.

Analogously, the dramatic action presents Socrates in a calm mood, playing a kind of medical charmer that takes care of his friends in the present circumstances; this care includes his encouraging them to take care of themselves in order to attain two main goals: serenity and courage.

Socrates cannot possibly demand Crito to offer a cock to Asclepius to obtain a future benefit from him, for he does not have a commercial view of religion and Asclepius cannot be bribed. On the contrary, he must feel they are in debt and wants to pay it off in a gesture of gratitude for a healthy gift that all of them could have attained up to a point (though probably in different degrees and modalities). Let me advance that in my view, his final command: ‘do not be careless’, cannot possibly

17 πολλὴ μὲν ἡ Ἑλλάς, ἔφη, ὦ Κέβης, ἐν ἣ ἐνεισὶ ποι ἀγαθοὶ ἄνδρες, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν βαρβάρων γένη, οὕς πάντας χρῆ διερευνᾶται ἵπτομεν τοιούτον ἐπιθῶν, μήτε χρημάτων φειδομένους μήτε πόνων, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν εἰς ὅτι ἂν εὐκαιρότερον ἀναλίσκεται χρήματα. ἤπειρα δὲ χρῆ καὶ αὐτοῦς μὲτ’ ἄλλης: ἵπτομεν γὰρ ἄν ὀφθὲ ραδίως εὔφροιτε μᾶλλον ύμῶν δυναμένους τούτο ποιεῖτε. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ, ἔφη, ὑπάρξει, ὦ Κέβης.
refer again to the cock but is the expression of his fears that they could forget or spoil Asclepius's gift, i.e. their respective lifespan, if they did not care for the health of their souls.

If this analysis is right, I think we have to distinguish carefully between Socrates's good hope, and his final gratitude and fear. With regard to himself, Socrates hopes his soul is on the point of being liberated from the body and all its infirmities and will be restored to her primal purity and health, which will enable him to learn better and more in the blessing company of the gods. He hopes he will fulfill his deepest wish.

On the other hand, with regard to his friends, I dare say that at the end of the day he feels satisfied that he could do a good job by teaching them, through words and exercise, how to love arguments and do research, how it is possible to set limits to the excessive demands of the body, and how they could remain serene in the face of the separation from the body, by repeating to themselves certain enchantments that would encourage them to take the risk to strive for a pure philosophical life here and after they die, i.e. to live as if they were immortal.

Therefore, I can imagine he is grateful to Asclepius because he was given the time and chance to do his job correctly (with the helpful contribution of father Apollo who kept the sacred ship sailing on the sea). However, the final verdict belongs to the gods. Though he thinks that in his whole life, so far as he could, he has left nothing undone in his eagerness to become one of those who have practised philosophy in the correct way, as to whether his energy has been spent correctly and they have made any progress, they will know the plain truth, god willing, when they get to that other place (69 d 2-5)\textsuperscript{18}.

Why does Socrates understand that they all have a debt? I think we can imagine he wants all of them to feel engaged in his gratitude and last humble offering because all of them enjoyed the care and teaching Socrates devoted to them on these last days in prison, as he himself enjoyed their affectionate tender company, complaints and doubts included. And also perhaps because he would be persuaded that having them all gathered in a final sacred offering might also contribute to their remaining faithful to his heritage.

Socrates's last will: A key passage

Next he gives his final piece of advice, again to the group: μὴ ἀμελήσητε (2 pl. aor. subj act.; in the absolute sense is 'frequent in attic': LSJ) by using a negative clause: 'do not be careless'. If the clause μὴ ἀμελήσητε referred to the cock, it would be either trivial or redundant or both. When Socrates is about to die Plato cannot be trivial: the debt must be significative. Socrates is a pious grateful man: the cock actually had to be offered, and the ἀπόδοτε is enough to make himself sure of that (pace the Pythagorean bid, if that were really so, for, we could assume, Plato was not interested in the sect's rites but in Philolaus' philosophy). When Socrates has neither more time nor much energy left, it would be strange to insist on the cock issue\textsuperscript{19}.

\textsuperscript{18} ἐγὼ κατά γε τὸ δυνατὸν οὐδὲν ἀπέλιπον ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἀλλὰ παντὶ τρόπῳ προσφερθῇ καὶ τι ἡγόσαμεν, ἔκεισε ἐλθόντες τὸ σαφὲς εἰσόμεθα, ἂν θεὸς ἐθέλη, ὀλίγον ύστερον, ἄς ἔμοι δοκεῖ.

\textsuperscript{19} Madison (2002) 431 writes: "virtually every English translation has obscured the significance of these words by translating the sentence as 'pay the debt and don't neglect it' (Gallop); 'make this offering to him and do not forget' (Grube); 'see to it and don't forget' (Tredennick); as if Socrates' dying words expressed nothing more than a trivial concern with Crito's unreliable memory". We could add to her list our equally obscuring García Gual's: 'págaselo y no lo descuides', Vigo's: 'haz la ofrenda y no te olvides' and Ramos Jurado's ambiguous translation: 'pagadle la deuda y no os
But it would be appropriate to remind them all their purpose in life. In my view, καὶ is not explicative but conjunctive for it adds Socrates’ most important message in a nutshell. I think it is worthwhile to quote Madison20 at this point: ‘it is difficult to maintain that a writer and thinker of Plato’s caliber would compose the dying words of his mentor in such an artless manner: Pay the debt and don’t forget to pay the debt.’

Moreover, Socrates cannot be worried about Crito’s being negligent about the cock, for two reasons: because a cock is a poor offering and Crito is wealthy and generous enough, and more importantly, because Crito loves Socrates so much that he is eager to fulfill his will perfectly. This is confirmed by Crito himself, as he immediately assures Socrates that that will be done (118 a 8).

The first part of Socrates’s final words prescribes gratitude and the second one prescribes care. While the first part looks at the past, the second one faces the future. And the negative adverb, I suggest, denotes Socrates’s fears not about the cock, but about something much more important: their souls. That Socrates is really worried about this issue is evident when he says:

“If the soul is immortal, it requires our care not only for the time we call ‘our life’, but for the sake of all time, and from that perspective, one is in terrible danger if one does not give it that care (107 c 2-5).”

Three pages above we have a precious passage in which Socrates gives his friends a key message. In my view, this passage turns out to be essential to understand Socrates’s last words:

“Top of Form

“Well, Socrates, do you wish to leave any directions with us about your children or anything else—anything we can do to serve you?”

“What I always say, Crito,” he replied, “nothing very new. If you care for your own selves, whatever you do will be pleasing to me, and to mine, and to you yourselves too, even if you do not agree with me now, but if you neglect your own selves and are unwilling to live following the tracks, as it were, of what we have said now and on previous occasions, you will achieve nothing even after having vehemently agreed with me in the present circumstances, many times over” (115 b 6- c 1).22

In my opinion, the question Crito asks is quite close to the one we are trying to answer here. Crito wants to serve his friend, so he wants to know which is Socrates’s last will. The answer, in my view, contains key elements that can help us decipher the enigmatic riddle at the end. I would dare say that Plato could leave the riddle ‘unsolved’ because he had already given the clues for the reader to solve it, through the whole dialogue and particularly, in the passage quoted above.

olvidéis’. On the other hand, translations that open the line to a better understanding while being more faithful to the Greek are Dixsaut’s: ‘Payez cette dette, ne soyez pas négligents’ and Casertano’s: ‘pagate questo debito e non siate trascurati’;

21 εἴπερ ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος, ἐπιμελείας δὴ δεῖται ὑπὲρ τοῦ χρόνου τούτου μόνον ἐν ὑψίλος καλοῦμεν τὸ ζήν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὲρ τοῦ παντός, καὶ ὁ κίνδυνος νῦν δὴ καὶ δοξεῖν ἂν δεινός εἶναι, εἰ τις αὐτῆς ἀμελήσει.
22 ταῦτα δὴ εἰπόντος αὐτὸι ὁ Κρίτων, εἶεν, ἔφη, ὃς Σωκράτης: τί δὲ τούτως ἢ ἔμοι ἐπιστέλλεις ἢ περὶ τῶν παῖδων ἢ περὶ ἄλλου του, ὅτι ἂν σοι ποιοῦντες ήμεις ἐν χάριτι μάλιστα ποιοῦμεν; ἄπει ἂει λέγω, ἔφη, ὃς Κρίτων, οὐδὲν καὶ νόμον; ὅτι ὑμῶν ἄτων ἐπιμελοῦμενοι ήμεις καὶ ἔμοι καὶ τοῖς ἔμοις καὶ ἠμῖν αὐτοὺς ἐν χάριτι ποιήσετε ἃττ᾽ ἂν ποιῆτε, κἂν μὴ νῦν ὁμολογήσητε: ἓν δὲ ὑμῶν μὲν αὐτῶν ἀμελήσει καὶ μὴ 'θέλετε ὅπερ κατ᾽ ἰχνη κατὰ τὰ νῦν τε εἰρημένα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ ἐμπροσθεν χρόνῳ ζῆν, οὐδὲ ἓν πολλά ὁμολογήσητε ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ σφόδρα, οὐδὲν πλέον ποιήσετε.
People who are about to die often have the same obsessive messages about what they ask their relatives to do once they have passed away. The final sudden urge refers to a debt he wants to pay off for he feels gratitude for a healthy achievement they were allowed to manage, but Socrates is aware of the fact that that attainment could be put at risk if they do not persevere. This is, in my view, the real link between both parts of the final clause, and it is not just a theoretical relationship but a meaningful existential link.

Let us analyze the clues we can collect from the passage just quoted.

1. It is significative that Socrates’s last will remains ‘the same’. We read in the Gorgias (481 d 1–482 b 1; 482 b 7–c 3) a famous passage where Socrates says that he is in love with Alcibiades and with philosophy but he prefers philosophy because she always says the same. What we should know is not much and it is always the same. This sameness manifests Socrates’s steadiness; he is not going to ask them to do anything new, but what he always says (ἅπερ ἀεὶ λέγω, ἔφη, ὦ Κρίτων, οὐδὲν καινότερον) for he has all his desires and expectations focused on just one objective. This sameness also supports my view that the last words cannot introduce a strange novelty out of the blue, but have to be understood in the light of the dialogue as a whole.

2. We should notice that the content of Socrates’s last will is focused on his friends. It is a generous will. Socrates needs nothing for himself but he would be pleased if his friends took care of themselves. He does not say that they should take care of their souls exclusively, but of themselves tout court: ὑμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, which allows us to interpret that he expects them to take care of themselves as a unity. Obviously, taking care of themselves implies care of their most important part. And again, if they took care of their souls they would also take care of their bodies properly. Because, we have learnt from the Charmides, the treatment of the soul engenders ‘moderation’ which in turn secures health to the body.

3. We also learn that this care provokes joy. The language denotes that it would please Socrates in the sense that he would be given a kind of special gift or grace (χάρις)23. I do not take this to mean that Socrates were imagining the joy he would experience if he could contemplate his friends ‘on their right tracks’ in his afterlife24, but that there is something they could do for themselves in his memory (be it as it may with regard to life after death). I understand his answer as emerging from Socrates’s interest and care for them. In addition, we are told that this care would provoke joy also to Socrates’s close relatives. And last but not least, the most interesting point is perhaps that this peculiar care he has ‘always’ been talking about, would give joy to themselves. Analogously, in the Republic (580 d – 588 b) Socrates uses the best kind of pleasure (the most real and steady one) to persuade his interlocutors to choose the highest life they can give themselves. These examples show us that Socrates not only values this joy or high pleasure, but has no objection to use it as part of his argument for a careful examined life25.

24 Ahrensford (1995) 194-7 regards both possibilities: that Socrates seems to suggest that he will be aware, even in Hades, of their devotion to philosophy, and also that they would be keeping him, in some sense, alive through them. He also comments that the goodness of the philosophical life does not depend on the existence of an afterlife; it is the best way of life, not because of the rewards in Hades, but rather because of the happiness the philosopher enjoys, as a human being, in this life.
25 We shall be told later on in the context of the Philebus (21 e-22 a) that no human being would like to lead a life without joy or pleasure. But wisdom has to decide which are the purest that come from the best activities and set certain limits to the
4. Let us notice that the tone here, though firm, is much less imperative than in the final words. Socrates is not under the urge of the poison yet. However, this final message in the intimacy (just before the arrival of Socrates's family) is strong and attempts to be persuasive because it takes for granted human freedom. On the other hand, Socrates is aware of the fact that they are in such a low mood that it would be difficult for them to accept that this care for themselves could make them feel 'happy', now that their Master and guide is about to leave them alone. And that is why he adds that this is so, even if they do not agree with him 'now' (κἂν μὴ νῦν ὀμολογήσητε: line 7-8).

We might be tempted to translate this first ὀμολογήσητε with the same meaning as the second one (in line c 1), either as 'agree' (Rowe) or as 'to make a promise' (Dixsaut, Casertano, Vigo) so as not to break the paralellism. However, I do not find this formal reason enough, for the meaning required by the contexts is different. In the first case, it is clear to me that Socrates claims that 'self-care produces joy, even when they might not agree with him' about this fact right now because they are sad. I cannot see what the meaning might be of the claim that 'self-care produces joy, even when they do not promise or take the commitment to do so'. In the second case, Socrates claims that if they do not actually follow the right track, they will not do much with their lives, even if they 'promise' so, many times or even if they 'agree' with him many times. Both meanings are possible here, for Socrates could either refer to their former agreements along the dialogue or to the promises they could make immediately after. In fact, as Rowe26 observes, “Simmias and Cebes have gone on assenting to Socrates's proposals about the importance of caring for themselves” many times. On the other hand, as soon as Socrates stops talking, Crito hurries to 'promise' they will do so.

5. If the positive reason for a careful life is joy, the other side of the coin, i.e. the negative effect against a careless life is insignificance or mediocrity. If they were negligent about themselves, they would not do much with their lives. We can imagine they would live as mortal slaves who lead an unpurified, mean and base life, if they forget their souls and abandon striving for the truth. They would be like those who exchange smaller pleasures for greater pleasures of the same kind and big fears for smaller fears, without wisdom. Apparently virtuous, they would be called 'corageous' through being afraid, and would be regarded as 'moderate' through a kind of lack of restraint (68 d-69c). Socrates has reasons for feeling afraid, because 'there are many that carry the thyrsus but in truth few that are the god’s' (69 c 8). Other dialogues echo the same lesson: if they do not take care of themselves, they will turn out to be nobodies and will not become worthy of their names (Laches, 179 d 2-4)27.

4. Back to the final words

Let us precise a bit more which kind of healthy gift Asclepius must have conceded to them all. I agree with Madison28 that the favour was presumably granted during the discussion they have just shared together and that their healing has to do with their conversion to philosophy. But I do not agree with her that Socrates has perceived, by the time he drinks the poison, that his friends have been healed mixed ones (64 d-e). Now in the context of our dialogue, life is a gift from the gods, our owners. To lead a careful life is to respect their precious gift, to spend it properly, which brings joy.

27 εἰ μὲν ἀμελήσουσιν ἑαυτῶν καὶ μὴ πείσονται ἡμῖν, ἀκλεεῖς γενήσονται, εἰ δ᾽ ἐπιμελήσονται, τάχ᾽ ἂν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἄξιοι γένοιντο ἃ ἐξουσί. 
from the ‘terrible danger’ of carelessness because they have overcome the threat of misology\textsuperscript{29}. This solution seems problematic because Socrates says that it is ourselves that are not yet in a sound condition and that we must soldier on, eager to be sound, for the sake of the rest of our lives (90 e 2–91 a 2)\textsuperscript{30}. Nobody can be out of danger once and forever. Not even Socrates.

Could it be that Socrates is grateful for the progress of his friends on a moral basis rather than on the intellectual one? This solution seems even worse. Let us take ‘practical’ Crito for instance. He expected Socrates would accept to escape from jail, believed that Socrates could be identified with his corpse, suggested that he should enjoy some more time by drinking or having sexual intercourse before dying, and, among others, could not help crying. It seems that Socrates’ best friend needs more therapy than the one he could provide along the dialogue.

Along this line, one may also wonder why on the one hand, the wisest man in Athens was in love, among others, with Alcibiades, one of the worst men in town who ‘horrified’ him, and on the other hand, his best friend Crito could hardly understand his views and had to be taught and even scolded by Socrates. What did Socrates find in these individuals to love them and take care of them? None of them seem good for philosophy, the former because of careless of his soul and political ambition, and the last one due to simple-mindness and his readiness to take the easiest shortcut. What do they have in common? Let me suggest two main features. Though they cannot follow Socrates for different reasons, both of them seem to be aware of their own limits on the one hand, and they deeply love him on the other hand. In Socrates’ view only the arrogant ignorant ones should be rejected.

I would like to suggest that all of them owe a humble cock to Asclepius not because they have already recovered their ‘spiritual health’ but because they have discovered and experienced somehow that the right track that leads to human healing from irrational fears of death and excessive bodily pleasure and nonsense, is philosophy: the examined life of dialogue and search. And they have learnt this not only through clever arguments on the immortality of the soul but through their attesting Socrates’ good hope, serenity and care for them. We can assume then, that Socrates has fulfilled his mission for he dies as a philosopher and can have a hope to have helped his friends to engage in it, and have assuaged their anger and sorrow, while at the same time, he encouraged discussion and never hid the difficulties that beset the arguments for personal immortality. But I cannot believe that he suddenly felt they owed a cock to Asclepius because all of them had already managed to do so. I would rather say that it was so because he might have felt that they had fulfilled a good task: he had managed to place them on the right track, (as noble rethors are said to do, in a passage in the \textit{Phaedrus} (262 d 2) where παράγοι is likely to mean ‘leading somebody somewhere else, in order to reorient him’) though in our dialogue they are left standing at the point of departure. And that is why he added a second clause, which cannot be either trivial or redundant: he encouraged them ‘not to be careless’. I take this to mean, in a positive formula, ‘to provide themselves with their own care for themselves, body and soul’.

Socrates is indebted to Asclepius for conceding him the time and health (body and soul) to fulfil his mission, while they must give thanks to the god of healing for his assistance in their conversion towards philosophy, and in this sense I take him to be a liberator of the soul. But turning the direction of their heads towards a higher

\textsuperscript{29} Madison (2002) 433.

\textsuperscript{30} ἡμεῖς οὔπω ὑγιῶς ἔχομεν, ἀλλὰ ἀνδριστέον καὶ προθυμητέον υγίως ἔχειν, σοὶ μὲν οὖν καὶ τούς ἄλλους καὶ τοῦ ἔπειτα βίου παντός ἔνεκα, ἐμοὶ δὲ αὐτοῦ ἔνεκα τοῦ θανάτου, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἐγώγε ἐν τῷ παρόντι περὶ αὐτοῦ τούτου οὐ φιλοσόφως ἔχειν ἀλλ’ ἀσπερ οἱ πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονίκως.
way of existence does not mean they have attained it. Socrates’s healthy soul enables him to take care of himself and of his friends, like the gods take care of us. But now he must necessarily leave them, and his departure opens their ways to maturity and self-government. It is time to let them take care of themselves and of each other.

The cock is a solar symbol for it sings as it adumbrates a new day. Hopefully, Socrates will be led, under its auspices, into a new brighter dimension, while his friends (forgetful students, fearful ‘children’ and simple-minded men) will be standing on the right track, after a restorative therapy in real excellence and ‘proper intellectual hygiene’31, ready to start a new stage of courageous inquiry, moderation and joy... if they do not turn out to be careless.

Plato’s concept of the soul is, in a sense, voluble. We are never free from the risk of becoming like Penelope, making souls of the same kind as the body (σωματοειδῆ: 83 d 5) by surrendering ourselves to pleasures and pains, while at the same time expecting philosophy to work in our release (84 a 3)... Perhaps Socrates’s last fears were sensible after all.

In conclusion, though we cannot be absolutely sure about the ultimate meaning of Socrates’s last words, due to the fact that their uttering broke a sacred silence, they had to be both significative and coherent with the rest of the dialogue and with his life as a whole. In my view, Socrates ‘lived the death that was within him’32. His last sudden urge bubbled up, pushed at least, by two emotional drives: pious gratitude33 for his joyful earthly life along with the celebration of a modest philosophical triumph (i.e. the reorientation of his friends), plus the last expression of Socrates’s care for those whom he managed to love, warts and wrinkles34.

Resumen

ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπίῳ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα: ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε ‘Critón, le debemos un gallo a Asclepio; pagad y no seáis descuidados

33 Minadeo (1971) 296 observes that ‘Asclepius is a chief representative of those gods whom one must leave behind at death,’ but before doing so Socrates expressed gratitude for the therapeia or care (62d) which the god has accorded him during his long life, ‘suggesting grace even for the services of the old enemy, the body’. On the other hand, he also thinks that the expression of gratitude to Asclepius must be understood to include thanks ‘for the restoration to health to the argument’.

34 If the reader is interested in knowing the opinion of the cock, there is a short story by Leopoldo Alas ‘Clarín’ entitled: ‘El gallo de Sócrates’ that turns out to be quite illustrative. The cock that Crito finally captures for the sacrifice turns out to belong to Gorgias, so he can speak, and is very smart. Tired of his talkative owner, the cock had decided to leave him. On his flight, he is seen by Crito. But the cock is not ready to replace his owner who was the big sophist for a second-hand thinker. So he tries to persuade Crito that, as usual, he has misunderstood Socrates’s will and that his last words were just irony, so there is no need for him to die. As the reader can imagine Crito will fulfill his Master’s will at all costs. The end of the cock is the end of the story. But before that the cock says: ‘Discípulo indigno, vete y calla; calla siempre. Eres indigno de los de tu ralea. Todos iguales. Discípulos del genio, testigos sordos y ciegos del sublime soliloquio de una conciencia superior; por ilusión suya y vuestra, creéis inmortalizar el perfume de su alma, cuando embalsamáis con drogas y por recetas su doctrina. Hacéis del muerto una momia para tener un ídolo. Petrificáis la idea, y el sutil pensamiento lo utilizáis como filo que hace correr la sangre’ (p.13).
(Fedón, 118 a 7-8).

En este trabajo me propongo aportar alguna luz sobre la cuestión del significado de las enigmáticas palabras finales de Sócrates. Contra la famosa interpretación de corte Nietzscheano de que Sócrates debe un gallo a Asclepio porque le está agradecido por curarlo de la enfermedad de la vida mediante la muerte, intento defender la visión de que la deuda atañe a todos los presentes, por un bien común ya recibido. A mi juicio, las últimas palabras se han de interpretar a la luz de todo el diálogo en su conjunto y no a expensas de la esperanza personal de Sócrates, porque van dirigidas a los presentes. Sócrates está agradecido al hijo de Apolo por haber tenido la oportunidad de vivir sanamente, en cuerpo y alma, y por haberuesto a sus amigos en la senda de la vida filosófica, que vence el miedo a la muerte y modera las demandas del cuerpo, mediante el uso de argumentos y encantamientos. La recomendaciónfinal no puede ser trivial ni redundante: cuando les pide que no se descuiden no puede tener por objetivo reforzar la memoria de Critón respecto del gallo (que es una ofrenda humilde para un amigo rico que, sin duda, desea realizar hasta el último detalle la última voluntad de su Maestro) de sino que remite al futuro. A mi juicio expresa la preocupación de Sócrates para que no olviden sus enseñanzas ni su testimonio y se cuiden de no abandonar el propósito de una vida examinada.

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Life rather than arguments: resailing Socrates’ second sailing  
(Phaedo 99c-d)

Braga, André Luiz

1. Introduction

to Yasmin Jucksch,  
who swims like a mermaid

I was afraid. You know? That was what it was: I was afraid. I could make out the bank of the [Brazilian colossal] river [São Franciscisco] on the other side. Far, far off, how long would it take to get there? Fear and shame. The brutal, treacherous water – the river is full of menace, deceitful ways, and whispers of desolation. My fingers clutched the sides of the canoe. […] “You must be brave”, he said. Could he see that I was on the verge of tears? It hurt me to answer: "I can't swim." The boy smiled pleasantly. “Neither can I.” Calm, calm.

Guimarães Rosa  
(The devil to pay in the backlands)

In the first page of his 1955 paper, John Ackrill presented his work to the readers in this way: “this is a shortened version of a paper read to a colloquium […]. The paper was designed to provoke discussion; this fact may help to excuse some oversimplifications and overstatements […]” (1997. p.72 nt 1). Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to ask you for this same lenience. This paper was written for our Symposium, its intention being to give rise to discussion and dialogue. Furthermore, either due to the temporal limitations involving an oral presentation, or to the dimensions inherent to a short article, the following treatment of problems will be extremely concise – even by topics.

I must acknowledge that this kind of explanation will be certainly inappropriate in terms of the objective of this text… Inappropriate because the encounter between the magnitude of my subject and such a synthetic exposition will inevitably leave open many questions. My aim, in fact, is not a modest one: to identify some characteristics and conditions that the Phaedo’s text establishes for the use of the so called “Hypotheses Method”, as well as to explain the meaning of the expression used to qualify it: “second sailing”. However, although my exposition about this matter is “slimmer” than seems desirable, in view of the above mentioned limitations it is what can be accomplished here. So, may its synthetic tone be accepted, at least as a healthy opening and instigation to think together, to discuss: το διαλέγομαι. Now, let’s go to our points.

2. Three moments of Phaedo

“Scene 1”: Phaedo 84 c-d: [After Socrates’ explanation about the immortality and indestructibility of soul, his interlocutors remain silent; but Socrates notices that Simmias and Cebes are whispering to each other and says]:

τί; […] υμῖν τὰ λεχθέντα μῶν μὴ δοκεῖ ἐνδεῶς λέγεσθαι; πολλὰς γὰρ δὴ ἔχει ὑποψίας καὶ ἀντιλαβάς, εἰ γε δὴ τις αὐτὰ μέλλει ἱκανῶς διεξιέναι. εἰ μὲν ὄντι τι ἄλλο σκοπεῖσθον, οὐδὲν

2 Therefore, about Phaedo’s Hypotheses Method, I will not analyze its so called ‘contents’, not even its use in the dialogue, but only the “general” aspects thereof.
SOCE. Well then? Don’t you surely think that there are things to add to what has been said? Because many of those things still remain suspect and still are points open to attack, if someone wants to sufficiently examine them. [...] If any of these things leave you in aporia, do not hesitate, now is the time to speak and explain [...].

(Pl. Phd. 84c5-d1 – my underlines³)

...[SOC.] 84e-85b: [Socrates then says that he is like a swan, an Apollo’s servant, that owns a musical prophetic gift; it is suggested here that his discourse is like the last song of a swan before death; after these words, Simmias will answer:]...

SIM. You speak beautifully, Socrates. I will tell what leaves me in aporia, and then he [sc. Cebes] [will say] in which regard he does not accept the things that were said. Because it seems to me, and maybe to you too, Socrates, that a safe knowledge is something either impossible or totally difficult to acquire; and that, without submitting what was said about these things to absolutely all kinds of examination, and giving up before investigating them thoroughly, someone who gives up is a man with a “flabby” spirit. Because about these things it is necessary one of the following [options]: either to learn in some way, or to find out [by himself], or, if these [options are] not possible, taking among the human lógoi one that is at least better and less liable to be refuted, it is necessary to embark oneself on it, as taking the risk of to cross the life navigating in a raft, if it is no possible what is the safest and riskless [option]: to be carried through [life] in the sturdier watercraft: some divine lógos [...]. In fact, Socrates, to me, the things that were said did not seem to have been completely and satisfactorily said.

[SOC.] Maybe, my friend, it is true [the way] they seemed insufficient to you.

(Pl. Phd. 85b10-e2 – my underlines)

96a-99c [Then Socrates will recall his early unsuccessful search to find out the reasons about causes, a biographic narrative that is not important to my objectives today]
**Scene 2**: 99c6-d3 [So the character of Greek philosopher will submit his alternative to that previous unfruitful search, and will return to the nautical metaphor alluded to by Simmias; the connection and symmetry between the words of these two characters is one of the almost total unanimities concerning comments about the *Phaedo*]

εγὼ μὲν οὖν τῆς τοιαύτης αἰτίας ὅπῃ ποτὲ ἔχει μαθητής ὅπου οὐδὲν ἔδιστ᾽ ἀν γενοῦμιν: ἐπειδὴ δὲ ταύτης ἐστερήθην καὶ οὔτ᾽ αὐτῶς εὑρεῖν οὔτε παρ᾽ ἄλλου μαθεῖν οἷος τε ἔγενόμην, τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν ἐπὶ τῆς τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησαν ἢ πεπραγμάτευμαι βούλει σοι, ἐφι, ἐπίδειξιν ποιήσωμαι, ὃ Κέβης;

ὑπερφυῶς μὲν οὖν […] ὡς βούλομαι.

[SOC.] […] I would be happy if there was something to be somehow learned about this cause; but I was deprived of this, and I neither discovered it all by myself nor discovered what it is from someone else. Do you want to me to make an exhibition of the “second sailing” that I realized in the search for the cause, Cebes?

[CEB.] I certainly do.

(Pl. *Phd*. 99c6-d3 – my underlines)

99e4-100d9 [then Socrates expounds his Hypotheses Method]

ἔδοξε δή μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. ἵσως μὲν οὖν ψε εἰκάζω τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ ἔοικεν: οὐ γὰρ πᾶν συγχωρῶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν τοῖς ἐργαίς. ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ ταύτης γε ὥρμησα, καὶ ὑποθέμενος ἑκάστοτε λόγον ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμενέστατον εἶναι, ἡ μὲν ἄν μοι δοκῇ τούτῳ συμφώνειν τίθημι ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα, καὶ περὶ αἰτίας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ὄντων ᾧ, ὧ δ᾽ ἂν μὴ, ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ.

[SOC.] […] It seemed to me necessary, when seeking refuge in the *lógoi*, to look for the beings’ truth in them. Perhaps this somehow does not look like what I imagine; cause not even I completely agree with investigating what is searched of the beings in images in the *lógoi*, more than [investigating it] in concrete things. However, my impulse is this: by hypothesizing on each occasion the *lógos* that I decide as being the strongest, the things that seem to me to be in consonance with it, I consider to be true, and those that do not [seem to be in consonance with it I consider] not to be true, either in terms of the cause or in terms of all the other things.

(Pl. *Phd*. 99e4-100a7 – my underlines)

[100e8-106d9: then the discussion follows with the “demonstration”: based on the assumed premises, the immortality of the soul is supposedly proved.]

“Scene 3”: 107a2-b6 [after the “demonstration” has been accomplished...]

οὐκον ἔγωγε, ὃ Σώκρατες […] πῃ ἀπιστεῖν τοῖς λόγοις. […]

ἀλλά μὴν […] οὔδ᾽ αὐτῶς ἔχω ἐπὶ ὅπῃ ἀπιστῆσιν περί τῶν ἠγομένων: ὑπὸ μέντοι τοῦ μεγέθους περὶ ἄν ὁ λόγος εἰσίν, καὶ τῆν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀσθένειαν ἀτιμάζων, ἀναγκάζομαι ἀπιστίαν ἐπὶ ἔχειν παρ᾽ ἐμαυτῷ περὶ τῶν εἰρημένων.

οὐ μόνον γ᾽, […] ὧ Συμμία […] ἀλλὰ ταυτά τε εὐ λέγεις καὶ ταῖς γε ὑποθέσεις τὰς πρώτας, καὶ εἰ πιστάς ὑμῖν εἰσίν, ὡς ἀπισκεπτέαι σαφέστερον […]).

[CEB.] I at least, Socrates, […] have no doubt about these arguments.

[SIM.] Much less myself, after all the things that were said. But, in spite of it, due to


6 Although *Phd*. 77a-b tells us that Cebes is “the most obstinate man in distrusting *lógoi*”, later in 107a-b we can see that it is not he but Simmias who will manifest a last doubt about the conclusions of the discussion...
the magnitude of the objects of [these] lógoi, and not sheltering a high consideration about the human weakness, in my inner being, I still feel obliged to have doubts about the things that were said.

(SOC.) You speak correctly not only about these things, Simmias, but also in relation to those former hypotheses: although they seem reliable in your view, it is necessary to examine them thoroughly and in the most reliable manner.

(Pl. Phd. 107a2-b6 – my underlines)

3. The “second sailing” expression: an outline of the scholars’ dispute

Undoubtedly the existence of this expression in Phd. 99c9-dl is one of most debated passages of the corpus platonicum. In this sense, the rough draft I am going to present here about the status quo of the discussion in scholarship is far from pretending to be exhaustive: I will only present some of the main positions that I know about.

In Burger’s (1984, 254, nt. 26), Gallop’s (2002, p. 176) and Fischer’s (2002, p. 675) views, the expression “deúteros ploûs” has two possible meanings in Greek: it may mean, when someone is sailing, to use oars when wind stops (I will call it “meaning A”), or it may mean a second and safer method to do something (I will call it “meaning B”). Burger (idem) and Fischer (idem) see evidences of “meaning A” in fragment 241K of the comic poet Menander, and evidences of “meaning B” in scholiast’s comments about Phd. 99c-d. In his turn, Gallop states that “the first […] of these meanings is well attested, and suggests a second-best method to accomplish something” (idem); nevertheless, he does not affirm anything in this way about “meaning B”. Fischer (2002, p. 675, nt. 62) repeats the mention about the comedy fragment, adding to it a reference to the Corpus Paraoemiographorum Graecorum; however, this collection of proverbs does not offer any explanation about the meaning thereof.

About the specific use of that expression to characterize the Hypotheses Method in Phaedo, Murphy (1936), Burger (idem) and Dixsaut (1991) adopt meaning “B”. Burger, following Murphy, states that “Socratic second sailing […] proves to be safer”, and “its apparent inferiority […] must be put into question in light of the danger and unreliability of the first way” (1984, p. 254, nt. 26). Dixsaut seems to follow the same trend when she claims that the expression “second sailing” “renvoie à un autre parcours, indirect, plus long mais plus sûr en ce qu’il évite les errements de la navigation précédente” (1991, p. 140). Robin (1934, p. XLVIII) and Robinson (1941, p. 110) hold that the proper meaning of such expression is “second best”, “pis-aller”, but they point out an “ironic” use of it in Phaedo – as well as Burnet (1963, p. 108). A dissenting position have Goodrich (1903, p. 381 et seq.), Hackforth (1972, p. 137), Shipton (1979, p. 50, nt. 11 and nt. 15), Bostock (2002, p. 157) and Fischer (2002, p.675-676), who consider that the Hypothesis Method contains an inherent mark of insecurity, and therefore is really a “second best” way. Dorter follows a compatible direction with that, stating that the method reaches “not definitive but provisional” answers (1982, p. 127).

As regards to the two above mentioned meanings (“meaning A”: the use of oars when the wind stops; “meaning B”: a second more secure way to do something), I

7 Having in view this Socrates’ subsequent argument, that legitimates Simmias’ misgivings, maybe we may reconsider a former speech of the same character to Cebes, and now refrain us from consider it as criticism, as it seemed to be at that time: “Always you, Cebes, are investigating some lógoi and being absolutely not inclined to trust immediately (euthéos peithsthai) in what someone has told [to you]” (Pl. Phd. 63a1-5).

8 About the absence of obligation to see the denounced insecurity of the method as a sign that it is not philosophy’s but misology’s own method, see DORTER, 1982, p. 89.
am compelled to say that commentators that present them as being two alternatives seem to have “lost the point” of the deúteros ploûs expression. The expression is really a proverb, a metaphorical expression diffused as a proverb. As it happens with every metaphor, it presents an “image” to which a meaning was attached. Therefore, the nautical picture of the oars is the very metaphor of the expression, which does not exclude the existence of an ulterior and more general meaning for the proverb. In my view, the problematic point of the presentation of “meaning A” and “meaning B” in a two-alternatives scheme – a presentation that was made, as I said, by Burger, Gallop and Fischer – is its suggestion that these two things are self-exclusionary. As explained below, the proverbial nautical image and its meaning in the Greek culture were two things that coexisted without any problem.

4. Explanation of the “second sailing” expression: image, meaning and utilization

The first question that might be addressed to me would be: why did I put quotation marks around this key-expression in the text? The answer is simple, and I have stated it before: because it is a proverbial expression of the Greek language of Plato's time. And, if “proverbs” (paroimíai) are also “metaphors” (metaphorai), as Aristotle showed (Rhet., III, 11, 14), then Phaedo’s proverbial expression has both an image and a general meaning, which do not are obviously self-exclusionary: the general meaning is exactly what allows the use of the image to many different particular cases. In his explication, Lyceum’s founder does not say that proverbs can have more than one meaning; and probably one thing that makes them “smart sayings” (asteía, Rhet., III, 11, 14) is the fact that they are really very easily understandable – so, without ambiguous sense. To proverbs work well, presumably when people hear them they must do not have doubt about their meaning. So let’s see the image, the meaning and a good example of use of “deúteros ploûn” expression that confirms perfectly its meaning:

A) As pointed out by the scholars, the description of this image or metaphor is in a fragment of Menander’s lost comedy Thasyleon:

ὁ δεύτερος πλοῦς ἐστι δήπου λεγόμενος, ἃν ἀποτύχῃ τις οὐρίου, κώπαισι πλεῖν.

The second sailing is doubtlessly the saying that, if it happens to someone the winds fail, to sail using oars.
(Men, fr. 241K – my underline)

B) The explanation of the meaning of this proverb is, among other places, in the Scholia Graeca in Platonem, in the scholiast’s comments about the occurrence of this same expression in Philebus...

19c2-3 δεύτερος... πλοῦς] παροιμία “δεύτερος πλοῦς”. ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσφαλῶς τι πραττόντων, παρ’ οἷς οἱ διαμαρτόντες κατὰ τὸν πρότερον πλοῦν ἀσφαλῶς παρασκευάζονται τὸν δεύτερον. μέμνηται ταύτης Πλάτων καὶ ἐν Φαίδωνι [...] καὶ Αριστοτέλης ἐν τῷ Β´ τῶν Ἑθικῶν [...] καὶ Μένανδρος Κεκρυφάλῳ [...] καὶ Πλοκίῳ [...] καὶ Θεοφορομένῃ [...] 19c2-3 second... sailing ] “second sailing” proverb: as regards those who do something in a safe way, in parallel with this those who fail to reach the security of the first sailing prepare themselves for the second one. Plato recalls this as well in the Phaedo [...] and Aristotle in the [book] B’ of Ethics [...] and Menander in Kékryphálos [...] and Plokios [...] and Theophorouménē [...]
D. τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν] Δεύτερον πλοῦν facere dicuntur qui, aliquia re primo infeliciter tractata, denuo eam aggrediuntur.

the second sailing] After first to deal with something in an unhappy way, those who treat it in a second tentative say to do a “second sailing”.

(SCHOL. PLAT. STALL. 183 – transl. by Renato Ambrosio)

D) An easier example of use of this proverbial expression: besides Phaedo 99d, the other applications of this by Plato (Phlb. 19c; Plt. 300c), as well as the Aristotle ‘s ones (EN 1109a36; Pol. 1284b19) are undoubtedly very debatable points. On the one hand, as I have said before, because many accusations were made by scholars stating that Platonic characters were being ironic when they mentioned that proverb (e.g., ROBIN, 1934; BURNET, 1963; ROBINSON, 1941). On the other hand, because we modern readers do not have what contemporary readers of Athenian and Stagyrite philosophers had: a complete knowledge of and familiarity with the meaning of this proverb. And maybe this is the main reason of the actual quarrel about this topic. Counting on the familiarity of their readers, these two ancient authors used the “second sailing” expression not only without explaining it; indeed, they used it to elucidate their other affirmations. And, in view of my presentation’s temporal limits, and difficulty in interpretation, it is not possible to dwell adequately on all those passages here; it would deviate my text from its intended course… Then, it really seems to me more helpful to find a more detailed use of the proverb (even if by some other author), in a more simple context, less subject to dispute, in order to bring to light the general meaning that the saying had in terms of the culture of that time. Remembered by Shipton (1979, p. 51, nt. 15), a much more illuminating example of the use of the “second sailing” expression can be found in book VIII of Polybius’ Histories. The quotation is long, but it’s worthwhile; its context deals with the relationship between the states and war:

διὸ καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἀσκέπτως έαυτούς ἐγχειρίζουσι τοῖς ὑπεναντίοις ἐπιτιμητέον, τοῖς δὲ τὴν ἐνδεχομένην πρόνοιαν ποιουμένοις οὐκ ἐγκλητέον: τὸ μὲν γὰρ μηδενὶ πιστεύειν εἰς τέλος ἀπάκτων, τὸ δὲ λαβόντα τὰς ἐνδεχομένας πίστεις πράττειν τὸ κατὰ λόγον ἀνεπιτίμητον. εἰσὶ δ᾽ ἐνδεχόμεναι πίστεις ὅρκοι, τέκνα, γυναῖκες, τὸ μέγιστον ὁ προγεγονὼς βίος. ἡ γὰρ τὸ διὰ τῶν τοιούτων ἄλογηθναι καὶ περιπεσεῖν οὐ τῶν πασχόντων, ἀλλὰ τῶν πραξάντων ἐστίν ἐγκλήμα. διὸ καὶ Μάλιστα μὲν τοιαύτας ζητεῖν πίστεις δεῖ, δι᾽ ὃν ὁ πιστευθείς οὐ δυνῆσεται τὴν πίστιν ἀθετεῖν. ἐπεὶ δὲ σπάνιον εὑρεῖν ἐστὶ τὸ τοιοῦτο, δεύτερος ἂν εἴη πλοῦς τὸ τῶν κατὰ λόγον φροντίζειν, ἵν᾽ ἂν τού καὶ σφαλλώμεθα, τῆς παρὰ τοῖς ἐκτὸς συγγνώμης μὴ διαμαρτάνωμεν.

While, therefore, we must censure those who incautiously put themselves in the power of the enemy, we should not blame those who take all possible precautions. For it is absolutely impracticable to place trust in no one, and we cannot find fault with anyone for acting by the dictates of reason after receiving adequate pledges, such pledges being oaths, wives and children held as hostages, and above all the past life of the person in question; thus to be betrayed and ruined by such means carries no reproach to the sufferer but only to the author of the deed. The safest course of all therefore is to seek for such pledges as will render it impossible for the man in whom we trust to break his word, but as these can rarely be obtained, the second best course is to take reasonable precautions, so that if our expectations are deceived, we may at least not fail to be condoned by public opinion.

(POLYBIUS. 8, 36, 2, 1-6 – Transl. by W. R. Paton – my bold and underlines)
the meaning of deúteros ploûs then appears in a crystal-clear mode, and in full consonance with the above quoted explanations by the scholiasts about its meaning in Philebus and Phaedo: the best would be a path with absolute guaranty, that is, one in which any failure would be impossible. However, considering that such absolute certainty is extremely unusual, almost impossible to attain, one must be satisfied with a “not-so-good-but-available” option, namely, the “second sailing” way. The metaphorical and proverbial expression means, in that sense, a path that, though lacking the desired total guaranty, is the path that can be followed. This is my point, to which I would like to call your attention, ladies and gentlemen: for our consideration of the Hypotheses Method in the Phaedo’s text, it is fundamental to never forget this meaning: the “second sailing” proverb, in the Greek language of Plato’s time, was analogous to Brazilian proverbs such as “if you don’t have a dog, hunt with your cat”, or “to a person who is dying by drowning, even an alligator can serve as a lifebuoy”. In English, such meaning is conveyed by the expression “second best”, and in French by “pis-aller”; so it seems satisfactory to use such expressions to translate that Greek expression into contemporaneous languages.

Hence, in spite of the allegations of some great scholars mentioned above, in the Phaedo the “deúteros plôus” is a really unsafe method of doing something which, far from being the ideal, best and more desirable way, is the only one available for this accomplishment at the moment. This meaning, as I have tried to demonstrate, may be found in all the presented references explaining such expression: the Scholia to Philebus 19c (= Menander’s fragment 228) and to Phaedo 99d; the Polybius’ passage (8.36.2); as well the Phaedo’s passages formerly referred to (85c-d, 99c-100d and 107a-b). In this sense, the use that Socrates made of this proverb in Phd 99c9-d1 not only takes again the navigation metaphor, but is fully in accord with the fragile and insecure raft image used by Simmias (85c-d). An insecure and fragile raft: this is the metaphor adopted in Phaedo – first by Simmias, and later proverbially reinforced by Socrates – that represents maybe the only possible search for knowledge available to us, human beings, to accomplish the crossing of life.

5. Abstract of the picture outlined in Phaedo:

We may now extract from the dialogue the following affirmations: about certain matters10…

...A) to safely acquire knowledge is either impossible or extremely difficult to attain…

...& it is necessary to submit to a refutation scrutiny, in absolutely all the possible manners, the arguments about such matters, and persist until such examination is completed [this seems to be a means to find out if the available lógoi correspond to a clear and safe knowledge: a “test” notion];

...B) [conditions for using the Hypotheses Method (that was qualified as a “second sailing”, that is, an alternative way with uncertain success):]

B.1) IF it is not possible to attain a safer, more devoid of risks, and more firm knowledge

8 See BURGER, 1984, p. 147.

9 Simmias’ statement about knowledge being like “a human raft” (Pl. Phd. 85-c-d) is expressly about the questions involving the soul, that had been recently expounded by Socrates in the dialogue; however, Socrates posterior pronouncement (“be it about causes, be it about all the other things”, 100a5-6) clearly point out a possible universal use to the outlined method.
(that happens by means of some divine lógos\textsuperscript{11})

B.2)  
B.2.1) IF it is not possible to learn with someone else

B.2.2) IF it is not possible to find out by oneself\textsuperscript{12}

B.2.3) THEN the Hypotheses Method, a “second sailing”, remains as only possible way: to take from the human lógoi what is best and more difficult to refute\textsuperscript{13} and assume the risk of going through life on it…

[characteristics of this method:]

1) ...investigating what is being searched about beings by means of logói and images\textsuperscript{14};

2) ...hypothesizing on each occasion the lógos that one decides to be the strongest and taking it as a criterion of truthfulness: what is consonant with it (what arises out\textsuperscript{15} of it) one considers to be true, what is not, not true.

At this point it is proper to explain how this “hypothesize” appears in Phaedo’s text: Socrates starts from three previous accorded postulations or homología\textsuperscript{16}, to...
reach a conclusion:

i) the existence of the Forms (100b5-c2);
ii) the ontological causality rule of “Participation”17 (100c4-102b2);
iii) the argument of Contraries and Likeness (102b5-105c8);
hence (supposedly occurs)
iv) the immortality of the soul (105c9-106d9).

3) ...BUT the magnitude of these matters and the human weakness demand that one should always mistrust the lógoi and hypotheses, at least until they are submitted to an in-depth examination18.

6. Final considerations: sailing without guaranties?

I was afraid. You know? That was what it was: I was afraid. I could make out the bank of the river on the other side. Far, far off, how long would it take to get there? Fear and shame. The brutal, treacherous water – the river is full of menace, deceitful ways, and whispers of desolation. My fingers clutched the sides of the canoe.

Guimarães Rosa

At the start of my paper, I said that its layout and limits would certainly leave many questions open to discussion and consideration. And that the objective of this communication was to present, in Phaedo, the characteristics and conditions of the Hypotheses Method19, as well as to explain the meaning of the expression step to establish the direction of the discussions; this word is usually translated as “agreement”, “concord”. But, considering Phaedo’s context about “consider that” or “hypothesize”, we can no refuse Burger’s (1984, p. 149) expression for this Greek word, “required basis”.

1 17 Although I agree with Dorter (1982, p. 129) that the statements about “participation” in 100c4-d9 are not a “new assumption” (in the sense of something new that is introduced in the discussion in this moment), since such affirmations have been present in a certain way since passage 74d. However, I understand – thus disagreeing with this scholar - that the affirmation about “participation” in 100c4-d9 is a hypothetical affirmation (a “hypothesis”) that, added to the affirmation about the existence of the Forms, and others, constitutes the heart of the “Hypothesis of Forms” latu sensu (also called “Theory of the Ideas”) in Plato’s dialogues. That is, my discordance with Dorter is: in my understanding, one of these assertions constitutes the nucleus of the Hypothesis of the Forms “together with” the other assertion, one assertion not being necessarily “presupposed” in the other, as the scholar stated (1982, p. 130).

1 18 As well observed by Dorter (1982, p. 161), in passage 107a there is no affimation from Socrates, about deception or inconsistency in the lógoi and hypotheses included in the dialogue: only an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of Simmias’ lack of conviction about these things, as well as the acknowledgment of the need of more ulterior examination thereof. Thus, Socrates reaffirms the need of do not stop the research before examining in all means the arguments – a need that Simmias had pointed out in 85c4-6, as we have seen.

1 19 Therefore, to denote my standpoint that Socrates’ “second sailing” in Phaedo is, before some specific thesis or theses, a “method” in general: in each occasion, to hypothesize and take the human lógos that looks like being the stronger one, investigating its consequences (100a). The affirmations about Forms that will appear subsequently in the dialogue (100b-102a) seem to me to be above all examples of contents of the hypothesized lógoi and examples of contents of the consequences that come after them. That is, they are examples of the possible uses
used to qualify it, “second sailing”. So, now that that objective has been fulfilled, we can see that my advice has a lot of consonance with the characteristics of the very method described in *Phaedo*. Because, as it shined resplendently in all the references, as well as in the proverb that characterizes it, this method has as its main features the insecurity, the uncertainty, and the fact that a definitive truth for the problems can be not found. However, the consequences of acknowledging this evidence extracted from the texts cannot be investigated here: they go beyond the time and the dimensions we are subjected to. What could Plato want to mean with this lack, this incompletion, this fragility about arguing about certain matters? Did the founder of the Academy intends to point to some secret teaching, absent from his written works? Or did he want rather to indicate the weakness of the non-divine human condition? Better yet: did he want to point to the fact that, in spite of such weakness, our condition is the obligation to always go-after, the unremitting search — in spite of everything? If so, maybe we could hear Platonic character Socrates also saying (giving him a fictitious Brazilian way): when you are “entering in a forest without a dog” ("aporia"?), you must “to hunt with the cat that you have” — this is the duty, the task, the need of effort, of the daughter (as Love) of *Póros* and *Penía*, the philosophy (*Smp*. 203d-204b).

That is, my final suggestion is: in his death bed, more than trying to convince friends about the “truth” or “complete certainty” of this or that argument, the real “persuasion” desired by Socrates may be the idea that the kind of life worthy to be lived is the life he lived, to wit, a philosophical life, a life as a continuous quest for knowledge, uninterrupted research and examination. If becoming a perfect *sophós* of the “Hypotheses Method”, as a general method, and therefore not being the “second sailing”, properly speaking. As mentioned before, an argument in favor of my interpretation is Socrates’ affirmation that the explained method may be used in the investigation, “be it about causes, be it about all the other things” (100a5-6); then it could be used for matters that are not necessarily eidetic. So I come closer to Donald Ross’ position about this point (1982, p.24, *apud* FISHER, 2002, p.654), straying away from Shorey (1933, p. 179, *apud* FISHER, 2002, p.653) and Dixsaut (1991, p. 140). Dorter also differentiates the explanation of the “method” in general from the exposition of a specific argument debated by using this method (1982, p.89; 126-128). For him, the Hypotheses Method would be “more a project” of investigation than an assemblage of “finished answers” (*idem*, p.90). About this matter, Shipton seems to understand it in a different way, but not totally dissimilar: in his view, the answer previously considered defined would not be the answer, but the answer being looked after (that is, the question): “the *deúteros ploûs* […] still is […] a questioning about the teleological cause” (1979, p.40). I take this opportunity to say that I cannot see an incompatibility between accepting this procedure as a “method” and the notion of *anamnesis*, an incompatibility initially alleged, and afterwards faded, by Fischer (2002, p. 665-666; 674, nt. 60).

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1 20 As the greatest exponents of the so-called Tübingen–Milan School intend. For example: KRÄMER, 1959; GAISER, 1980; REALE, 1997; SLEZÁK, 2009.

1 21 It is important to demarcate that I cannot see the apparent self-exclusion that Burger (1984, p. 158) sees between the continuous search for knowledge, a peculiar quality of the “genuine philosopher” and the assumption of insecurity and incompleteness of the “second sailing”. See as well DORTER, 1982, p. 134; 138; 140.

22 “To be in a forest without a dog” (meaning “to be in a very difficult situation”) and “who doesn’t have a dog has to hunt with his cat” (meaning “a second best way to accomplish something”) are two Brazilian proverbs.
can be something possible only for a god (Phaedrus 278d2-7), to love sophía and to exert themselves to walk in its direction is certainly possible for human beings – in spite of insecurity and no assurance that it will be attained. At least, life of endeavor seems better than a life of laziness or total hopelessness, as we were told elsewhere (Meno 81d5-e2). In this sense, the silence of Socrates in the dialogues, the incompleteness of those discussions when facing certain matters, could be, above all, the invitation of men to the continuous thinking, the soundless calling of his friends (inside the drama) and of readers (outside the drama) to the indefatigable questioning… to the crossing of life as long and how: philosophizing:

τί; […] ὑμῖν τὰ λεχθέντα μῶν μὴ δοκεῖ ἐνδεῶς λέγεσθαι;

καὶ ἂν εἰσὶν […] μᾶλα εὐχέρως καὶ εὐκόλως ἐξέπειν. […] κατεκλίνῃ ὑπότιος […] ἦδη οὖν σχεδὸν τι αὐτοῦ ἦν τὰ περί τὸ ἦτρον ψυχόμενα, καὶ ἐκκαλυψάμενος—ἐνεκεκάλυπτο γὰρ—ἐίπεν—ὅ δε τελευταίον ἐφθέγξατο:

‘ὡ Κρίτων, ἕφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα: ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε.’

ἄλλα ταύτα […] ἔσται […]. ἄλλα ὡς εἰ τί ἄλλο λέγεις.

ταύτα ἐρομένου αὐτοῦ οὐδὲν ἔτι ἔκρινατο […] ὁ Κρίτων συνέλαβε τὸ στόμα καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς.

[SOC.] Well then? Don’t you surely think that there are things to add to what has been said [literally: that the said things need to be said]?

[…]

Right away, without reluctance he [sc. Socrates] […] drank [the hemlock] to the last drop. […] He laid down on his back […] he had become hard and cold in almost all the lower belly, when he uncovered his face […] and said these words, the last he ever spoke:

[SOC.] Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius: don’t forget to pay this debt.

[CRI.] I will…. […] But see if you don’t [still] have some other thing to say?

This question remained unanswered […] Crito closed his mouth and his eyes.

(Pl. Phd. 84c5-6; 117c3-118a14 – my bold and underlines)

Exactly like Guimarães Rosa’s character Diadorim crossing the torrential and brutal Brazilian river São Francisco in a so fragile boat, Socrates was: calm, calm….

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RESUMEN: En el Fedón de Platón, el personaje Sócrates, en su lecho de muerte, diciendo palabras confidenciales a sus amigos, les cuenta que, en su vida, le fue imposible el descubrimiento de la verdad de la causa de los seres a través del conocimiento de los otros, tampoco a través del descubrimiento por sí mismo. Entonces, el filósofo reconoce haber tenido que apelar al Método Hipotético, algo que denominará una “segunda navegación”: hipotetizar el lógos que él, Sócrates, decidió en cada ocasión ser el más fuerte, acerca de los causas y de todo el resto. Y, aquello que parecía estar en consonancia con este lógos, consideró verdadero; a lo que no, consideró falso (99c1-100a7; BURGER, 1947; FISCHER, 2002). Teniendo esto en mente, los puntos principales de este trabajo serán: i) presentar las posiciones más importantes sobre este pasaje ii) mostrar que ambos scholia antiguos a la expresión “deúteros ploûs” y sus usos cronológicamente cercanos a Platón dan perfecto testimoñio del significado “second best” de la misma; iii) tal significado también

1 23 See BURGER, 1984, p. 111

1 24 About the relation In Phaedo’s text of the “Hypotheses Method” with the “crossing of life”, Dixsaut is in accordance as well: “[…] poser ce mode d’être suppose une conversion radicale de la manière de voir, de penser et de parler aussi, de vivre et de mourir […]” (1991, p. 142).
es compatible con las otras dos apariciones del proverbio en el corpus (Filebo 19c2-3; Politicus 300c2) y con signos y alusiones a “hipoteticidad” y “provisionalidad”, “incertidumbre” e “inseguridad”, visibles a lo largo de todo el texto del Fedón; iv) otras insinuaciones en el Fedón (107a8-b6) que resultados obtenidos con el Método de Hipótesis están todavía abiertas a la “duda” e indican que el significado del proverbio en el Fed.99c6-d3 era efectivamente “second best” y que no estaba siendo usado en un sentido irónico; v) como había señalado Dorter, esto no tiene que ser interpretado como una recaída hacia la misología. Mi sugerencia será: más que tratar de convencer a sus amigos de la “verdad” o “completa certeza” de este o aquel argumento, la persuasión que Sócrates realmente desea podría ser la idea de que el tipo de vida que merece ser vivida es la vida que él vivió, que es, una vida filosófica, una vida como continua búsqueda de conocimiento, investigación y examinación ininterrumpidas. Si volverse un perfecto sophós es algo posible solo para dios (Fedro 278d2-7), amar la sophía y exhortar a sí mismos a caminar en esta dirección es ciertamente posible para los seres humanos – a pesar de la inseguridad y de no tener garantías de alcanzarla. Al menos, una vida de esfuerzo es seguramente mejor que una vida perezosa o de completa desesperanza (Menón 81d5-e2)

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Feeling memories. The epistemic role of erotic visual perception in the recollection argument (*Phaed.* 73d5–74a1)

Candiotto, Laura

1. Declaration of the thesis

   My main thesis is that *eros* has an epistemic role in the process of recollection, and the goal of the paper is to explain how this role works. The erotic content triggers a process of recognition because memory of the Ideas/Forms is extended and distributed in individual objects. The objects, as memory tools, represent the cognitive extension of the memory inside a constitutive system of relations between Ideas/Forms and physicality. The parts of the world endowed with the affective power of *eros* work as the external memory storage for the soul of the philosopher.

   It should be immediately noted, but I will come back to it in due course, that I am not claiming that this works for all kinds of object or for the untrained soul. On the contrary, only the well-trained soul of the philosopher, which has a strong affinity with the Ideas/Forms and which desires to “come back home” to the realm of the Ideas/Forms, will systematically use the erotic objects as tools for the recollection.

2. Structure of the argument

   In order to prove my thesis about the epistemic role of *eros* in recollection and to explain how this role is performed, I provide here some evidence that supports these claims.

   (1) The literary analysis of the three examples shows that *eros* has a role in the learning process as recollection.

   (2) In order to understand what this role is and how *eros* performs it, it is useful to look at Plato’s epistemology of perception, to which the majority of the paper is dedicated.

   The question is: why does the soul use perception to (re)gain knowledge of the Ideas/Forms, rather than the soul serving the body’s needs-desires? Plato seems to suggest that the soul serves its own desires; that the soul desires the immaterial Ideas/Forms because of its affinity to them; and that the soul’s desires for the Ideas/Forms leads it to seek knowledge of the Ideas/Forms (as per the *Symposium*).

   Hence, the soul instrumentally uses the body/perception to attain cognitive tasks. This is a form of extended cognition, since the soul uses perception, not to cognize perceptibles, but as a tool to cognize imperceptibles.

   (3) Embodied cognition could be useful for anyone (sc. the philosopher) who knows how to recognize the mnestic traces of the Ideas/Forms in the erotic world. This is exactly the type of knowledge which suits the philosophers. The mnestic traces are the extension of the Ideas/Forms.

   (4) In this way, *eros* appears as a cosmological power which performs the epistemological and metaphysical relation between the soul, physicality and Ideas/Forms.

   (5) *Eros* discloses values and the affinity argument shows that the desire of the philosopher’s soul can be understood as a striving for the good, since the Ideas/Forms are understood as something better than the actual condition and they are familiar. This means that the philosopher’s soul has a primordial desire for the good.

   (6) This is the ethical account presupposed by every process of learning/knowing (very Socratic!)

3. The three empirical examples

   The three empirical examples (*Phaed.* 73d5–74a1) used by Plato to introduce...
the recollection argument (*Phaed.* 72e3–77a5) are significant for understanding the epistemic role of *eros* in visual perceptions, and to capture the material vehicles of memory. The examples point to the empirical causes of the cognitive act of memory, namely a particular kind of “erotic object” able to bring the beloved to mind.

In recent years, literary interpretations of Plato’s dialogue has underlined how carefully Plato chose the dramatic elements of his writing, as settings and characters and, significant to my argument here, examples, in order to frame the dialogue properly. Arguably, the three examples used by Plato to introduce the recollection argument are not produced by chance but, on the contrary, can provide the key for the proper framing of the argument. My understanding of the examples points not only, as has generally been noted, to the notion of similarities and dissimilarities and the related discussion about the equal in itself, but to the epistemic role of *eros* in perception and, more specifically, in the recollection argument.

The examples are expressed by Socrates thus:

- “when lovers (οἱ ἐρασταί) see a lyre their beloved is always playing, or a cloak he wears, or anything like that, they’re affected in this way—not only do they recognize (ἔγνωσάν) the lyre, there also comes to mind the shape of the boy (ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ παιδὸς) the lyre belongs to” (*Phaed.* 73d5–10, tr. Rowe).

- “is it possible to see a painting (ἰδόντα) of a horse, or a painting of a lyre, and recollect a person? And to see a painting of Simmias, and recollect—Cebes?” (*Phaed.* 73e5–7)

- “Then what about seeing a painting of Simmias and recollecting Simmias himself?” (*Phaed.* 73e9–10)

The objects have an emotive content (Gordon 2012, 187) and are provided with affective and embodied information (Zadra and Clore 2011): the lyre or the cloak of the beloved (73d5–9), the picture of a horse or a lyre (73e5–7), and the picture of Simmias that makes one remember Simmias in person (73e5–7) or his friend Cebes (73e6–7). We may notice how the objects chosen for the examples are characterised by a common emotive content, the erotic one, which is presented by Socrates as something that is very familiar by anyone who was affected by it. Moreover, the examples refer to very situated experiences, making the knowledge as visual perception something concrete, framed into the experience and felt (73b7, 73d8, 74a6, 74d4, 74e6).

Socrates explicitly refers to the objects of the beloved (the lyre or the cloak): it is not meaningless to remark here the fact that the lyre refers to lyric poetry and the horse could be recognized by the listeners as a symbol of desire (Gordon 2012, 187, underlines that the horse is a phallic symbol in the Attic comedy, and in pp. 100–101 suggests that it refers to courage). Also the referenced relations between people are erotic—i.e. the one between the agent of perception and the beloved recollected through his objects, and the friendship between Simmias and Cebes. At the same time, not only the object in itself (lyre or horse) but also its painting is erotic, since it makes us remember the object itself.

Thus, painting, images and mental representation are understood as directly connected to the objects and endowed with the same erotic power. This is the reason by which in their absence the soul can remember them. In fact, the third example underlines how the image of Simmias brings to our mind Simmias himself.

It is exactly the epistemological and metaphysical role of *eros* that prompts me to argue against the classical interpretation of the lines based on the associative process between the object belonging to the beloved and the beloved, or the resemblance process between the picture of a beloved and the beloved. It is true that

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1 For all the quotations I adopt here Rowe’s translation in Rowe 2010.
after the three examples Socrates speaks about the likeness but, in my opinion, not just to explain that $x$ is like $y$ or that a thought about $x$ is grasped by seeing $y$ that is likened to $x$, but because there is a metaphysical necessity to posit the form of the equal as the basis of the perception of equal things.

Having set out these three empirical examples, Plato provides a non-empirical example about “the equal in itself” (74a9–b1), and not about “the beauty in itself”. Arguably, this aspect does not contradict my thesis but underlines the fact that an erotic recollection, moved by the desire for wisdom and by erotic objects, is about all types of Ideas/Forms, even the ones strictly connected to geometry (Sedley 2006), and that these Ideas/Forms are objects of wonder (74b1). In fact Socrates in 76d7–9, as we have just mentioned, underlines that this process works for all the other Ideas/Forms: “if the things we’re always talking about really exist—something that’s beautiful by itself, something that’s good by itself, in short all the things of that kind that there are”). Moreover, an Idea/Form chosen as an example could not be the only justification for the recollection through visual perception. Thus, my claim is that there is, of course, use of the notion of likeness in the three examples, but that this explanation becomes more reliable if it is combined with the specific evidence that comes from the text itself—i.e. the epistemic valence of the erotic visual perception as the source of recollection.

4. Plato’s epistemology of perception

The second step to argue in favour of the thesis is the claim that the soul instrumentally uses the body/perception to attain cognitive tasks. This is a form of extended cognition, since the soul uses perception not to cognize perceptibles, but as a tool to cognize imperceptibles.

To understand this claim, I should introduce one main general point about Plato’s epistemology of perception. There is no contrast between perception and cognition of Ideas/Forms but, on the contrary, there must be an ontological and epistemic link between the two in order to have a cognitive achievement. Concepts are at work in the first and immediate perception of the objects because the human knowledge is rationally structured (Taylor 1926; Ross 1951; Gulley 1962; McDowell 1996). The unity of perception and cognition is given by the soul because it is through the eyes that the soul sees (Phaedo 65b1–7) (Casertano 1994, 2015a, 2015b), and because every perception is always also a cognition and a representation of the object in the soul through the Idea/Form. The soul sees through the eyes: even if perception is cognition, Plato said (mostly against Protagoras, I claim) that the soul uses perception to remember “because that’s what looking into something through the body is—looking into it by using our senses” (79c4–5).

There is at work here is an instrumental relationship between the soul and perception, exactly because Plato recognizes that perception is a form of cognition that does not alone saturate all knowledge. Thus the necessity of its collaboration with the Ideas/Forms that are in some way in the soul (by the affinity argument) and are extended in the world as erotic mnestic traces is necessary. Therefore, conceptual learning is extended to perception. What it is amazing here is that Plato suggests that in order to cognize imperceptibles in this life in which the soul is embodied, the philosopher uses the body as a vehicle for the Ideas/Forms. In my view, the justification of this claim is the extension (as mnestic traces) of the Ideas/Forms in the objects that makes visual perception a case of extended cognition. The extension, in the meantime, also provides the soul’s motivation to pursue this type of knowledge. In fact, it is because the soul recognizes the Ideas/Forms in the erotic objects that she undertakes the cognitive process of recollection that brings her to the Ideas/Forms themselves.

4.1 Outside memory and extension
In order to understand this specific notion of extension, a very brief overview of the contemporary approaches to the epistemology of perception’s approaches that are in the background may be useful. O’Regan (1992) and O’Regan and Noë (2011) have developed the enactive approach of the world as outside memory: i.e. the idea that the mind has immediate availability of information by its constitutive interaction with the world. This approach is functional in understanding how is possible, from an epistemological point of view, that some objects can awaken the soul and that, more generally, bodily experience and perceptions can be a source of learning.

However, this approach does not explicitly recognize the role of love and affectivity in the process. I think that Plato comes upon this first, and his account could be very significant in contemporary debates about the extended and embodied knowledge. Moreover, thanks to recognition of the value of the affectivity in the process, he can provides also a very uncommon link between ethics and epistemology, clarifying how this kind of knowledge discloses an ethical world. In fact, as Goldie (2000) has pointed out, the intentionality of emotions discloses values.

Moreover, contemporary studies on the philosophy of emotions have stressed how emotions have the ability to improve the attention of the cognitive agent, making the object more salient. As it is well known, attention has a leading role in the memory processes. Arguably, Plato too recognized this specific role developed by the emotions in memory, but has also provided them with a very specific metaphysical role.

Consequently I argue for an active externalism of the theory of recollection based on the extended and distributed power of the Ideas/Forms. The soul, which is endowed with memories, is not just in the “head” of the subject, but it is extended in space and in time—remembering is making present something absent, which is in the past—but the cyclical argument is also relevant here. The vehicle is the erotic desire that uses the body as a catalyst.

In the connection between the cyclical and recollection arguments, the soul’s extension is the way to prove its immortality and its power and wisdom as disincarnated (70b3–4; 76c11–12). Again, Plato’s account has a strong peculiarity that sets it apart from contemporary approaches: the extension referred by Plato is not just an occurring cognitive system which grows up spatially by virtue of the integration between the mind and the environment, but it is also placed in the time, through a cognitive process that was performed before the birth of the agent and that can continue (that is the main topic of the dialogue) after his death. This difference poses the necessity to understand the Platonic soul as a metaphysical entity.

4.2 Representation and erotic visual perception

For Plato, knowledge is representation and perception is visual perception (Candiotto 2016). Arguably, in this dialogue (before the Sophist), he expresses his confidence regarding mental images, positing a kind of transparency between them and the objects. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this kind of transparency does not imply denying the difference between the two or the possibility of cognitive errors; on the contrary, it is exactly an acknowledged difference that makes possible
a relationship that, in this case of transparency.

Moreover, he underlines a cognitive structure where top-down concepts and bottom-up perceptions are mixed up in the process of remembering which is orchestrated by the world and made thinkable by the Ideas/Forms. This is the reason that *eros*—as I have already noted, *eros* is the key notion that comes from the examples—is not just in “the head” of the cognitive agent or instantiated by the affective objects, but it should be understood as the epistemological and metaphysical relationship between them. The relations built by *eros* are also metaphysical, because the object can be recognized by the agent thanks to the Idea/Form that makes it comprehensible. The Idea/Form is in the meantime what makes the object thinkable and what is grasped by the agent from the object as thought: “aren’t we right in saying that he recollected this second thing that he came to have in mind (τὴν ἔννοιαν ἔλαβεν)” (*Phaed.* 73c10–d1, tr. Rowe). Here, *ennoia* is thought as content, expressed in the first example (73d9: ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἶδος τοῦ παιδὸς οὗ ἦν ἡ ἀρά) by the word *eidos*, while thinking as activity is here expressed by the word *dianoia*, and in the lines to which we are referring to by the grasping (*elaben*). For Casertano (2015b, 464–465), what is grasped is not just the feeling, not just the thought, but also and primarily the Idea/Form, since in the process of visual perception there is something more, a knowing, and this knowing is epistemic—i.e. the Ideas/Forms are at work on it.

Representationalism is not incompatible with active externalism—i.e. it does not necessarily require an internal soul detached from the environment, since representations (*eidola*) are at the same time the products and the origins of a cognitive action motivated by expectations and dwell in a constitutive relationship between the soul and the cognitive environment.

Arguably this claim is suitable for the *Phaedo* and also for the previous characterisation of learning as *anamnesis* in the *Meno* (81b–84b) and in the *Phaedrus* (249b–d), but not for the *Philebus* (34a–c), where it is claimed that *anamnesis* (which is different from memory, *mneme*) occurs in the soul by itself when the soul remembers the sensations that she felt with the body in the past.3

I think that this thesis coming from the *Philebus* is very convenient for understanding that Plato’s theory of recollection is not reducible to an empiricist theory, as my emphasis on embodied and extended cognition could erroneously make one think, but—and this is my claim—it is not incompatible with it. The compatibility has been built by Plato himself, connecting his epistemological version of the theory of recollection with its metaphysical implications. So, for Casertano (2015b, 456) the great achievement gained by Plato in the theory of *anamnesis* is exactly the blending together of the epistemological and mythical accounts of it, understood here as the metaphysical stance.

Metaphysical entities (Ideas/Forms) are not just postulated inside the myth, but they perform a leading role in the same perceptual process: even to attain the perceptual knowledge as “*eidola*-building”, it is necessary for the cognitive agent to possess the Idea/Form that makes understandable what is perceived. Without the Idea/Form of the equal, we could not recognize (not in a detached way, but inside our perceptions) that a stick is equal to another stick. This functional role performed by the Idea/Form (well stressed by the neo-Kantian interpretation of Plato’s epistemology) has, moreover, a metaphysical goal: it is true that we know the Ideas/Forms through perception, but they exist before the perception, in the realm of the separated souls before the birth. This metaphysical goal, connected

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3 For Casertano, this problematic claim does not mean that the soul does not need the body, since it conserves a relationship with the perceptions even when it is not occurring. See Casertano 2015b, 306.
to the epistemological meaning of the theory of recollection, is envisaged as a hypothesis that must be demonstrated (92 d6–7: “that was put forward on the basis of a hypothesis worthy of acceptance”, tr. Rowe).

Plato argued against mere empiricism that ascribes to the body the real source of knowledge, and to its more refined epistemological account that says that there are the simple perceptions that impress the soul with mental images. Conversely, and avoiding the opposite claim that does not recognize how physicality is a component of perceptions, Plato would assert the necessity that the contents of knowledge is still conceptualized in the same perception, in a constitutional machinery that binds together Ideas/Forms and bodily perceptions, and put them to work in a very well integrated system. In this way, my thesis is connected to the discussion of the theory of immanent forms (i.e. the bigness in “us” in Phaed. 102a10–c9) that unfortunately I cannot pursue here, but I note for the argument’s sake that the Idea/Form is in some way in the physical realm without being reduced to it.

4.3 What the inferior objects desire

The theory of recollection is not “epistemologically pessimistic” (contra Scott 1995) because the senses, understood as unity of perceiving, are the catalyst, the foundation and the experiential context for what I am assuming to be an “extended recollection” (“But we’re also in agreement that we haven’t got this thought, and couldn’t have got it, from anywhere except from seeing (ἐκ τοῦ ἰδεῖν), touching (ἀγαθῆθα) or one of the other kinds of perceiving (ἐκ τινὸς ἄλλης τῶν αἰσθήσεων); I’m counting all of them as the same in this case”, Phaed. 75a5–8), and so their objects are enhanced by the cognitive extension performed by the Ideas/Forms. By themselves they are inferior, but their own eros for the Ideas/Forms transforms them into an opportunity for the soul to learn and acquire the knowledge of the Ideas/Forms.

Previously (Phaed. 73e1–3), regarding the process of learning connected to the dynamics of forgetting/remembering, Socrates said: “what counts most of all as recollection is when someone has this sort of experience in relation to things he’s actually forgotten (ἐπελέληστο), because time has passed and he’s not been thinking (ἐπισκοπεῖν: it might be better to translate literally as the act of seeing/perceiving) of them?” Socrates posits the reason for the forgetting as no longer perceiving the object that makes the soul remember. This reason, briefly described here from an epistemological point of view, finds its mythological explanation in the Phaedrus in the seeing of the Ideas/Forms by the soul before the birth.

For Dixsaut (1991, 490), recollection represents exactly the passage between perception and representation, but it must be understood not just as memory (i.e. the storage of representations) but as the product of the soul’s power which ratifies her membership of the realm of Ideas/Forms. This is strictly connected to the affinity argument between the soul and Ideas/Forms in 78b–81a. The soul’s power is understood by Dixsaut as “liaison”, relationship, exactly like eros, which is the most prominent power of the soul. For Dixsaut, in fact, this “liaison” is pursued only by the souls of the philosophers who are moved by the love for the Ideas/Forms (Dixsaut 1991, 493).

Connected to this is what Williams (2002, 133) called “the question of provenance” of the knowledge and the discussion between those scholars who believe that here Plato is developing an elitist view (only philosophers know the truth through recollection) and the others who strive for an ordinary interpretation (see, for example, Ackrill 1973). I share with Williams (2002, 148) the idea that what really makes the distinction is the presence or not of eros in the cognitive process. As is well known, this kind of true love belongs to the philosophers who literally “love the sophia”, but this does not mean (though I cannot discuss it here) that there
are not opportunities to become a philosopher if there is the desire to learn how to know (the *Meno*, 75e–76a, said that it is those who learn who recollect) through the erotic dialogue and *anamnesis*.

In *Phaed.* 74a5–7, the recollection through similarity brings us to the deficiency thesis. For Dixsaut, it is exactly due to the “liaison” that things in themselves desire to overcome their deficiency and so reconnect with the Ideas/Forms (“le désir de rencontrer ce qui est”, Dixsaut 1991, 493). This “élan”, or leap, is understood by her as the liberation from perception (Dixsaut 1991, 494) and only on this point do I disagree with her interpretation, even if I can understand its ethical plausibility in the *Phaedo*. I disagree exactly for the reason that I am developing here about the instrumental use of the body as cognitive extension. In particular, regarding the affinity argument on which she discussed, I think that the use of the word *phronesis,* which Dixsaut (2010, 93–108) understands as a disincarnate process, can support in some ways what I am saying, but I cannot here pursue in detail this line of investigation. I can just briefly note that *phronesis* is understood as a *pathema* of the soul and for me it refers to a cognitive process understandable as thinking and feeling (the *phronimon* is the centre where all the sensations converge) that can be performed also in the absence of the object, so by the soul by itself (as the lines 79d1–7), as is required in the case of the recollection for the *Philebus*.

I agree with Casertano (2015b, 314), for whom the deficiency (from *elleipo*: to lack, 74a5–7) of equal things does not signify their inferiority (from an ontological point of view) but their strong need for Ideas/Forms to be comprehended. I can say that this kind of deficiency is very welcome, because it is what permits to the soul to remember the place from where she comes from: “in that case we must have known the equal before the time when we first saw those equal pairs” (*Phaed.* 74e9–a1). In this way, Plato’s soul attained the metaphysical goal which, as is well known, has strong ethical consequences (overcoming the fear of death and so pursuing the good) and, from an epistemological point of view, is what permits the constitutive relationship between perception and cognition, physicality and Ideas/Forms. In Williams’ words, “the discrepancy between our concepts and the particulars […] is therefore a standing invitation to turn our attention to the Forms” (Williams 2002, 149). As I have already underlined, it is exactly this attention which is strictly connected to all memory processes, that the emotions improve by making the things more salient to us.

What it is acquired is a “familiar knowledge” (οἰκείαν ἂν ἐπιστήμην, 75e5–6), since *eros* reunites the soul to its origin (Gordon 2012). Thus, it is from the metaphysical and ethical point of view that this deficiency earns its positive and vital value, since it pushes us to strive after the Ideas/Forms (“But then it’s precisely from our acts of perceiving (τῶν αἰσθήσεων) that we must get the thought that all the equal things we perceive (πάντα τὰ ἐν ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἐκείνου) in those acts strive after (ὀρέγεται) what’s equal by itself (τοῦ ὃ ἔστιν ἴσον) and fall rather short (ἐνδεέστερά) of it”, *Phaed.* 75a11–b2) and so to go through the process that brings us to them (as in the *scala amoris* of the *Symposium*). In fact, as Gonzales (2007) has pointed out, the desire has a significant role in the recollection process, and in my interpretation

4 "and the name we give to what the soul experiences in this case is ‘wisdom’ (τὸ πάθημα φρόνησις κέκληται), 79d6–7).

5 75e2–7: “Whereas if we get our knowledge before we are born but lose it on being born, and then later through the use of our perceptions (ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι) we get back those pieces of knowledge that we had at some previous time, what we call learning (μανθάνειν) would be a matter of getting back knowledge (ἐπιστήμην ἄναλαμβάνειν) that was ours anyway; and we’d surely be correct if we called that recollection (ἀναμνηστικέσθαι)?”
it represents the path through which the Ideas/Forms exercise their extended (in space and time) power. Crucial to my interpretation is another claim of Gonzales (2007, 300–301)—i.e. that what Socrates is presenting here is a practice, and exactly the vital practice of *eros* in the dialogue. In fact, in my interpretation, *eros* discloses values, and the affinity argument shows that the desire of the philosopher’s soul is understandable as a striving for the good, since the Ideas/Forms are understood as something better than the actual condition, and they are familiar. This means that the philosopher’s soul has a primordial desire for the good. This is the very Socratic ethical account presupposed by every process of learning/knowing. For Plato, the aspiration for the Ideas/Forms does not come from an abstract ideal, but it is grounded in those desires which live in the soul of the philosopher and can be awakened by perception.

I conclude this section by underlining that through this sophisticated system of tracing Ideas/Forms in the physical realm, which has its epistemological grounding in the role of Ideas/Forms in the extended and embodied erotic perception, Plato finds a place for the transcendence in the immanence, without dualism (Candiotto 2015).

**5. The erotic power of the soul**

The Platonic soul is energy and mind (Dorter 1982) but also a genuine entity (Brisson 2008; Trabattoni 2011): as energy, it is the principle that imparts motion to matter; as mind, it uses both sensation and reason to know; and as an entity it survives death. The soul as energy is erotic.

For Gordon (2012), the human soul is primordially erotic and, thanks to the recollection of the *eidos* of the beloved (73d8), it feels the desire to recollect what causes the love and so achieves the recollection of Ideas/Forms. Love as psychic energy may be later channelled towards knowledge of the truth (Vallejo Campos 2011, 306), as Cornford (1950) has claimed in the Fifties, understanding the *Symposium* as a gradual redirection of a single psychic energy. The remembering does not stop at the image of the beloved but proceeds to the Ideas/Forms that are at work in the process of recollection through erotic visual perception. This is exactly the metaphysical power of *eros*. The active externalist approach to the mind asks us to understand this as a continuous loop between cognition and perception or, as Sassi calls them, the “fluxes of the soul” (Sassi 2011, 257), interpreting *eros* as psychic force.

We know from the *Meno* that recollection comes from dialogue—i.e. the maieutic process of inquiry through questions and answers—while here, in the *Phaedo*, recollection comes from the erotic visual experience. I don’t think that these two views are incompatible, precisely because of the relational role performed by *eros*. In fact, as is made explicit in the later dialogues, such as the *Sophist* and the *Politicus*, building relations (*sympleke*) is the work of the dialecticians, and as the Diotima’s speech in the *Symposium* points out, *eros* is a *daimon* and a *metaxy*—i.e. a relational power. As Williams said, “the best generator of restlessness is *eros*” (Williams 2002, 147). The links that are established by the erotic power of the soul inside the process of recollection through visual perception are the links between physicality and Ideas/Forms.

In fact, as I have just noted, what Plato describes in the three examples is not a neutral process of visual perception but a very specific variety of it, grounded on the affective content of the object that is felt. It is not only because it is felt thus by the

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6 As is well known, the recollection thesis is pursued in the *Meno* by the experiment of teaching geometry to a slave boy (in *Phaed.* 72e3–b3 we have an intertextual reference between the two dialogues), underlining that learning is recollection, and so it is “those who learn” (75e1–76a7) who recollect (Sedley 2007).
perceiver that the horse is erotic, nor because the love is a possession of the horse by itself: the horse is a part of the extended cognition bound together by eros. Through the extension of the horse, the soul remembers her love for the Ideas/Forms.

Eros as psychic energy does not belong only to the individual soul but, more significantly, to the world itself. It is exactly thanks to the cosmological role of eros that knowledge can find its condition of existence in the body, since this energy is the link that establishes the constitutional connection between the soul, physicality and Ideas/Forms. The erotic world is a storage of memory for him who knows how to use it, the philosopher-lover. The mnemonic traces of Ideas/Forms spread around the world make the erotic experience of the world the occasion for the soul to come back home. To come back home means, for the myth, to come back to the world of Ideas/Forms; and this signifies, as I hope I have sufficiently explained, a return to the forgotten knowledge, and so the remembrance of the Ideas/Forms.

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La mia tesi principale sostiene che eros abbia un ruolo epistemico nella teoria platonica dell'anamnesi e lo scopo del mio intervento è spiegare come si realizzi questa funzione attraverso un'analisi del passo 73d5-74a1 del Fedone.

Il contenuto erotico degli oggetti percepiti induce un processo di riconoscimento perché la memoria delle Idee/Forme è estesa e distribuita in essi. Gli oggetti, intesi come strumenti per il processo mnestico, rappresentano infatti l'estensione cognitiva della memoria all'interno di un sistema costitutivo di relazioni tra le Idee/Forme e la corporeità. Le parti del mondo affette dal potere di eros svolgono quindi la funzione di deposito esterno di memoria per l'anima del filosofo.

Va sottolineato che la tesi non sostiene che ciò avvenga per tutti gli oggetti e per le anime non educate alla filosofia. Al contrario, solo l'anima ben allenata del filosofo, la quale ha una forte affinità con le Idee/Forme e che desidera “tornare a casa” nel mondo delle Idee/Forme, sarà in grado di usare sistematicamente gli oggetti erotici come strumento per l'anamnesi.

Riassumo per punti la struttura argomentativa:

1. L'analisi letteraria dei tre esempi evidenzia il ruolo di eros nei processi di apprendimento come ricordo;
2. Per comprendere quale sia il ruolo di eros e come venga svolto, è utile riferirsi all'epistemologia della percezione platonica. La questione che si pone è dunque: perché l'anima usa la percezione per riacquisire la conoscenza delle Idee/Forme invece di rispondere ai bisogni/desideri del corpo? Platone sembra suggerire che l'anima risponda ai suoi propri desideri; che l'anima desideri le Idee/Forme immateriali data la sua affinità con esse; e che il desiderio dell'anima per le Idee/Forme induca l'anima alla ricerca della conoscenza di esse (come nel Simposio). In questo modo l'anima usa strumentalmente il corpo e la percezione per ottenere le proprie finalità cognitive. Questa è una forma di cognizione estesa dal momento che l'anima usa la percezione non per conoscere I sensibili ma per conoscere gli intelligibili. Le tracce mnestiche sono l'estensione cognitiva delle Idee/Forme.
3. La conoscenza estesa è anche una conoscenza incarnata. Essa è funzionale a coloro che sanno riconoscere le tracce mnestiche delle Idee/Forme nei sensibili in un mondo articolato da eros, ovvero ai filosofi.
4. In questo modo eros si rivela essere una potenza cosmologica in grado di stabilire una relazione conoscitiva e metafisica tra l'anima, la corporeità e le Idee/Forme.
5. L'eros rivela valori e la dimostrazione dell'affinità tra l'anima e le Idee/Forme pone il desiderio dell'anima del filosofo come ricerca del bene, dal momento che le Idee/Forme sono intese come qualcosa di migliore e di familiare rispetto alla condizione attuale. Questo significa che il filosofo possiede un desiderio primordiale per il bene.
Socrates’ last days as described in the *Phaedo* are marked by an extraordinary experience: obeying a recurrent dream, he becomes a poet and composes a hymn to Apollo while at the same time adapting a bunch of Aesop’s mythoi (60e–61b). The aim of my paper is to show that this conversion strongly resonates with Socrates’ conversion to the life of enquiry as recounted in the *Apology*, and that Aristotle pointedly appropriated Socrates’ words at the beginning of the *Poetics*. In turn, Aristotle’s move authorizes a poetological (though hardly ‘Aristotelian’) reading of the *Phaedo*’s passage and of Socrates’ emphasis on the making of *mythos* as *the condicio sine qua non* for poetry. As we shall see, however, the true mythmaker proves to be not Socrates but Plato, something that may prompt a new understanding of Socrates’ last words ‘we owe a cock to Asclepius’.

In the Apolline context of the *Apology*, Socrates poses as a ‘soldier of Apollo’, who will never desert the post assigned to him by the god. Two passages are especially relevant:

> Ὄτως γὰρ ἔχει, ὥς ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· οὗ ἄν τις ἑαυτὸν τάξῃ ἢ ὑπ’ ἄρχοντος ταχθῇ, ἐνταῦθα δεῖ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, μένοντα κινδυνεύειν, μηδὲν ὑπολογιζόμενον μήτε θάνατον μήτε ἄλλο μηδὲν πρὸ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ. ἐγὼ οὖν δεινὰ ἂν εἴην εἰργασμένος, ὥς ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, εἶ ὦτε μὲν με τοι δραπετοὺς ἐπί τινος, οὗ ὡς εἰς ἠλπίζει ἀρχεῖν μου, καὶ ἐν Ποτιείῳ καὶ ἐν Ἀμφιπόλει καὶ ἐπὶ Δηλίῳ, τὸτε μὲν οὖ ἐκεῖνοι ἐταττοὺ ἐμεῖν ὡσπερ καὶ ἄλλος τις καὶ ἐκινδύνευον ἀποθανεῖν, τὸ δὲ θεοῦ τάττον, ἔγὼ οὖν καὶ ἐξετάζομαι ἐμαυτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, ἐνταῦθα δὲ φοβηθεῖς ἢ θάνατον ἢ ἄλλ’ ὁτιοῦν πράγμα λίποιμι τὴν τάξιν.

For wherever a man’s place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying. Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher’s mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was wise when I was not wise (28d–29a, trans. Jowett).

> ἐμοὶ δὲ τούτῳ, ὡς ἐγὼ φημι, προστέτακται ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πράττειν καὶ ἔκ μαντεῖων καὶ εξ ἐνυπνίων καὶ στραγγοῦσας φύσει τῆς ποτε καὶ ἄλλη θεία μοῖρα ἄνθρωπω καὶ ὃτιον προσέταξε πράττειν.

And this is a duty which the God has imposed upon me, as I am assured by oracles, visions, and in every sort of way in which the will of divine power was ever signified to anyone (33c, trans. Jowett).
In fact, Socrates' philosophical life is the product of the Delphic oracle: when Chaerephon 'asked the oracle to tell him whether there was anyone wiser than I was', the Pythian prophetess answered in the negative (21a). Consequently, Socrates wondered what the god might mean (τί ποτε λέγει) and resolved to put the oracle to the test (ἐλέγξαν τὸ μαντεῖον) by examining people who were said to be wise. Thus Socrates chose the life of philosophy, something that turned him into a potential rival of Athens' self-proclaimed educators. Accordingly, just before telling the story of Chaerephon's visit to Delphi Socrates cites the case of the Evenus of Parus, who charged substantial fees for his lessons. Remarkably, Evenus resurfaces in the Phaedo as a rival of Socrates. This time, however, the rivalry involves poetry:

Tell Evenus, Cebes, he replied, that I had no idea of rivalling him or his poems; which is the truth, for I knew that I could not do that. But I wanted to see whether I could purge away a scruple which I felt about certain dreams. In the course of my life I have often had intimations in dreams 'that I should make music'. The same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words: Make and cultivate music, said the dream. And hitherto I had imagined that this was only intended to exhort and encourage me in the study of philosophy, which has always been the pursuit of my life, and is the noblest and best of music. The dream was bidding me to do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor in a race is bidden by the spectators to run when he is already running. But I was not certain of this, as the dream might have meant music in the popular sense of the word, and being under sentence of death, and the festival giving me a respite, I thought that I should be safer if I satisfied the scruple, and, in obedience to the dream, composed a few verses before I departed. And first I made a hymn in honor of the god of the festival, and then considering that a poet, if he is really to be a poet or maker, should not only put words together but make stories, and as I have no invention, I took some fables of Aesop, which I had ready at hand and knew, and turned them into verse (60e-61b, trans. Jowett modified).

In the Phaedo, Socrates puts his dreams to the test (ἐνυπνίων τινῶν ἀποπειρώμενος) in an attempt to find out what they might mean (τί λέγει). The dream
in question urges Socrates to compose and develop mousike, and the déjà vu effect is striking, all the more so because the Apology, too, mentions Socrates’ divine dreams (ἐνύπνια, 33c). The testing of the divine dreams in the Apolline context of the Phaedo, just like the testing of Apollo’s oracle in the Apology, is a sign intended to mark a new beginning: when Socrates was young, the oracle determined his conversion to a life of enquiry; in the Phaedo, the divine dream marks Socrates’ conversion to music and poetry. The importance of this new turning point is reinforced by Socrates’ use of the verb aphosioumai ‘purify oneself’ or ‘purge a scruple’. Intriguingly, Plato’s Socrates uses this verb on another occasion only, and that is when he launches into his palinode in the Phaedrus, in a context that is likewise marked by Socrates’ urge to distance himself from the excesses of rationalism (242c).

In the shadow of death, Socrates experiences a new conversion, a palinode. What is the point of such a belated, if momentous, change? I would like to suggest that, whatever its relationship with the historical Socrates, this new beginning makes perfect sense form a Platonic point of view. Plato decided to have Socrates’ last day recounted – of all places – in Phlius, a relatively small and insignificant city. However, Phlius was famous for the courage of its inhabitants and for hosting the last ‘authentic’ Pythagoreans. Even more importantly, Phlius was famous for the very notion of philosophical ‘beginning’, for it was here, according to the famous account of Plato’s pupil Heracleides Ponticus (87–88 Wehrli), that Pythagoras, himself of Phliasian origin, invented the word philosophos to the astonishment of the local ruler. Pythagoras, whom Socrates credits with the invention of a philosophical way of life in the Republic (600b), had probably been the first to suggest the identification of philosophy with mousikē (cf. Strabo 10.468). Like Socrates, he had never written anything. Socrates’ poetic turn, introduced with what may be described as a sacramental tone, has all the solemnity of a new beginning aimed at changing philosophy forever. In this context, Socrates’ emphasis on mythos, which he describes as the condicio sine qua non of poetry, cannot be overestimated. In fact, Socrates’ words remind one of Aristotle. In the Poetics, mythos is by far the most important part of tragedy: without myth, tragedy, and by extension poetry, cannot even be conceived of. The very beginning of the work has a strange Platonic air about it. Aristotle is intent on exploring the power and inner working of mythoi, which are integral to poetry: see 1447a9–10 πῶς δὲῖ συνίστασθαι τούς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἐξεῖν ἡ ποιήσεως and cf. 1451b27–29 τὸν ποιητὴν μᾶλλον τῶν μύθων ἐναι δὲι ποιητὴν ἢ τῶν μέτρων. This closely parallels Socrates’ conversion in the Phaedo, when he claims that mythos is fundamental for the very definition of poetry (61b τὸν ποιητῆν δέοι, εἴπερ μέλλοι ποιητῆς εἴναι, ποιεῖν μύθους and cf. 60c μύθον ἂν συνθεῖναι).

Needless to say, there is nothing sacramental in the Poetics, and Aristotle ends up giving mythos an entirely new meaning, similar to plot or structure: his pragmatic approach could not be more different from the religious aura that surrounds Socrates’ poetic conversion. Nevertheless, his terminology and certain turns of phrase call to mind the Phaedo. I take this as evidence that Aristotle sensed the poetological import of the passage in question, or that he may have had first-hand knowledge of its intended meaning. Whatever the case, he seems to have Construed it as Plato’s own ‘poetics’. The fact, too, that Aristotle’s Poetics takes into consideration sokratikoi logoi is equally interesting. Plato’s dialogues, in turn, contain many myths. It follows that the dialogues were thought of in both Plato’s and Aristotle’s ‘poetics’ as a form of poetry by definition, and the Phaedo itself illustrates the point very well: its very subject, namely the immortality of the soul, is introduced through the two verbs ‘to enquire’ (διασκοπεῖν) and ‘to tell myths’ (μυθολογεῖν) (61c, and cf. 70b).

By openly combining enquire and the telling of myths, the Phaedo is
conceptualized not only as an intellectual enterprise, but as a ‘mythological’ one too. This opens a gap with the approach of Aristotle, who either turns *mythos* into a scientific tool of sorts (throughout the *Poetics*) or credits it with philosophical value only insofar as it kicks off research by inducing stupefaction, something that in due course must be superseded (*Metaphysics* I 2.982b11–983a21). By contrast, the *Phaedo* emphatically closes with a memorable myth, which is Socrates’ last word.

As we have seen, Socrates is apparently the protagonist of a major change, leading him, so to say, from *(dia)logos* to *mythos*. However, his palinode is in a way preposterous, for he has no time left to exercise and develop his newly acquired art of poetry. By his own admission, moreover, he is not a mythmaker, something that squares well with his tendency to disavow authorship of the myths he recounts in the dialogues. Paradoxically, then, he cannot measure up to the requirements of true poetry he boldly sets at the beginning of the *Phaedo*. How can we make sense of such a paradox? In what follows, I shall expand on the idea that Socrates’ belated new beginning seems to point to Plato the mythmaker.

The *Phaedo* is, almost literally, Socrates’ swan song, as he implies when he explicitly identifies himself with Apollo’s birds. What would happen after his death? This is how the question was put to him by his anxious friends:

Καὶ ὁ Κέβης ἐπιγελάσας, Ὡς δεδιότων, ἔφη, ὡ Σώκρατες, πειρῶ ἀναπείθειν-μᾶλλον δὲ μή ὡς ἡμῶν δεδιότων, ἀλλ’ ἵσως ἐν τις καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν παῖς ὡς τὰ τοιαῦτα φοβεῖται. τοῦτον οὖν πειρῶ μεταπείθειν μὴ δεδέεσθαι τὸν θάνατον ὡσπερ τὰ μορμολύκεια. Ἀλλὰ χρῆ, ἔφη ο Ἡσιότης, ἑπαύειν αὐτῷ ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ἐγὼ δὲ ἐξεπάσητε. Πόθεν οὖν, ἔφη, ὡ Σώκρατες, τῶν τοιούτων ἀγαθὸν ἐπαρδόν ληψέμεθα, ἐπείδη σὺ, ἔφη, ἡμᾶς ἀπολείπεις;

Cebes answered with a laugh: ‘Then, Socrates, you must argue us out of our fears—and yet, strictly speaking, they are not our fears, but there is a child within us to whom death is a sort of hobgoblin; him too we must persuade not to be afraid when he is alone with him in the dark’. Socrates said: ‘Let the voice of the charmer be applied daily until you have charmed him away’. ‘And where shall we find a good charmer of our fears, Socrates, when you are gone?’ (77e–78a trans. Jowett modified)

After Socrates’ death, a good charmer/singer will have to be found somewhere. Remarkably, we encounter here the exceptional verbal form ἐξεπάσητε (from ἐξεπάδω, ‘charm away’), which probably puns on the word *pais*, triggering the secondary meaning of ‘get rid of one’s childish fear’. Be that as it may, Socrates’ reply is somewhat mysterious:

Πολλὴ μὲν ἡ Ἑλλάς, ἔφη, ὡ Κέβης, ἐν ἡ ἐνεσίου ποι ἁγαθοὶ ἄνδρες, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν βαρβάρων γένη, οὗς πάντας χρῆ διερευνᾶσθαι ζητοῦντα τοιούτον ἐπαρδόν, μήτε χρημάτων φειδομένους μήτε πόνων, ἀλλ’ ἵσως ἐστιν εἰς ὅτι ἐν εὐκαιρότερον ἀνάλυσινοι χρήματα. ζητεῖν δὲ χρῆ καὶ αὐτοὺς μετ’ ἀλλῆλων- ἵσως γὰρ ἂν ὁν ὡς ὀδίδωμεν μᾶλλον ὑμῶν δυναμένους τούτο ποιεῖν.

Hellas, he replied, is a large place, Cebes, and has many good men, and there are barbarous races not a few: seek for him among them all, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of using your money. And you must not forget to seek for him among yourselves too; for nowhere are you more likely to find someone to do it (78a, trans. Jowett).
Socrates’ answer is carefully crafted along the lines of a rhetorical Priamel, which, decoded, reads something like: you can search Greece, you can search far-away countries, you can spend a lot of money on your quest, nevertheless, the best thing you can do is look for the good charmer/singer among yourselves, for only there are you likely to find somebody ‘to do it’, that is, to do the charming; ‘among yourselves’, says Socrates, pointing to his acolytes. Socrates’ main interlocutors in the Phaedo, starting with Phaedo himself and the ‘Theban couple’ Simmias and Cebes, were writers in the genre of Sokratikoi logoi. However, Cebes and Simmias feel lost and have no clue as to where they might find the good charmer: where is he? And, we might add, who is he?

Only in his last days did Socrates become a ‘real’ poet by trying his hand at a hymn to Apollo and at some of Aesop’s fables. His poetic initiation was completed at last, but there was no time left for him to practice the art. As we learn at the beginning of the Phaedo, ‘Plato was ill’ (59c) and so could not visit his dying master. This is the one and only time that the name of Plato appears in the dialogues, and I believe the reason for this is that he is in fact the ‘good charmer’, who, though not physically present at Socrates’ deathbed, was most certainly among his friends. Socrates’ late metamorphosis into a fully-fledged poet merely prefigures the reality of Plato.

If the sort of figural reading I have been advocating makes sense at all, one may attempt a new reading of Socrates’ enigmatic last words as reported in the Phaedo. It is of course a vexed riddle, which has attracted much scholarly attention, as even the present symposium testifies. The problem is generally tackled through a straightforward question: what does Asclepius’ cock stand for? One may perhaps attempt a somewhat more oblique strategy, one that takes into account both the Apollonian beginning and Asclepian ending of the Phaedo. In fact, the shift from Apollo to Asclepius is a wholly traditional move, both from the historical and from the literary point of view. Historically, Asclepius is known to have supplanted Apollo Maleatas as the main healing god through a long and complex process. This explains why hymns and poems addressed to Asclepius had to mention Apollo at the beginning: this much is clear from Isyllus of Epidaurus (C27-30 ‘you cannot ask Asclepius for help … unless you offer first a sacrifice to Apollo’) and, as we now know, from Poseidippus, whose section of Iamatika (95-101 Austin-Bastianini) begins with Apollo in the first epigram and ends with Asclepius in the last one. Thus, I submit that the structure of the Phaedo is governed by the very same cultic structure. In this context, and with an eye to my figural reading, I propose that the superseding of Apollo by Asclepius may point to that of Socrates by Plato. If my hunch is correct, the healing involved in the process may stand for the healing of philosophy. In spite of the impending death of Socrates, philosophy comes to be saved by a new beginning merely hinted at by Socrates and fully developed by Plato, his philosophical ‘son’.

ABSTRACT IN ITALIAN: Gli ultimi giorni di Socrate, nella descrizione del Fedone, sono segnati da un’esperienza straordinaria: in obbedienza a un sogno ricorrente che da sempre gli intima di “fare musica”, Socrate diviene poeta e non solo compone un inno per Apollo, ma riadatta poeticamente una serie di favole esopiche (60e–61b). Lo scopo del mio intervento è in primo luogo quello di mostrare che tale conversione richiama da vicino quella ricordata nell’Apologia, quando l’oracolo di Apollo lo indusse a dedicarsi alla vita della ricerca e della confutazione. In entrambi i casi, con notevoli richiami testuali e con la sorprendente menzione del sofista/poeta Eveno, Socrate riceve da Apollo segni e sogni che decide di mettere alla prova e
infine interpretare. La conversione 'musicale' di Socrate pone al centro la nozione di mito, perché – come è detto con studiata naturalezza – senza mito non si dà poesia. Questa asserzione che fa del mito una *condicio sine qua non* può essere utilmente confrontata con l'inizio della *Poetica* di Aristotele: con parole molto simili, che si avvicinano a una citazione, Aristotele apre l'opera facendo del *mythos* il centro di gravità del fare poetico. La stretta somiglianza fra i due passi induce a credere che Aristotele leggesse nel brano del *Fedone* una sorta di micro-poetica, e dobbiamo credere che in questo fosse bene informato, anche se il suo approccio 'laico' alla poesia è lontanissimo dall'aura religiosa di cui è soffusa la conversione poetica di Socrate. Ma di quale micro-poetica si tratta? Forse una poetica socratica? Difficile crederlo, perché Socrate, come esplicitamente afferma, non è in grado di comporre miti, e in effetti quando nei dialoghi si trova a raccontarne, non ne presenta come l'autore, ma li attribuisce a fonti tradizionali. Oltretutto, Socrate, che non ha mai scritto nulla, non ha ormai tempo per sviluppare a fondo tale svolta poetica. In realtà questa micro-poetica rimanda a Platone: lui si è autore di miti, ed è lui che metterà davvero in atto la rivoluzionaria svolta sollecitata dal sogno apollineo. In questo è importante tenere conto della cornice del dialogo, che si svolge a Fliunte: qui, secondo una tradizione che Platone certo conosceva, Pitagora inventò la parola filosofia, un'attività che per lui e per Socrate rimane confinata all'oralità. Ed è ancora qui che il *Fedone* racconta come Socrate abbia presentito la necessità di un nuovo inizio per la filosofia, che nel segno del mito si fa poesia, composizione. In questa prospettiva si può tentare anche una nuova lettura delle enigmatiche ultime parole di Socrate, con la celebre menzione del gallo dovuto ad Asclepio. L'*incipit* apollineo seguito da un *explicit* nel segno di Asclepio è una movenza tradizionale, che trova riscontro non solo nel culto di Asclepio ma anche nella tradizione poetica: non si può menzionare Asclepio senza prima aver reso omaggio al padre Apollo. Nel quadro di questa struttura tradizionale il debito ad Asclepio segnala, in termini metaforici, il passaggio di consegne dal 'padre' Socrate al 'figlio' Platone, che nel segno della composizione poetica ridà nuova vita alla filosofia. La filosofia si trasforma e non muore con Socrate: per questo dobbiamo un gallo ad Asclepio.
La definición del verdadero filósofo en el *Fedón* o cómo construir una ortodoxia filosófica a partir de una heterodoxia religiosa

Casadesús Bordoy, Francesc

El *Fedón* es el diálogo más innovador y revolucionario de cuantos escribió Platón. Esto se debe al hecho de que el contenido de este diálogo marca una nítida y consciente separación con el pensamiento anterior el cual, con el objetivo de distinguirlo del socrático-platónico, fue calificado justamente por los historiadores de la filosofía como “presocrático”. El *Fedón*, en definitiva, representa una enmienda a la totalidad del pensamiento de los filósofos anteriores, los denominados “physiologoi” por Aristóteles a la vez que supone un giro copernicano en la historia de la filosofía occidental.

El pretexto para acometer esta innovadora empresa es el último día de la vida de Sócrates, realizado dramáticamente por el imprevisto retraso de la nave procedente de Delos. La inminente muerte de Sócrates, será utilizada como pretexto para exponer su creencia en la inmortalidad del alma ante sus atónitos interlocutores. Este es el escenario que Platón quiso y supo aprovechar para dar a conocer abiertamente algo de lo que hasta ese momento muy pocos habían oído hablar: que el alma es, en verdad, inmortal.

En este contexto resulta llamativo que Platón hubiera elegido a tres pitagóricos, Equécrates, Simias y Cebes como principales protagonistas del diálogo. Pero resulta todavía más llamativo que los tres aduzcan ignorancia sobre aspectos esenciales tratados en el diálogo: en el caso de Equécrates, su desconocimiento de las circunstancias en que se produjo la muerte de Sócrates; en el caso de Simias y Cebes su confesión de no saber nada acerca de la postulación de la inmortalidad del alma1. De hecho, la simple elección de Equécrates de Fliunte como primer interlocutor2, tal como ya ha sido señalado por otros estudiosos, pretendía, de entrada, enmarcar el diálogo en un contexto pitagórico3. Además, la insistencia en la utilización, al comienzo del diálogo, del verbo *akouein* no parece casual, sino orientada a destacar también el ambiente del silencio y secretismo que rodeaba al pitagorismo y la importancia que los pitagóricos otorgaban al conocimiento trasmitido por medio de *akousmata*. Así, el pretexto que origina el diálogo es la curiosidad de Equécrates que pregunta a Fedón si estuvo presente en la muerte de Sócrates o si lo que sucedió ese día en la prisión lo escuchó de otro. El motivo de tal interés es que Equécrates,

1 La relación entre Simias y Sócrates era estrecha, pues en el *Critón* 45b se les presenta como poseedores de una cantidad de dinero suficiente para liberarlo. Esta cercanía, resalta algo importante en la estrategia expositiva del *Fedón*: que Simias y Cebes tampoco habían oído nada acerca de la inmortalidad del alma del propio Sócrates, hecho que realza todavía más la declaración de Sócrates en su último día de vida de que el alma es inmortal.

2 Mencionado como un pitagórico de Fliunte por Jámblico, VP 36, 267. Cf. VP 35, 251; DL 8.46.

3 “By setting the dialogue in Phlius, a pythagorean enclave, which Eccheocrates is said to have founded, Plato casts the entire retelling of the dialogue in a Pythagorean context”, A.-M. Bowary, “Plato’s Theory of Forms: Recollecting and Recovering the Soul” en W. A. Welton *Plato’s Forms. Varieties of Interpretation*, 2002, p. 122.
dado que no llegaron noticias a Fliunte sobre ese acontecimiento, siente el deseo de escuchar directamente de Fedón qué dijo Sócrates en ese momento crucial y cómo fueron las circunstancias que rodearon su muerte (57a). En este preámbulo introductorio el verbo “escuchar” se repite en diversas ocasiones (58d). Si bien es cierto que este interés de Equécrates por conocer los detalles de la muerte de Sócrates podría explicarse por la estrategia expositiva de Platón que habría pretendido avivar en los lectores la misma curiosidad que Equécrates, llama la atención que el mismo procedimiento se repita a continuación con los dos principales interlocutores del diálogo, Simias y Cebes.

La excusa para justificarlo es, en efecto, el desconcierto que expresa Cebes ante la afirmación que acaba de formular Sócrates de que “no es lícito (τὸ μὴ θεμιτὸν) hacerse violencia a sí mismo” para cometer suicidio. Es entonces cuando Sócrates, a su vez, pregunta sorprendido a Cebes:

¿Cómo Cebes?, ¿No habéis oído tú y Simias hablar de tales temas, habiendo estando en compañía de Filolao?

Cebes se ve obligado a reconocer que no ha oído nada claro (οὐδέν γε σαφές).

A esta declaración de ignorancia responde de nuevo Sócrates:

Claro que yo hablo también de oídas sobre estas cosas ( ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἐγὼ ἐξ ἀκοῆς περὶ αὐτῶν λέγω). Pero lo que he oído no tengo ningún reparo en decirlo, ἃ μὲν οὖν τυγχάνω ἀκηκοὼς φθόνος οὐδεὶς λέγειν (61d).

La confesión de no haber oído nada claro del pitagórico Filolao sobre el asunto del suicidio, a pesar de que Simias y Cebes habrían sido sus discípulos, incrementa la sensación de desconocimiento transmitida anteriormente por Equécrates, circunstancia que, en nuestra opinión, habría tenido la intención de resaltar la dificultad en acceder a las secretas, y por ello muy poco divulgadas, enseñanzas de los pitagóricos. Por este motivo resulta sorprendente y paradójico que sean precisamente dos pitagóricos quienes afirmen no saber nada sobre esta cuestión. En estas circunstancias, la respuesta de Sócrates resulta especialmente significativa: a pesar de que reconoció hablar de oídas, no tuvo ningún reparo, φθόνος οὐδεὶς, en decir lo que sabía. Una manera muy sutil de sugerir que Sócrates estaba a punto de romper el silencio sobre cuestiones supuestamente relacionadas con el pitagorismo y desvelar algunos de los arcanos secretos de esa escuela. Así pues, Platón, con el objetivo de atraer la atención del lector, forzó la notable paradoja de que Sócrates se disponía a desvelar elementos esenciales de la doctrina órfico-pitagórica desconocidos incluso para sus dos interlocutores que debieran estar familiarizados con ellos.

De hecho, Sócrates, para aclarar la cuestión de si es lícito cometer suicidio, apela a un discurso que se dice en secreto en las iniciaciones ἐν ἀπορρήτοις λεγόμενος περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, y que sostiene que los hombres nos encontramos en una prisión por lo que no pueden escapar de ella (62b). La mención a esas enseñanzas secretas contenidas en un discurso sagrado, ἐν ἀπορρήτοις, de fuerte sabor órfico, aunque con algunas significativas modificaciones, pretende intensificar aún más...
la impresión de que Sócrates estaba abriendo de par en par las puertas de acceso a la desconocida doctrina órfico-pitagórica. En este contexto, resulta muy relevante en la estrategia expositiva de Sócrates que justifique la imposibilidad de cometer suicidio porque esa misma doctrina sostiene que “los dioses son los que se cuidan de nosotros y que nosotros, los hombres, somos una posesión de los dioses” (62b).

A partir de ese momento, Sócrates orienta su argumentación a demostrar que el alma es, en efecto, inmortal y a remarcar la decisiva intervención y supervisión de la divinidad en todo el proceso. Justificaba así la tranquila actitud frente a su muerte inminente al afianzar su esperanza de que tras ella a su alma, una vez liberada del ciclo de las reencarnaciones, le aguardaba convivir eternamente con los dioses.

Que esta creencia de Sócrates resultaba innovadora a sus oyentes, lo confirma Cebes al manifestar su desconfianza y sostener que estas afirmaciones generarían rechazo entre el común de la gente, mucho más proclive a seguir la creencia arcaica de que el alma, al morir, sale del cuerpo como un aire o humo, para disgregarse y no volver a existir nunca más. Para Cebes, creer en la inmortalidad del alma requiere mucha fe, pístis. Ante esta desconfianza, Sócrates apela de nuevo a la existencia de un antiguo relato, un παλαιὸς λόγος, en una nueva y velada alusión a la doctrina órfico-pitagórica, que alude a la transmigración de las almas (70c).

De este modo, se confrontaban dos concepciones del alma radicalmente opuestas. De un lado, la tradicional, popular y mayoritaria; de otro, la desconocida y novedosa que, hasta que Sócrates decidió darla a conocer, circulaba envuelta de silencioso secreto en los cerrados círculos órfico-pitagóricos. De hecho, Sócrates habría sido el primer divulgador de la noción de la inmortalidad del alma en occidente. Sócrates optó así por defender una concepción del alma alternativa a la más extendida y comúnmente aceptada y respaldada por la religión olímpica. Al actuar de esta manera, introdujo un pensamiento de procedencia religiosa que, además, puede ser calificado de “heterodoxo” con la intención de sustentar y fortalecer sobre él sus novedosas ideas filosóficas. Por este motivo, la actitud de Sócrates, alejada de la creencia imperante y mayoritaria, resultaba muy provocadora, sobre todo al provenir de alguien que precisamente fue condenado a muerte por impiedad, asebeia, bajo la acusación de haber introducido nuevas divinidades.

En este contexto, resulta muy significativo que Sócrates, justo antes de comenzar a exponer sus ideas, afirmó que se disponía a aprovechar la oportunidad que le ofrecían Simias y Cebes para tratar de defenderse y hacer su propia apología ante ellos, de manera más persuasiva que ante los jueces que lo habían condenado (63b). Una manera muy sutil de advertir que se reafirmaba en sus revolucionarias creencias y que confiaba que sus interlocutores, dada su formación pitagórica, iban a ser mucho más comprensivos con ellas que quienes le habían juzgado.

Que esta era su intención lo confirma el propio Sócrates al recurrir de nuevo a la doctrina órfica para conceder que quienes instituyeron las iniciaciones, τὰς τελετὰς οὗτοι καταστήσαντες, no eran unos cualquiera, sino que expresaban de antiguo de manera oscura que quien llega al Hades impuro y no iniciado, ἀμύητος καὶ ἀτέλεστος, yacerá en el fango, pero que quien llega purificado e iniciado, κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος, habitará en compañía de los dioses7.

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6 Expresión con la que Platón suele aludir a la doctrina órfica. En 70c se alude de nuevo a un antiguo relato como fundamento de la creencia en la palingénesis, que las almas de los que han muerto perviven en el Hades y regresan de nuevo a la vida.

7 Cf. Pl. R. 363d.
Para mostrar su simpatía por estos individuos, de indudable adscripción órfica, Sócrates no duda en reconocer que estos son los que han filosofado correctamente, οἱ πεφιλοσοφήκτες ὀρθῶς. Para que no hubiera ninguna duda de cuál eran su intención, Sócrates añade a continuación que no había descuidado en su vida estos preceptos y que él mismo "se había esforzado, por todos los medios, por llegar a ser uno de ellos" (69c-d). Para ratificarlo, ante su muerte inminente, Sócrates reconoce que pronto iba a saber con claridad, saphes, si se había esforzado correctamente, ὀρθῶς, en seguir sus preceptos.

A pesar de que pueda intuirse una cierta ironía en estas declaraciones, no es menos cierto que sobre ellas Sócrates construirá su nueva filosofía. Una filosofía que, como se deduce del pasaje que acabamos de comentar, es el resultado de una sutil transformación de nociones de fuerte sabor órfico, en la correcta, ὀρθῶς, filosofía que él, además, declaraba haber seguido también correctamente, ὀρθῶς. De este modo, la repetición del adverbio ὀρθῶς subraya las líneas maestras de la nueva orientación que Sócrates iba a impulsar en la filosofía y que Sócrates sintió la necesidad de dejar clara en los instantes previos a su muerte⁸.

En efecto, en esto consistió la revolución socrática, en postular la noción de inmortalidad del alma, de procedencia órfico-pitagórica para introducir una nueva concepción de la filosofía que él consideraba genuina, correcta y verdadera, sobre todo a la hora de encarar la muerte con la esperanza de que al alma le aguarda, en el Más Allá, un futuro mejor, en compañía de los dioses. Así lo expresa con claridad Sócrates en un momento clave de su argumentación, cuando con tozuda insistencia Cebes y Simias vuelven a dudar y plantean por segunda vez la posibilidad de que, al morir, el alma se disuelva y quede destruida “como piensa la mayoría de gente”, οἱ πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι.

Ante esta nueva muestra de desconfianza, Sócrates vuelve a replicar que el alma que ha filosofado correctamente, ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦσα, es la que, libre de la contaminación del cuerpo, después de haber dedicado toda su vida purificarse de él y a estar concentrada en sí misma, se ejercita toda su vida para encarar la muerte, μελέτη θανάτου. Y otra vez, Sócrates, con machacona insistencia, vuelve a vincular este correcto modo de filosofar con lo que se dice en los círculos iniciáticos, muy probablemente órficos, ὥσπερ δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τῶν μεμυημένων, que creen que las almas puras, alejadas de los males humanos, vivirán felices al pasar de verdad el resto del tiempo en compañía de los dioses. De este modo, Sócrates aclara en qué consistía su dedicación a seguir los preceptos de quienes “han filosofado correctamente” (69d). Tal insistencia en repetir las mismas ideas al inicio de diálogo, relacionándolas con nociones procedentes de la doctrina órfico-pitagórica e identificarlas con la “correcta filosofía” pone de manifiesto que Sócrates estaba procediendo a dar un “giro copernicano” en el pensamiento filosófico que iba a determinar el posterior desarrollo de la historia de la filosofía.

De hecho, Sócrates, antes de desvelar su procedencia mistérica, advierte que un hombre que, como él, ha dedicado toda su vida a la verdadera filosofía, ἀνὴρ τῷ ὄντι ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διατρίψας τὸν βίον, tiene la bien fundamentada esperanza de que, ⁸ Dieterich (1893, p. 281 n. 2) supuso que ὀρθῶς se trataba de un término órfico a partir de la utilización burlesca de este adverbio por parte de Aristófanes en Aves 690 y 692 y Nubes 250. Sin embargo, a pesar de estos paralelismos creemos como Pardini (L’Ornitogonia (Ar. Av. 693 sgg.) tra serio e faceto: Premessa letteraria al suo studio storico-religioso. In: MASARACCHIA, A. (ed.). Orfeo e l’orfismo. Roma, Agostino 1993, p. 62) que “l’attribuzione di ὀρθῶς al vocabolario orfico è inconsistente”, y, sobre todo en el caso de las Nubes, podría tratarse de una parodia del uso abusivo de este adverbio por parte del propio Sócrates.
una vez muera, va a obtener los mayores bienes. A continuación añade que esa es la principal preocupación de quienes se dedican correctamente a la filosofía, los que aspiran a morir y estar muertos. Esta afirmación merece un comentario irónico de Simias al señalar que, de tanto oír decir esas cosas sobre la muerte, la mayoría de gente cree que los filósofos están en trance de morir, aunque desconocen “en qué, quienes son verdaderamente filósofos, oí con otros docéntico filósofo, están moribundos y en qué sentido son dignos de muerte y de qué tipo de muerte”. Este preámbulo, tiene la función de dejar bien claro que la melécteta que es la principal dedicación del filósofo, lo que necesariamente implica la creencia en la inmortalidad del alma, la existencia de un Más Allá tras la muerte, y la necesidad de adoptar una vida filosófica, cuidando el alma al margen de la tiranía del cuerpo. En efecto, Sócrates reafirma que quien es en verdad filósofo, al filósofo, (64d2) desprecia al cuerpo, se aparta de él y se vuelve hacia el alma, prós de la vue...
de búsqueda del saber por medio de la concentración del alma en sí misma, con el objetivo de alcanzar el saber puro, καθαρῶς, en el Más Allá. De hecho, la actitud ante la muerte mostrará quién es filósofo y quién amigo del cuerpo, de la riqueza y de los honores, ὅτι οὐκ ἄρ› ἦν φιλόσοφος ἀλλὰ τις φιλοσώματος; ὁ αὐτὸς δὲ που οὕτως τυγχάνει ἄν καὶ φιλοχρήματος καὶ φιλότιμος (68c9. Con esta separación radical de intereses, Sócrates transformó el ideal de pureza propio de las doctrinas mistéricas en el objetivo del verdadero filósofo, tal como él mismo expresa al sostener que el purificado e iniciado, κεκαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος es el único que puede conseguir convivir con los dioses y alcanzar en el Hades, una vez separada el alma del cuerpo, el verdadero y puro saber.

Para garantizar la veracidad del proceso, Sócrates necesitaba demostrar que el alma es algo sólido y consistente y no, como por tercera vez repite Sócrates para realzar su posición, lo que creían Simias y Cebes que, como niños atemorizados, creían que el alma, al salir del cuerpo, era disuelta y dispersada por el viento (78d). Por este motivo, para dar consistencia filosófica a la argumentación que partía de presupuestos doctrinales órfico-pitagóricos que exigían fe, pistis, en ellos, Sócrates dedicó una gran parte de su discurso a las diversas y prolijas demostraciones de la inmortalidad del alma que, por motivos de tiempo, no podemos analizar ahora. En cualquier caso, en el contexto de la argumentación del Fedón, el objetivo de esas demostraciones era afianzar, mediante la lógica del razonamiento dialéctico, la noción de inmortalidad del alma que había sido originariamente introducida por la doctrina órfico-pitagónica. De este modo, una idea que procedía de un ambiente secreto, minoritario y heterodoxo, acabó divulgándose y transformándose en la “verdadera y correcta filosofía”, en la ortodoxa piedra angular del platonismo, sobre la que se basan sus fundamentos epistemológicos, éticos y políticos.

Que esta era su intención, el propio Sócrates se encarga de confirmarlo de manera tajante en el Fedón al criticar a Anaxágoras por haber postulado como principio un Nous mecánico sin ningún tipo de relación con una inteligencia divina que organic e rija el cosmos. El sentido de esa crítica radical debe enmarcarse en el contexto de la voluntad de imponer la ortodoxia filosófica socrático-platónica sobre el pensamiento anterior. En efecto, insatisfecho por la decepcionante propuesta de Anaxágoras y, en general, por la de otros filósofos presocráticos, Sócrates los rechaza por no haber postulado que el arche que gobierna el cosmos tuviera una fuerza divina, ταύτην οὔτε ζητοῦσιν οὔτε τινὰ οἴονται δαιμονίαν ἰσχύν ἔχειν (99c).

Ante esta constatación, Sócrates, una vez refutado el principio de Anaxágoras, anuncia ante sus sorprendidos interlocutores, Simias y Cebes, que se dispone a explicar la verdadera causa mediante lo que, utilizando una metáfora marinera, denomina “segunda navegación”. Y esa segunda singladura consiste en la postulación del mundo supra sensible de las formas, de la belleza en sí, que es la verdadera causa, por participación, de que todas las cosas bellas sean bellas. El eje central sobre el que gira el fundamento epistemológico de la demostración del mundo divino de las formas es precisamente que el alma es inmortal, ἀθάνατον [ἡ] ψυχή (100b).

Sócrates, llegado este punto se dirige a Simias y Cebes para decirles que si en realidad pertenecen al grupo de los filósofos, deben aceptar que esto es así, afirmación ante la que ambos asienten. Asentimiento que Platón aprovecha para hacer intervenir nuevamente a Equécrates que reconoce a su informante Fedón que Sócrates “lo expuso todo claramente, incluso para quien tuviera escaso entendimiento”, ἐναργῶς τῷ καὶ σμικρὸν νοῦν ἔχοντι εἰπεῖν ἐκείνην ἐκείνος ταύτα (102a).

Con este reconocimiento de los tres pitagóricos, que al inicio del diálogo habían mostrado su ignorancia, dudas y prevenciones, Sócrates adquiere la categoría de iniciador y divulgador de unos conocimientos que parecían vetados a la gran mayoría de los hombres incluidos, sorprendentemente los tres pitagóricos.
La aceptación de Equécrates de que Sócrates los ha expuesto claramente incluso para alguien que posea escaso entendimiento, certifica la validez y veracidad de su argumentación que, gracias a ello, consolida su condición de correcta y verdadera filosofía.

Conseguido su objetivo, Sócrates acometerá la última fase de su exposición y, una vez establecido el principio gnoseológico, recurrirá al argumento de la inmortalidad del alma para fundamentar los principios éticos que se derivan de ella. Para dejarlo claro, Sócrates al final del diálogo, vuelve a oponer la inmortalidad del alma a la anterior concepción para extraer, en este caso, las consecuencias éticas que se derivan de cada una de ellas. Así Sócrates sostiene que si, como la mayoría cree y ha quedado suficientemente refutado, “la muerte fuera la disolución de todo, sería para los malos una suerte verse libres del cuerpo y de su maldad a la par que del alma. Ahora, en cambio, al mostrarse que el alma es inmortal, ella no tendrá ningún otro escape de sus vicios ni otra salvación más que el hacerse mucho mejor y más sensata. Porque el alma se encamina al Hades sin llevar consigo nada más que su educación y crianza, lo que en verdad se dice que beneficia o perjudica al máximo a quien acaba de morir y comienza su viaje hacia allí” (107c-d). En definitiva, el alma que ha pasado la vida pura y moderadamente, tras encontrar allí a dioses como compañeros de viaje y guías, habita el lugar que a ella, en tanto que inmortal, le corresponde y se merece (108c).

De este modo concluye la reelaboración socrática de los principios surgidos de los presupuestos doctrinales órfico-pitagóricos que, al inicio del diálogo, se presentan como desconocidos incluso para sus interlocutores, reconocidos seguidores de la escuela pitagórica. Así, a partir de una creencia religiosa alternativa y minoritaria, y que por ello puede ser calificada de heterodoxa, Sócrates se embarcó en lo que en la fundamentación de lo que él mismo denomina “correcta” y ortodoxa filosofía, resultado de la elaborada transformación de esos principios en presupuestos epistemológicos y éticos que acabaron conformando los fundamentos básicos sobre los que se sustentó la filosofía socrático-platónica. Para ello, y esta es la enseñanza que consideramos más importante de la lectura del Fedón, Sócrates, horas antes de morir, decidió romper el silencio y secretismo que envolvía la doctrina órfico-pitagórica ante unos interlocutores ávidos de escuchar de él sus ocultos entresijos. Sócrates, supo aprovechar la tensión del momento para dar a conocer cuál era su verdadera y correcta filosofía justo antes de tomar, con la beatífica tranquilidad del iniciado, la cicuta que devolvería su alma a su lugar de procedencia: la convivencia definitiva y eterna con los dioses.

The definition of the true philosopher in the Phaedo or how to build a philosophical orthodoxy from a religious heterodoxy

In the Phaedo, attention should be drawn to the fact that Socrates is presented as a representative of a “new” philosophy, which he does not hesitate to describe using numerous adverbs, such as orthos, “correct”, alethos, “true”, and gnesios, “genuine”.

However, the most surprising fact is that Socrates, pretending to be an expert in front of his interlocutors, Simmias and Cebes, builds these “new” principles on religious beliefs, which were not known nor widely spread at that time.

The perplexity in this case increases because both characters, Simmias and Cebes, don’t know anything about this belief, although they admit at the beginning of the dialogue to have lived with Philolaus, a pythagorean who would be familiar
with these ideas as it can be read in some fragments.

In this context, it cannot be seen as a coincidence that the dialogue in which the totality of the previous thought, known as “presocratic”, is thoroughly and precisely discussed is precisely the Phaedo. Is the case of the critic to the thought of Anaxagoras, which is criticized by its mechanical physics and the absence of a theological and teleological principle that rules and governs the cosmos.

The fact that Socrates recognizes that this disappointment lead him to initiate a “second navigation” which took him to postulate the existence of a suprasensible world in which the divine and eternal Ideas and Forms are to be found must be seen as a declaration of principles.

It can be affirmed that the statement about the immortality of the soul, which is found in the Phaedo, within the context of Socrates dead, implies the divulgation of an idea that until then was only spread in the minority and secret circles, known as “Orphic-Pythagorean”. Hence, the Phaedo offers a priceless testimony of the effort and difficulties that introducing this notion in Greece implied. In fact, if analyzed in detail, it can be observed that in the Phaedo the process of constructing this new notion of soul has three different phases:

1) Overcoming the archaic thought that when dying, the soul had no consistency and was locked up in Hades, which was mostly transmitted through Homeric poems.
2) Describing the immortality of the soul based on principles that can be identified with the orphic-pythagorean belief in the transmigration of the souls.
3) Logic and argumentative demonstration of the fact that the soul is immortal. In this way, the Phaedo offers an example of how to reconstruct a new and “correct” philosophy based on a doctrinal principle that arises from a mystery and closed circle and alternative to the official religion. Paradoxically, an heterodox religion ended up forming a philosophical orthodoxy which would definitely determine the future of the occidental thought.
Phaedo - dramatic structure and philosophical content

Casertano, Giovanni

In memoriam: Mario Mastropaolo

It is likely for the soul to be immortal; ideas very likely exist, whatever the implications; what is sure is that philosophy is about the quality of our life

a suggestion by Christopher Rowe

Many a scholar has underlined the dramatic structure of Plato's dialogues. Each one of them might be seen as a play staging his "philosophy", where the characters go through the process of "building up", or "making" philosophy while taking part in the plot. Characters are fully-faceted. Every aspect contributing to their attitude towards philosophy is portrayed – their nature, opinions, fears, hopes. The dialogue practice is a choral action - that's one of the most important aspects of Plato's way of understanding philosophy. Though in each play characters perform a dialogue on stage, the dramatic feature is in some dialogues obviously stronger than in others, depending on the way actors interact, the skillfull use of pauses and intermissions and of the succession of short/longer storytelling with very quick turn-taking, not to mention one of the other significant traits of Plato's dramatic writing (and, in my opinion, one of the crucial features shaping his philosophy) - the regular use of metaphors, images, analogies and asides which may, at first, not seem important but then turn out being functional to his argument; they are actually essential to achieve the most important aim of his philosophical theater, winning the public/reader over a new way of understanding life, the meaning of life and the sense of man's actions in the world.

Now Phaedo is one of Plato's most dramatic dialogues. I believe Christopher Rowe is one of the scholars who better understood the peculiarity of this dialogue. While it is commonly believed that Phaedo is a dialogue with a huge literary and dramatic value but a mediocre one and full of mistakes, Rowe rightly commented one ought to consider the arguments in their context and think of them as features of a dramatic action, in order to understand it. The inadequacies in the argumentations are actually a fundamental driving force here. Let's consider for instance the affinity argument: Plato is aware of its weakness, as pointed out by Simmias and Cebes (80b), but what counts is what it tells us on philosophical argumentation in broad terms, namely that it is a quest for truth. The whole dialogue should thus be seen «comme représentation dramatique de l'activité philosophique, où les trois acteurs se livrent à un ballet de λόγος, selon une chorégraphie délicate et complexe». The stated topic is death, «but what is stressed is in fact the question of the conduct of life… immortality is always considered in relation to the issue of the best possible human life».

I have tried to translate the dialogue "in scenes" in my last book on Phaedo, dividing it into three acts and eighteen scenes that ought to convey the idea of the

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2 Ibid, p. 290.

“dramatical representation” and the “delicate and complex coreography” mentioned by Rowe. Here I am hoping to give some substantial instances of the specificity and brilliance of Plato's writing and style displayed in this particular dialogue.

I will start from Scene V of Act I. Cebes opens the scene with his comment on what Socrates had said until then – it was nice talking (69e6: καλῶς), but it does not free one from the great disbelief (70a1: πολλὴν ἀπιστίαν), i. e. from fearing that, when the soul leaves the body, it scatters like “breath or smoke” and is no longer anywhere. What is this nice talking Cebes is talking about? As Phaedo reports, Socrates opened his first argument referring to an image and a dream, and ended it by expressing his hope. As soon as he was freed from his chains he had come up with the image of two opposites - pleasure and pain, two creatures with one head (60b-c). Now this image is not accidentally brought about here, since it skillfully refers to the very discussion that will be started in Scene V about the generation out of opposites.

The dream Socrates is referring to is one he had been repeatedly having his whole life, exhorting him to make music (60e-61b); while at first Socrates had understood his dream metaphorically – he thought he had been composing music all the time, since philosophy is «the noblest form of music» (61a3-4), he then suspected the dream had to be taken literally; he therefore turned some tales by Aesop into verse and wrote a hymn to Apollo, composing mythes instead of arguments (61b5: μύθους ἀλλ' οὐ λόγους). Finally his hope, or rather his “good hope” (cfr. 67c1: ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος), is to go to Hades and eventually find there what he had been pursuing all his life in vain, real wisdom (68a).

I believe that here, in the first lines of the dialogue filling the first four scenes, Plato masterfully sets the whole context in which the entire dramatic action will take place. It is one where mythes and arguments, convictions and hopes coexist, in a dialogue full of images, metaphors, analogies, all blended in Plato’s unique “style”. Let me just mention a few instances: the image of virtue, nothing but a “painting of shadows” (σκιαγραφία) if separated from wisdom (69b), the metaphors of philosophy as music (60e), of the watchtower (62b), of the philosopher whose only desire is to die (64a), of releasing the soul from the body if one wishes to “chase” what is – i.e. the truth (65a-66a), the only right currency against which one should exchange pleasures and pain (69a-b). And the metaphor of the “purification” operated by philosophy, which is nothing but the practice of temperance, courage and wisdom (67c-69c). Philosophic reason, though, must perform a continuous monitoring activity on myths and mysteries, and that’s why images and metaphors are mixed up with significant reservations of the reason; like the one in 63c, stating one cannot positively assert our soul will go to good men after dying. Such reservations will come up again and again until the very last scene of the dialogue, in relation to myths and mysteries as well as to the very philosophical reasoning and to the actual “demonstrations”. Finally, Plato makes full use of proverbs and proverbial sayings too. They are often taken from the mystery tradition but are then given a broader ethical sense or recommended as the correct attitude in pursuing truth, see for instance «it is not permitted to take one's own life» (61c), «the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the Bacchuses few» (69d) and «it cannot be that the impure attain the pure» (67b).

While all this has been, as we have seen, nice talking, now Cebes needs some “help to believe” (70b2-3) that when a man is dead the soul still exists and keeps his φρόνεσις. Only if the soul of a dead man existed anywhere by itself, «there would be good reason for the blessed hope, Socrates, that what you say is true» (70a-7b2). This inverted relationship between hope and truth is a characteristic one. In fact, if what Socrates is saying is true – the statement implying a rational and logical analysis of what has been said – the hope our soul survives the death of our body would
be plausible. But Cebes is saying exactly the opposite: if our soul existed after the death of our body, then what Socrates is saying would be true. We will see Socrates makes use of this reversal again at the very beginning of his next argument. Here, though, I would like to point out that Socrates’ new argumentation at the opening of Scene V, the so-called argument of the opposites - by many a scholar rightly judged as extremely weak -, is reported by Plato himself in an explicitly stated mythical context; the very outcome of the argumentation is declared as simply “probable”. Indeed, as Cebes expresses his doubts, Socrates answers: «What you say, Cebes, is true. Now what shall we do? Do you wish to keep on telling myths (διαμυθολογώμεν) about this to see whether it is probable or not?» (70b5-7). He opens his argument referring to the myth, that “old tale”, according to which the souls coming from our world and returning to it, those born again from the dead, are in Hades -where else could they exist if not there? For they could not be here had they not been born again, and this would be a sufficient proof that they exist (70c-d). By making use of Cebes’ reversal, Socrates explicitly chooses myth as his starting point. Myth becomes thus on one hand the prerequisite of his argument intended to “prove” the truth of everything that has been said until now; on the other hand, though, it is the conclusion of the “logical” reasoning about the generation from opposites. That is to say, one gives what should have been proved as understood.

Here I won’t recall the development of this scene, since it is a well known one. This is a typically dramatic scene, underlined by Cebes’ brief lines, that go from a compliant approval of Socrates’ words (70d-71d), through the expression of a doubtful consent with reservations – on the very crucial points of Socrates’ reasoning, the suggestion that things that are “alive” generate from “dead things”, and that our souls are in Hades (71e) – to the eventual statement that “things are this way” indeed (72a9-10) and that the “absolute truth” of what has been said is by now obvious (72d4-5). We should think of this scene as played very quickly, Socrates’ lines and reasonings told in a fast sequence and disseminated with Cebes’ at first doubtful, then passionate approvals. Its rhythm lets the listener, the audience or the reader overlook the many logical inconsistencies of the argumentation. The lines play in turn a dance of words, where the two terms, the protagonists of this ballet, exchange roles and positions, mix up meanings, overlap senses. It is the dance of death and life. On the background a tangible reality which never comes to the stage, a real, solid reality that anyone can experience: the dead man. Such reality seems totally unrelated to the dance of his body and especially to the one of his soul. So those who are alive are born from those who are dead. But who are the living and who are the dead? The living cannot be men, who are indeed dead. The dead cannot be the souls of dead men, since those souls are in Hades, and are thus assumed to be alive. As a result, the one being generated again cannot be the real man, who is indeed dead and is not reborn. It should be his soul. His soul, though, cannot be reborn since it never died, and keeps travelling from Hades to earth and back. The dance ends on the same theme it opened with: the souls of the dead are in the underworld. This was precisely the explicitly mythical prerequisite we started from, which is now stated as if it was the necessary conclusion of the whole argumentation.

Here is a kind of ouverture, a foretaste of that very particular style distinguishing all further evidences that will be given in the course of the day. Each outcome attained in this scenically effective but theoretically deficient way will be continuously questioned again and again. This is true of the outcome attained here, the existence of the soul after man’s death; as we see in scene X, the last one of Act I, Cebes considers the evidence as lacking, or rather just partially demonstrated: «The argument seems to me to be just where it was (86e6-7: ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ὀ λόγος εἶναι)…: it has been very nicely (87a3: χαριέντως) shown that the soul existed
before it entered into its present form; but it does not seem to me proved that it will
still exist somewhere when we are dead ». Cebes's comment is invalidating all the
previous arguments; on the other hand it is somewhat ambiguous, or if you like, its
meaning is a much more destructive one than it seems at first; it turns into one of
those implicit platonic invitations to the audience/reader to take active part in the
development of thought brought to the scene by the play's characters. Let's see why.
The demonstration is only half convincing, says Cebes: if souls exist before their
incarnation in the bodies but then perish after a given amount of reincarnations
(this is what Cebes is objecting when he makes use of the image of the weaver in
87a-b), we should think there is an infinite number of souls existing in Hades that,
by incarnating in a certain amount of bodies, do not return to Hades anymore. This
in turn invalidates one more assumption that seemed conclusive; the principle by
which processes of continuous generation from opposites exist and do not just relate
to man's life and death but are rather a general law of becoming (70d-e).

Last scenes of Act I and the first two of Act II, (pages 77d-95a), provide an
instance of Plato's skillful direction. One amazingly combining images, myths and
reasonings together in order to outline a typical philosophical conduct of life. The
background is always one of likelyhood rather than certainty, since the only thing
sure is one has to live rightly and in the pursuit of truth – all stories told and special
theatre effects just have this one aim. Socrates' argument on reminiscence has just
come to its end here; here too, while describing the complex relationship between
sensations and the apriority of the idea, he has put together the illustrative side
highlighting the epistemological and gnoseological value of the theory, with the
mythical one stating the pre existence, i.e. the possible surviving, of the soul to the
body. Nonetheless is he aware of the fact that his argumentation still seems deficient
and that one should investigate the subject more deeply, since this reasoning is not
sufficient to exorcise the childlike fear of the soul's complete dissolving at the body's
death. Cebes smiles and confirms, by bringing up the image of the child who in
08 each of us and fears exactly that. These three features – Socrates' argument, the
scene caption on Cebes's smile, the image of the child – highlight a deep belief, one
Plato is borrowing and adjusting from two of his most declared enemies, Protagoras
and Gorgias: reasoning alone is not enough to start that complex process known
as “persuasion". Persuasion does not automatically proceed from rational evidence.
Emotional aspects reason cannot understand are rather involved. This is why, when
presented with the hobgoblin (μορμολύκειον), the fear of death, Socrates states that
you cannot reason with that child, you need to charm him (ἐπ ᾴ δειν) every day until
he is completely won (77e9-10). He adds that the one doing it doesn't need to be
a Socrates, every good man can do it, and ἀγαθοὶ ἄνδρες (78a4) are surely to be
found amongst Greeks and barbarian alike. Though each man is the best charmer
of himself.

Exactly because it has to "charm", to persuade, the dialogue between Socrates
and Cebes in Scene VII (77d5-82d8) includes and combines once again rational
argumentations and myths deriving from the initiation tradition or invented by
Plato himself; in the same argument the rational argumentation about the soul
resembling what is simple, and cannot be decomposed, and the body resembling
what is complex, which can indeed be decomposed, is posed together with the
myths on souls reincarnating in animal forms or going to the gods if they did not act
against philosophy and found their freedom and purification through philosophy.
I will not go through the whole scene but rather just stress some features of Plato's
approach, suggesting his awareness of the fact that the argument needs to charm
rather than rationally demonstrate. The first feature I'll consider is the argument's
particular flair, one of possibility and likelihood rather than truth or certainty, as
proven by the presence of two asides, which might sound odd at first but are exactly the sign of such an awareness.

Likelihood, εἰκός, is present from the start. It is introduced by Socrates himself in the very argument about what is simple and what complex (78c7). It then floods in both Socrates's and Cebes's lines at the end of the scene, where the argument has already turned to pure myth (80e2; 81d5, d6, e3; 82a3, b5, b9). A given ambiguity is then present in the discussion about what is simple and what complex: at the point in which such argumentation is connected to visibility and invisibility – i.e. when it serves to predicate the soul being indestructible, -, the soul is said to resemble the invisible and the body the visible. Such “resembling” is constantly expressed through a comparative: «the soul is more like the invisible than the body is, and the body more like the visible » (see 79b16: ὁμοιότερον, but also 79e1-2, e5; 80b3, b5). From a purely logical point of view such comparative is a puzzling one; in fact, it not only states a relative resemblance instead of an identity, it also necessarily implies a degree of visibility and invisibility pertaining both to the soul and the body. Indeed many scholars agree that this whole argument, known as the argument of “affinity”, is a puzzling one.

Let me stress at this point the asides in 80b11e 80d2-3, which are quite odd. The whole reasoning aims to assert the mortality of the body and immortality of the soul, and this is why the resemblance has been asserted here too. Now «since this is the case», states Socrates, i.e. as agreed on from what we have said until now, « is it not natural for the body to meet with speedy dissolution and for the soul, on the contrary, to be entirely indissoluble, ἤ ἐγγύς, or nearly so» (80b9-11). So the soul is nearly indissoluble; soon after, though, the body is also said to be nearly indissoluble, at least some of its parts like bones and nerves: they «are, so to speak (80d2-3: ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν), immortal (ἀθάνατα)». Indeed, such oddity also contributes to making the dialogue practice a pedagogical tool: through the dialectics of question and answer the audience or reader is being trained to the very essence of thinking as understood by Plato, caught in a process which is not purely reflecting the logics of a doctrinal systematic treatise but rather the lively developing of a dialogue. There's more to it though. A two-folded significance, ethic and gnoseological, pervades the whole scene. On one hand it calls for that μελήτη τανάθου (81a2) denoting the purifying action of philosophy in light of a life not subject to passions which may trouble the soul. Next scene also confirms such action by a most beautiful image: philosophy turns into a dialogue “character” itself, “taking” the soul while it is completely bond to the body and wrapped in absolute ignorance and “softly” encouraging it to set itself free of those restraining bonds (82e-83a). Note that it is not the body in itself that deceives, it is rather the soul deceiving itself when being absolutely subject to the body and not being able to make use of it “except in so far as its use is necessary” (83a6). Meaning it is necessary to make use of the senses and to start from them, whereas sensations may deceive only if one uses them as the starting point to learn the intelligible. This can only be attained by making use of thought, i.e. of the soul alone. This is where the ethical significance mingles with the gnoseological one since, as overtly stated (79c-e), the soul's “resemblance” with ideas explains the point by which only by investigating on its own is the soul able to attain knowledge, to satisfy its need of pursuing truth, something which is intellectual rather then sensible.

The whole performance reaches one of its most dramatical points between Scene IX of Act I and Scene I of Act II, where Socrates and Simmias exchange roles, as it was, outlining a hope and a plan that provide a very high level of dramatical effectiveness. Imagine, at the beginning of Scene IX, the stage lights going off and leaving just two spots faintly illuminated. On one side we see, but do not hear, Simmias and Cebes discussing under their breath; on the other side Socrates,
thinking alone. All characters stay still, they do not move. Only Phaedo’s voice off is heard, commenting in Phlius: «When Socrates had said this there was silence for a long time» (84c1-2). The lights then go on again and Socrates admits that «There are still many subjects for doubt and many points open to attack» (84c6-7), asking the two Thebans what is the subject of their discussion. Whether it is something unrelated to their meeting or they are having some difficulties in relation to what they have been discussing together. In the latter case they should overtly express their doubts, this way they can find a solution all together (84c-d). Simmias answers briefly, recognizing he himself and Cebes do actually have doubts on some points of Socrates’ arguments but do not wish to “trouble” him in such a tragic situation, like the one he is facing now. His answer causes the first of Socrates’s three gentle smiles on the last day of his life (84d9). Socrates grabs the occasion to repeat what he is feeling in this particular moment. It is a feeling of peacefulness and hope. He starts by saying it will be very difficult to persuade other men that he does not think of his present situation as a tragedy, if he cannot persuade his friends gathering there with him, who have so many times before had philosophical conversations together. In fact he feels like a swan sensing his death is near and thus singing more and better than he ever did in his life, since he feels he is about to reach the god has been serving and foresees all the goods that are in Hades. He declares himself ready to perform his “swan song”.

Encouraged by Socrates, Simmias takes the argument back to the field of rational thinking (though using himself one more wonderful image), and specifies a method recalling - we would say - Protagoras and Parmenides, two authors Plato always has in mind. In fact, Simmias states, the subjects they are discussing are so complex that attaining some certain and final knowledge is either impossible or extremely difficult, as Protagoras had already asserted (85c2-4; Protagora B4 DK). Nonetheless, as stated by Parmenides, «he is a weakling who does not test in every way what is said about them and persevere until he is worn out by studying them on every side» (85c5-7; Parmenide B1.32 DK). For there are only two roads leading to knowledge: either one has to learn how things really are from others, or find it out on one’s own. Anyway, though we will never be able to find out how things really are, there’s another chance that can save us from wrecking in the sea of life and of the arguments told in our life: clinging to a raft. The raft is the best and less disputable of human’s arguments. Choosing to do so means running the risk of making the voyage of life (85c7-d2). Unless one is weak, vile, or has other reasons and chooses a much more comfortable and safe vessel, the ship of a divine revelation with all its convictions and reassurances (85d2-4). This image brought in by Simmias is just so brilliant. In a totally socratic and philosophical sense and with just a couple of brushes he paints the picture of the instability of human life with its risks, deriving both from having to operate choices and having to justify those choices through rational arguments; at the same time he pictures the distinctive life of non “weak” men, that shall be devoted to the tireless practice of his own understanding, never tired of proving questions from every single point of view. A “courageous” life because it refuses to give up when faced with difficulties.

Scene X includes Simmias’ and Cebes’ two arguments. While Simmias maintains the thesis by which the soul is the harmony or crasis of the bodily elements, and is, as such, doomed to dissolve when those elements decay, Cebes assumes the soul survives the death of a given amount of bodies, though eventually dissolving with the last body it inhabited. Act I ends with these two arguments. They might well express two different points of view, nonetheless they both require more logical rigour from Socrates while providing his evidence and at the same time show how difficult it is to agree to the immortality of the soul, since it cannot be directly
experienced nor can it be proved by purely logical evidence. The audience is left with an uncomfortable feeling, one of confusion: all that has been said until now is worthless, then? At the same time it’s a sense of anticipation: how will Socrates react and defend his thesis? Plato is a learned director, so he puts a pause here, playing on these two sensations. A whole range of feelings and sensations permeates and frames Scene I of Act II, providing the essential background to key considerations, with some high level dramatical and scenic effects outlining what is actually the very meaning of Socrates’ life, of the real philosopher’s life.

We are taken back to Phlius through a voice over: the dialogue’s initial two speakers comment on the scene that has just come to an end in Socrates’ prison cell (88c). Confusion, dismay. Back to disbelief. The uncomfortable feelings felt by Socrates’ friends gathering there with him on his last day are the same felt now by Echecrates listening to Phaedo’s account of that day and communicated by him and Phaedo to the audience. First we have Echecrates stating he did believe himself in the soul-harmony hypothesis, was then won by Socrates’ argument and had eventually, listening to Simmias’ objection, come back to his previous belief; now he needs to be convinced again (88c8-e4). Then Phaedo expresses his feeling: he had wondered Socrates’ arguments so many times, but never had he admired him more than he did in that particular moment. He had not doubted Socrates would have been able to answer the criticisms, but what astonished him was, first, the pleasant, gentle and respectful way in which he listened to the objections of the two Thebans, secondly Socrates’ clear sense of the effect their arguments had had upon all those present (88e5-89a8). And here he is, Socrates: the cell is illuminated again.

This amazing scenic effect is expanded through a succession of actions, images, proverbs, rational reservations and working hypothesis expressing the very sense of philosophical activity. Socrates does not answer to the two Thebans immediately. He starts playing with Phaedo’s hair. Shall Phaedo have to cut his beautiful hair the next day, when Socrates will be dead? To have one’s hair cut was a sign of mourning. This is what the Argives did when they were defeated by the Spartans: they cut their hair and swore they would not let them grow again until they had taken revenge on their enemies. No, Phaedo won’t have to cut his hair, but rather he shall do so together with Socrates today, if their argument “dies” and they will not be able to “bring it to life again”. Not the death of one of the speakers but rather the loss of the argument is the real defeat. But here the enemies are two and “even Heracles was not a match for two”. That’s why Iolaus, Heracles’ nephew and adventures companion, came to help him (89b-c). Now who’s Heracles and who Iolaus? It does not matter: whether Socrates is Heracles and Phaedo Iolaus or viceversa, what matters is something else.

But most important is not to catch an awful disease, one that had until then been unknown and that Socrates now identifies; he even gives it a name that did not exist and is invented by the director: misology, the hate of arguments (89c11-12). Misology is very similar to a different disease, well known and with its own name: misanthropy. Indeed, the two diseases arise similarly, since arguments and men are very similar. Now instead of explaining the new disease right away, Socrates talks about the old one. He delays the explanation and prolongs the waiting – a skillful scenic effect. Misanthropy is actually easily explained: it arises from excessively trusting someone, thinking he is perfectly true and trustworthy, and finding out he is actually mean and untrustworthy. When one has this experience again and again, he will hate all men and think no one is true. That’s very disgraceful, but is clearly due to a lacking knowledge of human nature. At this point Socrates still does not turn to consider misology, he dwells on misanthropy with some additional comments. If one had knowledge of human nature, in fact, one would think that the extremely good and the extremely bad are both very few; the majority of men
are “ordinary”, in between good and bad. Even if there were to be a competition in rascality, those excelling would be very few (89d1-90b2). This is very likely, stresses Pheado, and Socrates as well (90b3-4).

Thus one has to be vaccinated against misology, a disease that arises especially from the “contradictory arguments” of those easily playing with truth and untruth, going up and down with their arguments like the tide in the Euripus (90b-c). The vaccine is a way of believing, of researching and living.

The philosopher has to believe. He has to believe in the possibility that «an argument which is true and sure and can be recognized as such» (90c8-d1) does exist, otherwise his work shall be useless. And he must never get tired of looking for such an argument, as Simmias had stated, and hoping to find it. Indeed, looking for the true argument is the most peculiar activity of the philosopher, since truth can only be found in the argument: if you hate the argument you won't have any chance (and hope) to find the true one. To be vaccinated thus means not to let in the thought that arguments have nothing sound in them, but rather prove, before accusing an argument of being inconsistent, whether we are lacking skill in considering it (90d3-7). It means trusting the argument, continuously looking for truth. It requires courage, and courage is a way of living, an attitude towards the world of men as well as the world of arguments. To be vaccinated means not being eager to win in one's argument, disregarding what the truth in it is and only striving to make one's own views seem true to one's hearers (91a). Socrates won't do this even now he is about to die, that is, now that he finds himself in a very convenient position, for those listening to a man who's going to die tend to immediately trusting his last words. Only «if by chance what I say is true, it is nice to believe it» (91b2-3), says Socrates, readjusting the right way the relationship between truth and beauty Cebes had inverted (70a-b). It is nice to believe it first of all for Socrates himself and then for his friends gathered there with him: they have to «give little thought to Socrates and much more to the truth» (91c1-2); only if they think what he says is true they should believe it, if not, they must oppose him with every argument they can muster, again and again. Here the scene ends with one more effective and beautiful image. Socrates does not want to deceive himself nor his friends, he does not wish to be like a bee, going away having left its sting sticking in them. (91c4-6): he does not wish to leave his friends in a state of confusion caused by his arguments. He has defended them passionately and indeed, just because of that, they could have been induced to temporary agree. But the only satisfactory consensus is the one by which men are connected in the truth.

The play is coming to its end. In the next seven scenes fast and befuddling dialogues alternate with two long monologues by Socrates; enlightening passages essential to understanding the sense of Plato's “philosophy” also alternate with a colourful and fantastic myth invented by Plato. At the very end, one of the most moving testimonies on the death of a master. Let me quickly recall those scenes here and briefly mention these aspects.

In Scene II of Act II (91c7-95a3), a “trio”, Socrates first of all discredits Simmias' thesis of the soul as harmony, in what we might call a syllogistic procedure. He just needs a couple of lines to reject it. If the soul was harmony, it should follow the things composing it, it should come into existence only after they do so. Simmias, though, did agree to the theory of recollection, and that theory implies the souls exists before the bodily elements; thus Simmias cannot agreee to the soul-harmony argument. Simmias has already been rebutted and he has totally and overtly capitulated, but Socrates carries on objecting to his thesis the whole scene long. And eventually we know why: the soul-harmony argument cannot be agreed to because it would lead to ill-fated consequences from an ethic point of view. Before explicitly stating this
point, Socrates engages one more bewildering duet with Simmias, barraging him with questions and statements. Simmias agrees sometimes, sometimes he does not understand, some other times he admits he does not know what to say. But Socrates chases him and runs on all his doubts like a locomotive, making use of the virtue-wickedness difference: if virtue is harmony and wickedness discord, there cannot be a discordant harmony, so there cannot be a wicked soul. It follows that all souls are good. Here it is, the unacceptable consequence: if we agree to the soul-harmony argument we are denying the rule of the soul on the body and its affections; we are then denying that man has the possibility to lead an ethically good and right life.

Scene III of Act II (95a4-97b7) includes the first part of Socrates’ first long monologue – the second will be a mythical and fantastic one on “true land”, Scene II, Act III. This scene has a theatrical effect too, but it also brings in some essential arguments in the author’s philosophy, which are just briefly sketched here and will be later fully explained and artfully solved. As for now, the theatrical effect is given by Socrates talking about his own bufflement, when he was young and investigating the causes of birth, death and being of all things. He admits he had often changed his mind and had not been able to follow the reasonings of those he had fallen in love with (and though he never mentions their names, it is easy to understand who is meant here). These memories have the effect of making the audience/reader’s sense of expectation grow.

Considered from both the point of view of method and content, the two final scenes of Act II and the first of Act III are surely one of the most important moments in Plato’s picture of philosophy. Scene IV of Act II (97b8-100a9) expands that sense of expectation brought about by the previous scene: the first words sound like the beginning of a tale, “one day I heard a man”, and put back in time Socrates’ new discovery, one that helped him going beyond the difficulties he had faced in his quest for the causes. He is of course talking about the hope of finding a satisfactory explanation to the question on the causes in Anaxagoras’ books. His hope was later deluded, though; hope and delusion provide our playwright/philosopher with the occasion to let Socrates illustrate one of his most beautiful arguments, one that can rightly be considered the “manifesto” of what he understands under philosophical investigation. The argument is announced by an image recalling a proverb of Greek culture, the image of a “second voyage”, ideally linked to the image of the raft used by Simmias in Act I, Scene IX and that could have in turn the sense of a “way out”, something one could and has to do when lacking a better choice – like having to resort to rowing in the absence of wind. A “second-back” in a standstill situation, which will in turn appear as the only feasible way to go. The very image of a ship having to be moved forward by using the oars gives the feeling of an undertaking costing commitment and work. And one more metaphor comes right after this one: one cannot look at the sun directly during an eclipse, without running the risk of being blinded. One has to look at the image of the sun in water or something of the sort. That’s what Socrates thought, and fearing his “soul would be blinded” (one more metaphor, expressing the loss of all orientation possibilities in the world of knowledge) had he looked at all things, the sensible as well as the ideal, with his body’s eyes and making exclusive use of his sensations, he had to recourse to arguments.

Socrates is aware he is creating images, but he immediately tells us that investigating “things that are” in images does not mean to imagine, to “make up” a world of knowledge, but it is rather the only way to understand things in their reality. Since the image is essential to the argument and the argument is the only tool in our possession to acquire knowledge of the world. So one cannot look at things in themselves without cognitively filtering them through the argument. The
argument is created through hypotheses. Posing hypothesis is the most typical method of argumentation. The argument, thus, proves and states truths on the basis of the hypothesis appearing to be the best one, the "strongest". The truth about things, the true things are therefore those agreeing with the set hypothesis; those not agreeing with it are non true. Truth and non truth are therefore attributes we can only assign on the basis of our arguments. Even admitting they can exist on their own, independently from us, they only acquire their significance when and if we acknowledge them, state them and prove them in our arguments.

Once again a dramatic device is closing the scene. What I said might be explained "more clearly", for maybe you did not understand everything, says Socrates – No, not well enough, confirms Cebes.

So in Scene V (100b1-103a3) the hypothesis of ideas is finally developed ("not a new one", but one repeatedly stated) as well as the hypothesis of the relationship between things and ideas. The latter is expressed in an allusive, metaphorical rather than demonstrative language, since it is very difficult to define it in a purely logical way and Socrates/Plato is very aware of this: he asserts he "can make no positive statement about it yet", call it a participation, a presence or a communion, therefore he cannot be clear about it (100d6-7: οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῦτο διισχυρίζομαι). A quick flash back stresses the significance of the hypothesis of ideas: we are taken back to Phlius and Echecrates shows his satisfaction with Socrates' argument, which he finds "astonishingly clear" to anyone even with a little intelligence – pouring salt into the wound caused by Socrates to Anaxagoras.

A new dramatic device opens Scene I of Act III. An unknown speaker underlines a given contradiction between what has just been said and what was said on opposites before in 70d-e, 77c. Socrates pretty much ignores it and quickly goes on starting his definitive argument on opposites and opposite things. He takes for granted that an opposite will never be the opposite of itself. Here is the last passionate dance of words that should "prove" the soul is immortal and indestructible. I find it essential to stress that, symbolically, the very last piece added to the puzzle of these "demonstrations" elicits some important reservations at the beginning and at the end of the scene from the two main characters of the dialogue – from Socrates himself. Cebes, for instance, is not troubled by the objection of the anonymous speaker, but he admits there are still many things troubling him (103c5-6). And at the end of the scene Simmias, echoing Protagoras again, acknowledges that the subjects are so great and human reasoning so weak that one always has to doubt in his own mind what has been said (107a-b). That is true, concludes Socrates, a pupil worthy of his playwright master: the hypotheses and their consequences always have to be examined more carefully, the argument always has to be open to new investigations and new tests (107b).

In any case, it is especially in the last piece composing the argument, intended to complete a previous question left pending, that the totally "dramatical" way of developing this "demonstration" is to be seen. The pending question is that of an opposite escaping or perishing when the other opposite comes near. Here the dance of names, things and ideas gets whirling; it is a dance and as such it cannot display logical precision but only fantasy, which has all the right to upset logical precision. At the end of the dance two figures embrace forever, on the background different figures gradually dissolving. The two figures are the soul and immortality/indestructibility. On the background other figures miming that embrace are dissolving: the number three, that shall never be an even number, fire that shall never be cold, odd that shall never be even and the fire's warmth that shall never be coldness. Some figures stumble on the scene, so that sometimes the odd number is not indestructible, as in 106c3-4. But only the two figures in the middle are left, wrapped in a cloak of
verbal impracticalities, unassailable by any other figure. Like the figure of death. Coming near to man (here the real and tangible subject of all these impracticalities comes back to the scene), death causes the body, man's mortal part, to... die, and his immortal part to... go away. And it really goes away to Hades, says the voice off – myth.

Scene II of Act III, where the longest of Socrates’s argumentes in the whole play is to be found, includes the wonderful myth of “true earth” but also explicitly provides the meaning of this whole performance – one that has actually often been outlined before. It is the ethic sense of a life to be lived at best, with wisdom, measure and purity. Here for the last time myth and ethic consideration are bound together tightly. The lines “They say” or “it has been told”, the pleasure of listening to beautiful myths and charming words are combined with considerations of the highest level. If the soul is immortal, then, we should take care of it constantly, try to always become better and as wise as we can. That’s why, Simmias and Cebes, my dear friends, and you in the audience, we have to do all we can in our life to take part in virtue and intelligence; and run the risk to believe in these tales. Intelligence, though, does not have to die by the hands of tales, myths and imagination. Because stating that everything Socrates is describing is exactly as he is putting it would not be fitting for a “man of sense”: Socrates himself is warning us. Nonetheless it is good to hope things are indeed so and run the risk of believe in these things, because the risk, the charm of this tale, is beautiful.

The scene ends on a “tragic” note, suited for an actor playing a tragedy: I am now called by fate, states Socrates. The following line then appears to soften the tragic flair, it can even seem a comic one, but it is not, it is equally earnest: it is time to go to the bath, so that the women will not have to bath the corpse.

Last scene of the tragedy (115b1-118a17) displays a logical perfection that very few other literary and philosophical texts have attained. Very fine psychological considerations, theatre actions underlining the sense of a life spent in philosophy and the expression of some of the most meaningful human feelings are staged here. How shall we bury you? asks Crito. Socrates smiles gently and gently scolds him: Crito is not yet convinced that the true Socrates is the one discussing with his friends now and not the corpse that will soon take his place. And he finishes with one of his immortal lines the playwright spreads in all his tragedies: a line conveying the sense of a life lived in harmony, told by someone who could attune his arguments well and attune his life to his arguments. For, dear Crito, you may be sure that such non good talking is not only a false note in an argument, it is also something evil for the soul, i.e. something causing mistakes and disharmonies in our behaviour.

Socrates then goes out, in another room not just to bathe, as he had announced in last scene, but also to talk to the women of his family and his sons, without his friends but Crito. He stays there a long while. “It was now nearly sunset”, notes Phaedo as in a scene caption. A brilliant line, suggesting the end of the day as well as Socrates ‘ end coming nearer and nearer.

The servant of the Eleven then comes in announcing the time has come to drink the poison; but he is overwhelmed by his emotion, bursts into tears, turns and goes away. After this the tragedy rapidly comes to its end. Only a great playwright like Plato could have staged this tragedy so artfully: the final prayer to the gods so that Socrates’ last voyage can be a happy one; the emotions and despair of Socrates’ friends; the crying and the tears; the weeping and greaving. Last request from Socrates not to play false notes, when the only words appropriate are the ones wishing him good luck. The friends feeling ashamed at Socrates’ last scolding. Socrates laying on his bed and slowly getting cold and stiff while he addresses a last ambiguous call to his friends. Finally, silence. Crito closes the eyes and mouth of that body that was,
and is not anymore, Socrates.

The dramatic circle describing a day, the last one, and symbolically the whole life of that extraordinary man Socrates was, closes here. Socrates’ prison cell is not on the scene anymore and we are taken back to Phlius, to the first scene and to Phaedo telling Echecrates the whole story. The story of a man that was the best, the wisest and the most righteous of men. At these moving comment by Phaedo the courtain comes down. The greatest and most brilliant literary monument a pupil ever wrote for his Master comes to its end. The courtain falls down and there are no more words. Only, if you like, a musical comment to the inevitable emotion, the immortal notes of the Andante in Mozart’s piano and orchestra concert n. 21.

Translated by Silvia Casertano

Plato
Phaedo, or On the soul

ACT 1
Scene I. Phlius: Echecrates, Phaedo (Phlius in Argolida, on a day of 399 probably): 57a1-59c7
Scene II. Athens, at prison doors: Guard, Phaedo, Friends. Socrates’ cell. Socrates, Xanthippe, Crito, Cebes, Simmias (Philosophy as music. Life as death: 59c8-60a1; 60a2-63b3)
Scene III. Athens, Socrates cell Socrates, Simmias, Crito (Socrates’ Defense and Hope. The truth and the ideas make their appearence: 63b4-66a10)
Scene IV. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Simmias (The opinion of the philosophers. Courageous by fear and temperate by intemperance: 66b1-69e4)
Scene V. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes (Telling myths. The opposites are born of the opposites: 69e5-72d10)
Scene VI. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes, Simmias (Learning is reminiscence. Ideas and sensations. The Soul: 72e1-77d5)
Scene VII. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes (The fear and the enchantment. Ideas and myth: 77d5-82d8)
Scene VIII. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes (The Nails of the soul and Penelope’s web: 82d9-84b7)
Scene IX. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Simmias (The swan song. The raft for life: 84c1-85d9)
Scene X. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Simmias, Cebes (The soul-harmony, man and mantle: 85e1-88b8)

Act 2
Scene I. Phlius: Phaedo, Echecrates. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Phaedo (Intermezzo. The misiology: 88bc1-89a9; 89a10-91c6)
Scene II. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes, Simmias (The soul is not harmony. The virtue and the vice: 91c7-95a3)
Scene III. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes (Because everything comes into being, dies and it is: 95a4-97b7)
Scene IV. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes (The cause and the best. The absolute necessity of speech: 97b8-100a9)
Scene V. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes. Phlius: Echecrates, Phaedo. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Cebes (Ideas as cause. The names and the ideas: 100b1-102a3; 102a4-10; 102a11-103a3.)
Act 3

Scene I. Socrates’ prison cell: Anonymous, Socrates, Cebes, Simmias (Hot and cold, fire and snow, the three and the odd: 103a4-107b10)

Scene II. Socrates’ prison cell: Socrates, Simmias (The healing of the soul and myth of the “true” land: 107c1-115a9)

Scene III. Socrates’ prison cell: Crito, Socrates, attendant, Socrates’ children, Family Women. Phlius: Phaedo (The last moments: 115b1-118a14; 118a15-17)
“El concepto de ἐπωνυμία en el argumento final de la inmortalidad del alma”

Casnati, María Gabriela

En el presente trabajo nos proponemos analizar la caracterización que aparece en el Fedón (y también en la República) de la Forma como una unidad sobre múltiples particulares que por participación adquieren sus propiedades y señalaremos que éste es el fundamento que da lugar a las aporías de la primera parte del Parménides (I). A continuación, analizaremos pasajes del argumento final de la inmortalidad del alma del Fedón donde se presenta la noción de ἐπωνυμία y nos concentraremos en el aspecto derivativo que con ella se introduce. Afirmaremos que la predicación epónica es posible en virtud de la explicación que da cuenta de por qué un particular puede justificadamente ser denominado a partir de una Forma. Resaltaremos la fuerte impronta del lenguaje de la inmanencia que aparece en estos pasajes, donde se insiste en la presencia de una imagen de la Forma –denominada por muchos autores propiedad o carácter inmanente- en las cosas. (II) Concluiremos que cuando Platón apela a la ἐπωνυμία para caracterizar el vínculo semántico que existe entre una Idea y los particulares que participan de ella, no alude simplemente a una comunidad de nombre entre Ideas y particulares sensibles, sino que aparece implicada una derivación nominal unida a la dependencia ontológica de la cosa nombrada respecto de la Idea de la cual participa en tanto el particular posee o tiene en sí el carácter de la Forma (III).

I

Es sabido que para Platón las Ideas existen realmente y son el único tipo de entidad al que puede aplicarse sin limitación la calificación de “ser”. La Idea es αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτό, una realidad existente en sí y por sí, que reviste independencia ontológica. Desde el punto de vista semántico, hay una multiplicidad de particulares sensibles a los que nombramos del mismo modo y postulamos una Forma con el mismo nombre. Esto se advierte con claridad en República X 596a5-8, donde Sócrates pregunta: “¿Quieres que comenzemos examinando esto por medio del método acostumbrado (τῆς εἰωθυίας μεθόδου)? Pues creo que acostumbrábamos a postular una Idea única para cada multiplicidad de cosas a las que damos el mismo nombre (ταὐτὸν ὄνομα)”. Allí, el método habitual es el de suponer la existencia de una Idea única para cada multiplicidad de cosas sensibles que tienen idéntico nombre, esto es, cuando hay un término general o predicado que puede atribuirse al mismo modo a múltiples cosas que exhiben un rasgo común. Platón contrapone la unicidad de la Idea a la multiplicidad de los particulares sensibles y, en ese sentido, la Idea constituye un “uno sobre lo múltiple”. Una concepción similar aparece en Fedón 78d10-e2, donde Sócrates pregunta: “¿Qué hay de las múltiples cosas bellas, como, por ejemplo, hombres, caballos, vestidos o cualquier otra cosa de este tipo, o bien de las cosas iguales o de todas las que reciben el mismo nombre (τῶν ἐκείνων ὁμωνύμων) que aquellas?”. Aquí vuelve a aparecer una multiplicidad de cosas sensibles que reciben el mismo nombre de las Formas (se utiliza el adjetivo ὁμωνύμος) y son, por tanto, 1Cf. Fedón 66a2, 78d5, 83a9-b2, 100b5.

2Las citas del Fedón corresponden a la traducción de A. Vigo (2009).

3Que la Idea buscada es un “uno sobre muchos” ya aparecía en Laques 191e10-11, 192b5-8, Eutifrón 6d9-11, Menón 73c6-8, 75e4-5, 77a5-9. Cf. en el mismo sentido Crátilo 439c7-d1, República VI 507b2-7, Fedro 249b6-c1, Filebo 14c7-15c3, y en pasajes del Parménides (131a7-8, e3-4, 132a1-ss., 133c-d).
homónimas a ellas.

Lo primero que surge preguntar es por qué a cosas diferentes (diferentes hombres, caballos o vestidos bellos) las llamamos con el mismo nombre. La razón del Fedón pareciera ser que comparten una misma propiedad. Leemos, por ejemplo, que "todas las cosas bellas son bellas en virtud de lo bello <mismo>" (Fed. 100d7-8); también que "es en virtud de lo bello <mismo> como llegan a ser bellas las cosas bellas" (Fed. 100e2-3). En general, diríamos que si de cada una de múltiples cosas sensibles grandes afirmamos que es grande, la razón no es otra que la magnitud (διὰ τὸ μεγέθος, 101a3-4).

Si nos preguntamos ahora por qué estos múltiples que tienen el mismo nombre y comparten una característica entre sí son homónimos, a su vez, de las Formas, la respuesta platónica del Fedón apela a la participación:

"A mí me parece que si hay alguna otra cosa bella al margen de lo bello mismo, no podría ser bella por ninguna otra cosa que por participar (μετέχει) de eso que es bello (...) Ninguna otra cosa hace bello a algo sino la presencia de (παρουσία) o bien la comunidad con (κοινωνία) aquello que es bello, como quiera que fuere que se tenga que denominar <a tal relación>" (Fed. 100c4-d6).

Es bien sabido que Platón no explica con precisión la relación participativa, pero el hecho es que aquí no parece interesable detenerse en eso sino solamente afirmar que existe una relación apropiada entre ámbitos y que es en virtud de relacionarse apropiadamente con las Formas que los particulares tienen sus características y, además, que ambas instancias poseen el mismo nombre.

Si volvemos ahora al pasaje de Fedón 78d10-e48 donde se pregunta por “las múltiples cosas bellas, como, por ejemplo, hombres, caballos, vestidos (...) o bien las cosas iguales o todas las que reciben el mismo nombre (τῶν ἐκείνοις ὁμωνύμων) que aquellas [que se encuentran siempre del mismo modo] (...) pero se comportan del modo totalmente contrario a aquellas y no se encuentran, por así decir, jamás, del mismo modo, en el mismo estado, ni respecto de sí mismas ni unas respecto de otras", vemos que el término ὁμώνυμος se aplica a individuos sensibles que poseen: a) el mismo nombre de la Idea de la que participan y, además, b) una naturaleza inferior respecto del ser pleno de las Ideas. Pero, creemos, ambas son propiedades diferentes y no es lícito derivar la segunda a partir de la primera. Es muy posible 4Tomamos homónimo en su sentido ordinario en español, esto es, “dicho de dos o más personas o cosas: que llevan un mismo nombre” (Diccionario RAE).

5Si bien Platón opera un cambio de dirección entre los planteos de República y Fedón, creemos que ambos textos pueden ser leídos en consonancia. En República, razonando en términos epistémicos, se traza un movimiento ascendente que va desde constatar que a múltiples sensibles los llamamos con el mismo nombre X porque comparten la propiedad X, a sostener que existe la Idea X. En Fedón, por su parte, se razona en términos ontológicos (según los cuales primero es la Idea y después los entes sensibles homónimos) y entonces se parte de la Idea hacia los entes sensibles (y, por tanto, del nombre de la Idea al nombre de los entes sensibles). Ver, en este sentido, L. Seminara (2004:307).

6Cf. T. W. Bestor (1980:41) quien afirma que “participar de” una Forma constituye para Platón una relación “apropiada” para aplicar el nombre de la Forma al sensible que participa de ella: “It is only because there really does exist a Form and a relation between it and sensibles that we can extend the application of the proper name ‘great’ to things it does not strictly name (some particular is great because it participates in the ‘real’ Great”).


8En el mismo sentido, ver Timeo 52a y Parménides 133c-d.

9Cf. L. Seminara (2004:306). G. Casertano (2015: ad loc.), en su comentario a la línea 78e2 afirma que la idea y los entes concretos que participan de ella tienen
que aquí Platón apele intencionalmente a cierta ambigüedad de la homonimia, que supone identidad de nombre pero implica diferente definición o naturaleza, algo que estaba siendo desarrollado por el propio Espeusipo, quien no deja claro si se trata de una distinción entre nombres o entre entes.  

En suma, los pasajes citados dan cuenta de múltiples particulares sensibles que: 1) comparten un nombre con la Forma, 2) tienen una naturaleza imperfecta en comparación con la Forma y 3) a estos particulares puede asignarse la propiedad que exhiben en virtud de su participación de la Forma. Tengamos en cuenta que para Platón apelar a las Formas -esto es, a la distinción de dos ámbitos entre los que se opera algún tipo de relación- no implica solamente una propuesta ontológica acerca de sensibles e inteligibles, sino también -y derivada de ella- una propuesta semántica sobre el lenguaje y la comunicación. En ese sentido, en tanto no se explique la relación ontológica que vincula a particulares y Formas (denominada por Sócrates, sin pretensión de rigurosidad, participación, comunión o presencia), tampoco podrán darse mayores precisiones respecto de la relación semántica que los une y que, a esta altura de la obra, se menciona como homonimia, esto es, en una relación simétrica según la cual se aplica el mismo nombre a entes distintos sin que ello implique derivación o dependencia ontológica.

Creemos que esta indeterminación respecto de la relación participativa en el Fedón es intencionalmente retomada en la primera parte del Parménides para dar lugar a los argumentos regresivos (Parm. 132a-b, 132d-133a) y al así llamado “dilema de la participación” (Parm. 131a-e). En esta sección crítica Platón asimila una relación semántica simétrica entre entes diversos (que, como vimos, aparece en el Fedón) con la relación ontológica de participación que, si bien no es explicada ni desarrollada hasta el argumento final de la inmortalidad del alma, tampoco se presenta como una relación simétrica sino más bien derivativa. Si dejamos de lado, por ejemplo, todos los pasajes del Fedón que insisten en la deficiencia ontológica de lo sensible respecto de la Forma, y nos concentramos más bien en que entre el mismo nombre: la homonimia entre la idea y los participantes es claramente afirmada por Platón tanto en este pasaje como en el mencionado de República X 596a5-7, donde se admite la existencia de una Idea para cada nombre con que se designa una multiplicidad de objetos (algo que se retoma problemáticamente en Parménides 130c-d).

10Seguramente también Aristóteles formó parte de esta discusión de la Academia en sus Categorías. Cf. L. Seminara (2004:289-302) quien analiza los tres pasajes de Simplicio a las Categorías de Aristóteles donde se expone (vía Boeto o vía Boeto y Porfirio) la doctrina de Espeusipo (fragmento 32 de Lang, 68 de Tarán y 45 a 47 de Isnardi Parente) y concluye que estas líneas pueden ser interpretadas tanto como prueba de que la división espeusipeana concierne a nombres como que concierne a entes (p. 302). Ver también W-R Mann (2000:esp. 48-50, 75-76) quien entiende la eponimia en Platón como un caso de homonimia, y analiza por qué Aristóteles descompone la noción platónica de eponimia en cuatro “-onymies” y T. W. Bestor (1980:46-49), quien da cuenta de otros testimonios antiguos.

11Cf. T. W. Bestor (1996:67 y 73n. 8).

12Cf. L. Seminara (2004:303-06 y 311) quien señala que Platón se sirve del término ὁμώνυμος sin haber formulado una doctrina de la homonimia y, tras relevar los 16 casos en que aparece en el corpus Platonicum, concluye que Platón utiliza el término ὁμώνυμος para decir, de dos o más entes, que tienen el mismo nombre, sin que eso implique nada sobre la naturaleza de los entes mismos.

13Cf., por ejemplo, la extensa sección 74c-77a -inscripta en el argumento a partir de la reminiscencia- donde resulta evidente la prioridad ontológica y gnoseológica de las Ideas frente a las cosas que aspiran a ser como ellas pero se quedan cortas y
Formas y particulares se da una cierta relación de “participación”, en virtud de la cual lo sensible adquiere de la Forma la propiedad que exhibe, y tenemos en cuenta, además, que a ambos tipos de entidades se aplica el mismo nombre simétricamente, entonces es fácil derivar que ambos ámbitos poseen del mismo modo sus propiedades y que es simétrica también la relación ontológica que los vincula. Y de allí las aporías del Parménides.14

II
Volvamos al Fedón. En el marco de la última prueba que se ofrece en favor de la inmortalidad del alma (Fedón 102a-107b), Platón introduce una serie de precisiones y distinciones de gran importancia. El nuevo argumento retoma la fórmula platónica según la cual, como ya señalamos, las cosas bellas (particulares) son bellas (tienen características) a causa de la Forma de belleza (τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ καλὰ, 100d7-8), pero ahora resulta insoslayable reconocer una metafísica que tiene en cuenta no solo particulares, que se relacionan con Formas, sino también una nueva instancia (que denominaremos, siguiendo a muchos autores, propiedades o caracteres inmanentes e incluso determinaciones de la Forma)15 que sirve de intermediaria entre las Formas de las que son copia y los particulares a los que pertenecen. Si bien el tema genera controversias y no hay consenso acerca de si estas propiedades en las cosas son miembros de la ontología del Fedón, consideramos innegable que Platón introduce en este cuarto argumento una explicación metafísica más detallada y que exacerba el lenguaje de la inmanencia. Sócrates agrega ahora que, como consecuencia de la participación, el particular sensible posee o tiene en sí el carácter, que es una particularización de la Forma en que participa y cuya existencia no podría darse sin el particular en que participa. Leamos algunos pasajes donde esto aparece:

“¿No es cierto que, cuando dices que Simias es más alto que Sócrates y más bajo que Fedón, estás afirmando que en Simias están presentes (εἶναι ἐν τῷ Σιμίᾳ) ambas <determinaciones>, tanto la grandeza como la pequeñez? (…) Seguramente no <piensas> que es en razón de su misma naturaleza, vale decir, por ser Simias, como Simias sobrepasa a otra persona, sino, más bien, por la grandeza que resulta tener (ἄλλα τῷ μεγέθει ὁ τυγχάνειν ἔχων). Y, a su vez, tampoco <crees> que sobrepasa a Sócrates por el hecho de que Sócrates sea Sócrates, sino, más bien, porque Sócrates posee <determinada> pequeñez (ὅτι σμικρότητα ἔχει ὁ Σωκράτης) respecto de la <propias> grandeza de Simias. (…) En efecto, a mí me parece no sólo que la grandeza misma (αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος) jamás admitiría ser, al mismo tiempo, grande y pequeña, sino también que la grandeza que está presente en nosotros (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος) jamás recibe la pequeñez ni admite ser sobrepasada. (…) Antes se decía que es a partir de una cosa contraria como se genera la cosa contraria17 <a ella>, y ahora, en cambio, que el contrario mismo no podría llegar nunca a ser contrario no lo logran.

17Seguimos en este punto la traducción de D. GALLOP (1975) “For it was mantained on the occasion you allude to that the opposite thing derive its origin from the thing opposite to it” y A. VIGO (2009). Como bien señala este último, la formulación
de sí mismo, ni el que está en nosotros (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν), ni aquel que existe en la naturaleza (τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει). (…) La situación es tal que no sólo la Idea misma (αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος) merece su propio nombre para siempre (τοῦ αὑτοῦ ὀνόματος εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον), sino que también hay algo diferente (ἄλλο τι) que, sin ser dicha <Idea>, posee siempre su forma, mientras existe (ἔχει τὴν ἐκείνου μορφήν αὐτῇ, ὅταν ἄνεψῃ η’). (102b3-103e5).

Aparece aquí una distinción entre Formas (αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος), caracteres o propiedades en la cosa (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος) y particulares (ἐγώ, Φαίδων, Σιμίας). Las Formas no pueden poseer propiedades opuestas ni tampoco pueden los caracteres inmanentes (e.g. la grandeza en nosotros no puede admitir la pequeñez; esta última se retirará o perecerá ante el avance de su opuesto). Por el contrario yo (el particular) puedo, siendo grande, volverme pequeño sin dejar de ser quien soy. Esto es, mientras ambos miembros de una pareja de determinaciones contrarias pueden estar presentes -incluso simultáneamente- en la misma cosa, las Ideas mismas nunca pueden recibir una Idea contraria ni participar de ella (la Pequeñez misma nunca puede ser grande, ni la Grandeza misma podrá ser pequeña) ni tampoco pueden recibir a sus contrarios ni participar de ellos las propiedades o caracteres inmanentes que están presentes en las cosas. No parece casual que Platón insista tanto en esta sección del diálogo en utilizar el verbo ἔχω y sus compuestos, dando a entender la posesión de las propiedades por parte de las cosas. Algo que reaparece cuando introduce un segundo modelo explicativo a partir de Formas que califica como más elaborado o sutil (κομψότερον, 105c2) y según el cual algo es caliente por la presencia del fuego en él, un cuerpo está enfermo por la presencia de la fiebre y vivo por la presencia del alma, y un número es impar por la unidad. En las líneas en que se ofrece esta explicación, encontramos cuatro veces la forma ἐγγένηται, que significa literalmente algo que le llega adentro, algo que se le hace presente. La insistencia al utilizar en todos los casos estas formas verbales resalta claramente la idea de inmanencia de una propiedad en la cosa.

Ahora bien, nos interesa señalar que, en el marco de esta reformulación más detallada de la relación entre ámbitos, la participación de la cosa de la Idea tiene como contrapartida la presencia en la cosa de una propiedad, y ésta es la base para la aplicación del nombre a la cosa sensible que posee la propiedad. Y es en este marco que se introduce en el diálogo el término eponymía (ἐπωνυμία) -noción asimétrica que supone una derivación nominal como resultado de la dependencia ontológica entre ámbitos- para dar cuenta del aspecto semántico que vincula a la cosa nombrada con la Forma de la cual participa. Sintetiza Fedón que “cada una de las Ideas es algo <existente>, y que es por participar de ellas por lo que las restantes cosas reciben la denominación correspondiente (τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει) a esas mismas <Ideas>” (102b1-3) y, en el mismo sentido, agrega Sócrates pocas líneas después que “Es de este modo como Simias recibe la denominación (ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει) tanto de ser pequeño como de ser grande; por encontrarse en medio de los otros dos, sometiéndose su pequeñez a la grandeza del uno (…), y presentando su de Sócrates es especialmente cuidadosa a la hora de distinguir entre el “contrario mismo”, que corresponde, inmediatamente, a la propiedad que el objeto posee por participación en la Idea y, mediatamente, a la Idea como tal, por un lado, y la “cosa” que posee la propiedad en cuestión, por el otro. Se subraya la palabra “cosa” en la traducción ya que el empleo del término πρᾶγμα dos veces seguidas en 103b3 (en lugar del mero adjetivo neutro sustantivado) tiene una función claramente enfática. 18ὑπέρσχει (102b8, c1, c3, d1), ἔχων (102c3), ἔχει (102c4, c8, c11, d3), ὑπερέχεισθαι (102c7, d9), ὑπέχων (102d1), ὑπερέχον (102d2).
19Cf. Fedón 105 b9, c3, c4, c8, donde aparece la forma ἐγγένηται del verbo ἐγγίγνομαι.
20Cf. T. W. Bestor (1980:45), quien da cuenta de la utilización corriente no-filosófica del término ἐπωνυμος y sus cognados en la época de Platón.
<propia> grandeza al otro” (102c11-d2).

De este modo, al dar cuenta de la relación participativa como un estar en (presencia) de las propiedades inmanentes -imágenes de las Formas- en las cosas, Platón emparenta a esta explicación el aspecto semántico e introduce la eponymía para caracterizar la vinculación existente entre una Idea, por un lado, y los particulares que participan de ella y son denominados según ella, por el otro. En tanto la predicación epónima debe estar siempre respaldada por algún tipo de explicación de por qué la cosa nombrada es nombrada a partir de algo, esta condición se ve satisfecha en el argumento que estamos analizando del Fedón por el hecho de que la cosa sensible recibe el mismo nombre que aquello a lo que se asemeja por poseer su mismo carácter, y esto constituye la base para la aplicación del nombre de la Idea a las cosas sensibles que poseen la propiedad correspondiente.

Es importante señalar la diferencia entre la eponymía que aquí se menciona y la homonimia de 78e, donde -como vimos- la relación de participación no estaba mayormente especificada y, a nivel semántico, solamente se afirmaba una comunidad de nombre entre Ideas y cosas. Al denominar epónima la relación semántica entre particulares y Formas, Platón está aportando nuevos elementos: está diciendo que entre ambos tipos de entidades hay una relación y que esa relación es apropiada -y no arbitraria- para que algo pueda ser nombrado derivativamente a partir de otra cosa. Platón apela aquí a la eponymía para caracterizar la vinculación que existe entre una Idea y los particulares que participan de ella, pero ya no desde la ambigua comunidad de nombre entre Ideas y cosas (como vimos en Rep. 596a o en Fed. 78d-e), sino que aparece implicada una derivación nominal unida a la dependencia ontológica de la cosa nombrada respecto de la Idea de la cual participa en tanto el particular posee o tiene en sí el carácter de la Forma. Y esto es algo que recién aparece en el Fedón en el curso de una explicación que pone de manifiesto que hay ciertas propiedades o caracteres, que no son las Formas mismas sino ἄλλο τι, y que están presentes en las cosas.

III

Si lo dicho hasta aquí resulta plausible, podremos concluir que Platón sostuvo en su madurez un único modelo ontológico que, al menos en el Fedón, exhibe dos momentos de desarrollo. En primer lugar, introduce la participación como una relación ontológica asimétrica entre un ámbito pleno y otro deficiente, pero deja sin explicar en qué consiste su vínculo. Su contrapartida semántica es la homonimia, en tanto una relación simétrica que otorga el mismo nombre a los dos ámbitos distinguidos. A la altura del último argumento, Platón hace un esfuerzo por explicar la enigmática relación de participación utilizando el lenguaje de la inmanencia.

23A T. W. Bestor (1996:71 n.6) le pasa inadvertida esta distinción que parece estar trazando Platón entre una relación semántica de homonimia y otra de eponimia y, más bien, pretende “corregir” al filósofo: “It is always dangerous to ‘correct’ Plato, but if we could it would be nice to limit ἐπωνυμία to the ‘vertical’ semantic relation between each sensible and its Form, and ὁμώνυμος to the ‘horizontal’ semantic relation between each sensible and each other sensible named after the same Form.”
24Si bien es cierto que no es necesario que nombrante y nombrado compartan una propiedad para que se dé la predicación epónica, éste parece ser el caso del Fedón al vincular la relación ontológica de predicación con la relación semántica de eponimia. Cf. T. W. Bestor (1978:193-196) donde se enumeran seis clases de posibles relaciones que permiten hablar de predicaciones epónimas. La relación entre particulares y Formas en el Fedón se encuadraría dentro de la primera de dichas clases.
25Cf. Fedón 103e2-5.
y reconociendo la existencia de ciertas propiedades en las cosas. Este desarrollo ontológico se ve plasmado en la relación semántica, que ahora denomina eponimia, para dar cuenta de la asimetría entre aquello que exhibe el nombre por sí y en virtud de sí y lo que lo obtiene derivativamente.

Es notable que en el Parménides, antes de introducir las aporías, Platón menciona las propiedades inmanentes (habla de la semjanza que nosotros tenemos) y también afirma que “hay ciertas Formas” (εἶναι εἴδη ἢττα) y que “estas otras cosas de nuestro ámbito, por tomar parte de ellas (μεταλαμβάνοντα), reciben sus nombres (τὰς ἐπωνυμίασ αὐτῶν ἴσχειν)” (Parménides 130e5-6), recurriendo a la noción de eponimia que supone una derivación nominal como resultado de la dependencia ontológica de la cosa nombrada respecto de la Forma de la cual participa. Resulta llamativo que, si bien se mencionan ambas cosas, a continuación se apela a una relación ontológica simétrica entre particulares y Formas, tal vez para mostrar las aporías que se producen si no tenemos en cuenta la asimetría ontológica y también semántica entre ámbitos.

Abstract

The purpose of this work is to analyze, first of all, the characterization of the Form appearing in the Phaedo (as well as in the Republic) as one unit over many particulars which, due to their participation, acquire their properties. In Republic X 596a5-8, Plato sets the uniqueness of the Idea against the multiplicity of sensible particulars and, in this sense, the Idea constitutes “one over many”. A similar concept can be found in Phaedo 78d10-e2, where a multiplicity of sensible things has the same name (the adjective ὁμώνυμος is used) as the Forms which are thus homonymous therewith: although there is an ontological difference between the perfection of the Idea and the deficiency of sensible things, at semantic level it is verified that the symmetrical relationship of having the same name exists between both fields. It is worth mentioning that both indetermination with which the participation relationship by virtue of which sensible things acquire the property they exhibit from the Form is shown and the statement that both types of entities are attributed the same name in a homonymous way, set the basis leading to the aporias of the first part of the Parmenides (I). Then, we will analyze the passages of the final argument for the immortality of the soul of the Phaedo where the concept of ἐπωνυμία is mentioned and we will focus on the derivative aspect introduced therewith. We will state that the eponymous predication is possible based on the explanation revealing why certain particulars (and not others) may legitimately be named after a specific Form (and not another). We will highlight the strong imprint of the language of immanence appearing in these passages, where emphasis is put on the presence of an image of the Form -called immanent property or character by many authors- in things. (II) We will conclude that when Plato turns to ἐπωνυμία to characterize the semantic link between an Idea and the particulars involved therein, he does not merely refer to a name community between Ideas and sensible particulars (such as in Republic 596a or in Phaedo 78d-e), since there appears an implied nominal derivation linked to the ontological dependence of the thing named in relation to the Idea it takes part in as the particular bears or has the character of the Form. And this is something which firstly appears in the Phaedo during an explanation which shows that there are certain characters or properties, which are not the Forms.

26“¿Tú mismo haces las distinción que dices, separando, por un lado, ciertas Formas en sí, y poniendo separadas, a su vez, las cosas que participan de ellas? ¿Y te parece que hay algo que es la semjanza en sí (αὐτή ὁμοιότης), separada de aquella semjanza que nosotros tenemos (ἡμεῖς ὁμοιότητος ἔχομεν)?” (Parménides 130b2-4)

27Cf. el análisis que en este sentido hace F. Fronterotta (2001:186-193)
themselves, but ἄλλο τι (103e4), and which are present in the sensible particulars.

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In the *Phaedo*, Simmias introduces the thesis that the soul is a ἁρμονία in response to the so-called Affinity Argument (Phd. 78b — 84b), an argument from analogy, according to which the soul is immortal because it is akin to the divine Forms; both are immutable, invisible, and divine and, consequently, imperishable. He then goes on to claim that this is what “we” take the soul to be, and thus uses the counter-example to pave the road for his own theory of the soul, which seeks to establish that, contrary to what Socrates believes, the soul is material and mortal.

In this paper, I address two interrelated difficulties relating to Simmias’ soul-ἁρμονία thesis, namely what this thesis is and who exactly the “we” are who are said to hold it, by arguing that the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen* is a likely source for such a thesis pace the majority of commentators who attribute it to the Pythagoreans or to other pre-Socratics. In so doing, I hope also to shed some light on early Greek conceptions of ἁρμονία.

Let us begin by analyzing Simmias’ counter-example. Simmias uses the analogy of the soul and an incorporeal ἁρμονία in order to demonstrate a flaw in Socrates’ reasoning:

Ταύτῃ ἔμοιγε, ἦ δ› ὅς, ἣ δὴ καὶ περὶ ἁρμονίας ἄν τις καὶ λύρας τε καὶ χορδῶν τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον λόγον εἴποι, ὡς ἡ μὲν ἁρμονία ἀόρατον καὶ ἀσώματον καὶ πάγκαλόν τι καὶ θείον ἐστιν ἐν τῇ ἥρμοσμένῃ λύρᾳ, αὐτὴ δ› ἡ λύρα καὶ αἱ χορδαὶ σώματα τε καὶ σωματοειδῆ καὶ σύνθετα καὶ γεώδη ἐστὶ καὶ τοῦ θνητοῦ συγγενῆ. Phd. 85e 3 — 86a 3

If Socrates wishes to be consistent, he ought to claim that the ἁρμονία continues to exist somewhere even when the lyre is thoroughly destroyed because the ἁρμονία is akin to something immortal. This is, however, an absurd conclusion because Simmias takes it to be commonly believed that the ἁρμονία of the lyre is destroyed before the physical components of a lyre. If the soul resembles a ἁρμονία then, by analogy, it should cease to exist before its mortal, earthly vessel does.

Once Simmias takes himself to have refuted Socrates’ argument for the immortality of the soul, he goes to establish his positive doctrine of the nature of the soul by elaborating on the idea that the soul is akin to a ἁρμονία:

 [...]ώσπερ ἐντεταμένου τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν καὶ συνεχομένου ύπὸ θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ καὶ ξηροῦ καὶ υγροῦ καὶ τοιούτων τινῶν, κρᾶσιν εἶναι καὶ ἁρμονίαν αὐτῶν τούτων τὴν ψυχήν ἡμῶν, ἐπειδὰν ταῦτα καλῶς καὶ μετρίως κραθῆ πρὸς ἄλληλα – εἰ οὖν τυγχάνει ἡ ψυχή οὕσα ἁρμονία τις, δὴ ἡ λύρα καὶ αἱ χορδαὶ σώματα καὶ σωματοειδῆ καὶ σύνθετα καὶ γεώδη ἐστὶ καὶ τοῦ θνητοῦ συγγενῆ. Phd. 86 b5-d3,
According to him, the soul is a compound (κρᾶσις) or some kind of ἁρμονία (ἁρμονία τις) of opposites such as hot/cold and dry/wet (Phd. 86 b-d). When these opposites are held together in due proportion, the soul is a ἁρμονία; however, when illness or some other cause results in a breaking down of this due proportion, the soul ceases to be. While Simmias’ initial claim is merely that there is an analogy between body/soul and lyre/ἁρμονία, his subsequent claim entails the identification of the soul with a kind of ἁρμονία. Further, he claims that “we” mostly believe something of the kind about the soul and body (Phd. 85b 5-6). As commentators, both ancient and modern, have realized, there is some ambiguity about who is included when Simmias says “ὑπολαμβάνομεν”. However, before we can consider possible candidates for those who take the soul to be a material ἁρμονία, we should make a first attempt at explicating Simmias’ thesis.

The first thing to note is that Plato uses at least two different senses of ἁρμονία in these pages. We should keep in mind that ἁρμονία is best understood in relation to its cognate verb ἁρμόζω (to fit, to join), since it is, at its most basic, a mechanical joining together; in addition, ἁρμονία can refer to fitting together of notes, ratio or some structure of objective relations, the octave, the tetrachord, an agreement, and a metaphysical principle of union, inter alia. The ἁρμονία of a lyre is a musical concept whereas the ἁρμονία of opposed elements refers to a proportional (and probably mechanistic) fitting together of those elements.

CCW Taylor (2008, 74-5) and David Gallop (1990, 148-9) follow Aristotle in distinguishing distinct possibilities for what Simmias’ thesis might be. He could be claiming that a) the soul is identical with the ratio or formula according to which the elements are combined to form the living man or that b) the soul is identical with the mixture or combination of elements according to that formula or that c) the soul is identical with a state of the bodily elements, viz. the state of being combined according to that formula. Scholarly consensus veers towards the third option — the soul is a tuned state of the body just as a ἁρμονία is a tuned state of the lyre. Such a reading takes the soul to be ontologically dependent on the body without being made out of the same material constituents as the body. However, the second possibility — that the soul is identical to the mixture of the elements — is the most natural reading, given the text. On this reading, Simmias is espousing a straightforwardly materialist thesis that Socrates then goes on to refute.

At any rate, I claim, pace these interpretations, that there is limited textual evidence for these fine-grained distinctions. Instead of relying on Aristotle or later commentators, we should focus on the textual evidence in the Platonic corpus and turn to Plato’s predecessors in order to better understand what Simmias might

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2 “οἶμαι ἔγωγε καὶ αὐτόν σε τοῦτο ἐντεθυμῆσθαι, ὅτι τοιοῦτον τι μάλιστα ὑπολαμβάνομεν τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι...”

3 I’m not including Socrates’ ironic reference to Cadmus’ wife Harmonia or the Socrates’ pronouncement that the different claims (made by Simmias) ought to harmonize.

4 Cf. Odyssey 2.248-9, 2.256. The primary Homeric use of this term illustrates its basic meaning of “physical joining together”. The word occurs twice in the Odyssey. This first is when Odysseus is building his raft in order to leave Calypso’s island (5.247-8). It is striking that these two lines use four words that all have the same root — ar* (to join, fit together). As Meyer (1932, 10) notes, the words surrounding ἁρμονισθείη help us understand what it means; ἁρμόζω means to fit something together and ἁράσσεν means to strike hard or to smite. In the raft, harmonia is parallel to γόμφοι (bolts), which it matches in case and number, and is a means by which the planks are joined together. ἁρμοζεῖν, ἁραστεῖν, and ἁρμονία all put one in mind of a compound composed of discrete entities bound together.

5 I do not want to claim that the ἁρμονία of the lyre is merely homonymous to the ἁρμονία of the soul, but it is beyond my scope to argue here that ἁρμονία is a structure that can be manifested in various domains.
mean. In clarifying what Simmias is alluding to, we might also obtain a clearer understanding of what he means.

The ancient commentators were more or less unanimous in their attribution of this doctrine to the Pythagoreans. Olympiodorus (In Phd. 10.2), Plotinus (IV 7.8) and Philoponus (in de An. 70) refer to the Pythagoreans and Macrobius (DK 44A23) refers specifically to Philolaus of Croton. However, as Gottschalk (1971) has pointed out, while they all ascribe the thesis that the soul is a ἁρμονία to the Pythagoreans, Philoponus and Plotinus do not identify Simmias’ version of it with that of the Pythagoreans. Nonetheless, this is a view that has prevailed with many modern commentators, and there are good reasons for this.

The fragments of Philolaus are our only evidence for the doctrines of early Pythagoreanism and ἁρμονίη plays an important role in his cosmology — it unites opposites in the guise of unlimited things and limited things in order to create the world-order (DK44 B 1, 2, 6). According to the Phaedo, Simmias and Cebes were students of Philolaus (61 d). Further, Echecrates, who was supposedly a Pythagorean (DL VIII, 46), says that he is drawn to the view that the soul is a ἁρμονία (88 d) and always has been. All of these can readily be taken as evidence that Simmias’ thesis is Pythagorean in origin.

However, an immediate problem with this possibility is that we tend to associate Pythagoreanism with the doctrine of μετεμψύχωσις (transmigration of souls) on the evidence of early testimonia and, if the soul were truly a material ἁρμονία, it surely could not transmigrate. The Pythagoreans probably believed in the immortality of the soul whereas Simmias offers the description of the soul as a ἁρμονία in order to disprove its immortality. Philolaus may have believed that the soul was a ἁρμονία — even though he there is no explicit mention of this in his extant fragments — but we have little reason to believe that he regarded the soul as mortal and perishable and that his account of the soul as ἁρμονία is what Simmias is reporting.

Iwata (2015, 56-9) offers a further argument that problematizes the attribution of this thesis to the Pythagoreans. One could respond to my initial worry by claiming that, based on the extant fragments of Philolaus, we do not have sufficient grounds to claim that he endorsed the so-called Pythagorean doctrine of transmigration. However, as Iwata (2015) points out, Socrates’ remarks at 61d-e suggest that a belief in immortality and transmigration was indeed shared by Philolaus. Iwata (2015) agrees with Archer-Hind (1894), Gallop (1975), and Hackforth (1955) that Simmias is referring to the general public when he claims that this is what “we” take the soul to be. Huffman (1993) thinks that it refers to Simmias and Cebes, and Rowe (1993) that it refers to the Platonic circle. Burnet suggests that “we” could refer to either people in general or a heterodox Pythagorean circle, and there is, of course, the prevailing orthodoxy that “we” refers to Pythagoreans (cf. footnote 1).

Dixsaut (1991, 359), in her commentary on this passage, reminds the reader of the fragment of Alcmaeon of Croton where he describes health as an equilibrium (ἰσονόμια) of opposites such as hot/cold and wet/dry. The most obvious problem with connecting Alcmaeon to this passage is the fact that he describes health as ἁρμονία. First, Simmias is not claiming that a healthy soul has a ἁρμονία — indeed, that is something that Plato himself agreed with — but rather that a soul is a ἁρμονία. It is important to emphasize this because Socrates’ refutation of Simmias’ thesis only refutes the identification of the soul with a material ἁρμονία; it does not rule out the possibility of a soul possessing ἁρμονία. Second, ἅρμονία entails a 1:1 ratio unlike ἁρμονία, which entails that one or more of the relata dominate over the others. The octave, which is the ratio 2:1, is a paradigmatic instance of ἁρμονία. Simmias uses “ἁρμονία” to describe the condition of the soul and this term shouldn’t be understood loosely or conflated with other terms.
Even though Alcmaeon is unlikely to have been a direct influence, this view certainly carries echoes of other pre-Platonic natural philosophers. Bernhardt (1971, 76-93) and Dixsaut (1991, 116) both point out the similarity between Simmias’ thesis and Heraclitus’ doctrine of the harmony of opposites. Again, this is a fair supposition. Dixsaut (1991, 114) also points out the possible influence of Empedocles and Parmenides. Given the scope of this paper, I cannot comprehensively refute any of these possibilities or establish the ‘true’ source of such a view. Indeed, such a task might not even be worth pursuing. I would, however, like to suggest yet another alternative that could even serve as a complement to the existing ones.

The author of the Hippocratic treatise On Regimen reports a view of soul that bears strong resemblances to Simmias’ account. First, he describes the soul as a mixture of fire and water: “ἐσσέρει δὲ ἐς ἄνθρωπον ψυχὴ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος σύγκρησιν ἔχουσα, μοίρην σώματος ἀνθρώπου.” (Vict., 7.2). The soul has parts and the character of the soul depends on these parts attaining the “ἁρμονίης ὀρθῆς” (Vict., 8.11). Let us consider the relevant passages in some more detail.

The Hippocratic writer claims that all living entities are made up of fire and water (Vict. I.3), and further that all apparent generation and corruption is, in fact, the mingling and separation of immortal parts of living entities. Since fire and water are the basic constituents, we need to maintain some kind of a balance between these opposites. These opposites make up the immortal seeds that enter men and women and separate into sperm and the female counterpart of sperm. An embryo only begins to grow when the two kinds of seeds mingle at the right time and in the right way.

In chapter 8, the author describes this mingling as a ἁρμονίη of male and female seeds, using language that strongly echoes Philolaus’ description of musical ἁρμονίη in DK44 B6a. Later, in I.18, we are told more about the nature of this ἁρμονίη — it is that which governs dissimilar entities, and the finest ἁρμονίη comes from the most diverse entities. In chapter 8, though, the writer is just discussing the development of the human foetus. Here, ἁρμονίη governs the discrete components within a growing embryo in order for it to eventually become a whole human being. We already know that certain parts of fire and water are nourished in an embryo and that parts of the embryo receive nourishment until they are sufficiently large. At this point, these parts move into a larger place by force and necessity, and the portions start to separate off and commingle by changing position. We are then told:

χώρην δὲ ἀμείψαντα καὶ τυχόντα ἁρμονίης ὀρθῆς ἐχούσης συμφωνίας τρεῖς, ἐξυληθῆνα διεξαγαγόντες ἄνθρώπους, τούτοις ἀποκύννιον ὀρθὸν καὶ πρόσβασθαι ἕν ἐς τής ἃρμονίης, ἐξειδίκευσα τὸ βαρέα τούτοις ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, ἢν ἡ πρώτη συμφωνίη, ἢν ἡ δεύτερη γεννηθῇ ἢ τὸ διὰ πάντος, ἑνὸς ἀπογενομένου πάς ὅ τόνος μάταιον—ὁ γὰρ ἄν προσειδείην ἀλλὰ διότι οὐ γίνωσκωσθην ο τοιούτων." Vict. I.8

As Barker (2007, 283) has noticed, this contains musical language reminiscent of Philolaus’ fragment B6a and the use of “ἁρμονίη” here can be seen as a parallel of Philolaus’ use of it in fragments B6 and B6a. Carl Huffman (1996, 128-130) suggests

6 Scholars have detected the influence of On Regimen in other works within the Platonic corpus as well. Bury (1932) thinks that Aristophanes’ speech in the Symposium parodies the kind of theory of the sexes that can be seen in On Regimen; Craik (2001) suggests that Plato used ideas from On Regimen in the speech of Eryxymachus. Joly (1983, 1961) has compared the methodological passage from the Phaedrus (270) with On Regimen. For a detailed account of the philosophical legacy of On Regimen, see Bartos (2015, 237-280)

7 Simmias speaks of wet and dry rather than fire or water, but the author of this Hippocratic treatise makes explicit the connection between fire and dryness and water and moistness when he refers to them as “ἕδατος ξηροῦ καὶ πυρὸς ύγροῦ” (Vict. 7.10).
that Philolaus thinks that some sort of harmony must “supervene” upon limited things and unlimited in order to bind them together in the kosmos. In the case of embryology, the opposites are male and female seeds, which are themselves made up of fire and water, and they must be arranged according to the principle of ἁρμονίη in order for the eventual creation of a viable embryo. The embryo is more or less identified with the proper ἁρμονίη of its constituents.

Similarly, in the Phaedo, Simmias identifies the soul with a ἁρμονία. While we have evidence that earlier thinkers viewed ἁρμονία as a positive state, somatic, psychic, or otherwise, this is the only passage where an organism is more or less identified with a ἁρμονία. For Simmias, a soul would cease to be a soul if it weren’t a ἁρμονία of its constituents whereas Plato and other pre-Platonic thinkers would claim that a soul would cease to be a good soul if it lost its ἁρμονία. In the Hippocratic passage, too, the embryo would cease to be an embryo without ἁρμονία.

On Regimen is also a fascinating work because it contains many ideas that are familiar to us from earlier pre-Platonic thinkers. The passage on embryology brings to mind not only Philolaus but also Parmenides (B17); later in the treatise, author echoes Heraclitus (B8) when he claims that the finest harmony comes from diversity. My contention that On Regimen is a likely source for Simmias’ thesis need not, then, be in necessarily in tension with those who have detected Pythagorean, Heraclitean, or other pre-Platonic influences. I suggest that it is this syncretic account from the Hippocratic tradition, containing elements of Heracliteanism and Philoic metaphysics, that is evident in Simmias’ contention that the soul is a ἁρμονία of its physical constituents. This suggestion also lends credence to the view that Simmias’ thesis entails a materialism about the soul — the soul is simply made out of material opposites and, when these opposites are no longer in a ἁρμονία, it ceases to be.

Résumé
Dans le Phédon, Simmias avance la thèse selon laquelle l’âme est une ἁρμονία, en réponse à l’argument dit “par affinité” (78b–84b), argument par analogie selon lequel l’âme est immortelle parce qu’elle est semblable aux Formes divines : l’une comme les autres sont immuables, invisibles et divines — et, par conséquent, impérissables. Simmias poursuit en affirmant que c’est là ce que « nous » tenons pour être l’âme, et utilise ce contre-exemple pour avancer sa propre théorie de l’âme, qui vise à étayer le fait que, contrairement à ce que croit Socrate, l’âme est matérielle et mortelle. Simmias décrit l’âme comme un composé (κρᾶσις) ou une sorte d’ἁρμονία (ἁρμονία τις) d’opposés tels que le chaud et le froid, le sec et l’humide (86b5–d3). La thèse qu’il défend semble affirmer que l’âme dépend en quelque sorte de ses composants matériels, et qu’elle doit donc périr avant que ne périssent ceux-ci.

Dans cette communication, je m’attacherai à examiner deux difficultés que pose la thèse de l’âme-ἁρμονία soutenue par Simmias : d’une part, comment il convient de comprendre cette thèse ; de l’autre, quelle peut être l’identité du « nous » supposé la partager. Je défendrai l’idée que Platon n’a pas opéré les distinctions minuitieuses que les commentateurs contemporains lui ont attribué, et que ce que soutient Simmias est une simple thèse matérialiste : l’âme est composée, dans une juste proportion, d’opposés matériels, et lorsque cette proportion se trouve altérée et détruite, sous l’effet de la maladie ou d’autres facteurs, l’âme cesse d’exister.

J’examinerai ensuite les arguments selon lesquels la thèse de Simmias trouve son origine chez le pythagoricien Philolaos, ainsi ceux qui s’y opposent. Je soutiendrai l’idée que le traité hippocratique Du Régime est une source plus probable de cette thèse. Tandis que d’autre penseurs — parmi lesquels 8 Some scholars have claimed that Socrates’ refutation of Simmias’ thesis is in tension with the idea of a just soul as one that possesses ἁρμονία, as espoused in the Republic. Given my reading of Simmias’ thesis, we can see how there is no such tension. First, Plato thinks that a just soul has a ἁρμονία not that it is a ἁρμονία. Second, Simmias is talking about a material ἁρμονία whereas Plato has in mind an immaterial ἁρμονία. Therefore, the refutation of Simmias’ thesis fits quite well with the account of the soul in the Republic.
Platon – voient dans l’ἀρμονία un état (somatique, psychique, ou autre) positif, Simmias comme l'auteur du traité hippocratique identifient telle entité à une ἀρμονία. Dans Du Régime, un embryon cesse d'être un embryon en l'absence d’ἀρμονία ; pour Simmias, en l'absence d’ἀρμονία, une âme cesse d'être une âme. Qui plus est, l'âme (selon Simmias) et le corps (selon les hippocratiques) sont fait d'une ἁρμονία et d'une κρᾶσις des opposés matériels. La présence dans le Phédon de la notion de κρᾶσις est, soutiendrai-je, un autre indice du fait que cette doctrine trouve son origine chez les auteurs hippocratiques. Cette affirmation présente par ailleurs l'avantage de ne pas interdire absolument de voir dans la thèse de Simmias un écho de Philolaos ou d'Héraclite : certains passages du traité Du Régime sont, sans aucun doute, redevables à ces deux penseurs, et c'est précisément le syncrétisme de ces vues, faites d'héraclitéisme, de métaphysique philolaïque et de médecine hippocratique, qui s'exprime nettement dans l'affirmation de Simmias selon laquelle l'âme est une ἀρμονία.

Select Bibliography


Il Fedone e la memoria dell’Apologia di Socrate: a proposito di una raffinata strategia letteraria.

Corradi, Michele

Con la messa in scena delle ultime ore della vita di Socrate, il Fedone rappresenta la conclusione dell’ideale biografia intellettuale del maestro che Platone costruisce attraverso le pagine dei dialoghi. In modo del tutto coerente con l’immagine di Socrate che emerge dal grandioso e innovativo progetto letterario che Platone edifica con la propria produzione, anche l’atto finale della vita del filosofo non può essere che all’insigna del διαλέγεσθαι e della ricerca in comune. Come è lecito attendersi da un’opera che assume tale funzione conclusiva, all’interno della discussione sull’anima e il suo destino che Socrate sviluppa nelle pagine del Fedone è possibile riconoscere tematiche, motivi, argomentazioni già noti ai lettori da altri dialoghi. Platone sembra, con sottile arte allusiva, giocare con la memoria del proprio lettore: esplicito è il caso del rinvio alla dottrina dell’ἀνάμνησις a 72e-73b in cui Platone, come risulta soprattutto dal riferimento alle figure geometriche, presuppone la conoscenza da parte del proprio pubblico delle celebri pagine del Menone (81a-e). Ma, per rimanere a dialoghi con buona dose di probabilità ritenuti cronologicamente anteriori al Fedone (e senza voler addentrarsi nel problema di eventuali prolessi), anche dietro alla concezione della σωφροσύνη quale scambio di ἡδοναί e di λύπαι criticata a 68b-69b il lettore può riconoscere quella μετρητικὴ τέχνη che Socrate espone, pur in un contesto elenctico, alla fine del Protagora (355b-357e): forse non casuale è il richiamo in apertura della sezione alla σωφροσύνη di quei πολλοί (68b) nella prospettiva dei quali è concepita da Socrate nel Protagora la μετρητικὴ τέχνη. Ed è difficile non mettere in rapporto il mito escatologico del Fedone con le pagine conclusive del Gorgia: al di là dei non pochi paralleli contenutistici (per i quali canoniche sono ormai le pagine di Annas [1982], 125-127) Schäfer (2011), 161-162, sulla scia di Ebert (2004), 429, segnala la significativa presenza di un parallelo lessicale nel verbo πέπεισμαι utilizzato nei due testi da Platone per indicare la fiducia di Socrate nella verità dei due racconti (Phd. 108c8, 108e1, 108e4, 109a7; Grg. 526d3-4). In tutti questi casi non ci troviamo però di fronte a semplici riprese ma ogni volta emergono nuove prospettive, gli argomenti sono rielaborati, le tematiche approfondite.

In linea con questo generale sguardo retrospettivo che sembra caratterizzare molte pagine del Fedone si colloca anche la fitta rete di richiami all’Apologia di Socrate che Platone tesse nel proprio dialogo fin dalle prime battute del prologo. Se certo la connessione fra i due dialoghi appare di per sé naturale in relazione al rapporto di causa/effetto che intrattengono le vicende narrate, per l’appunto il processo e la conseguente esecuzione capitale di Socrate, non è sfuggita alla critica più attenta agli aspetti letterari dei dialoghi platonici la presenza di una voluta strategia intertestuale. La colgono non a caso due interpreti, che pure offrono due

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4 Cf. Rowe (1993), 148-149.
5 Se, come ha giustamente rilevato Clay (2000), x, ogni dialogo di Platone sembra costituire un
letture della produzione di Platone tra loro molto diverse, quali Thomas Alexander Szlezák, che parla nel suo Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie in relazione ad Apologia, Crîtone e Fedone di «difesa a tre livelli», e Christopher Rowe che, nel suo Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing, definisce il Fedone quale «Socrates’ defence continued», in sostanza una continuazione dell’Apologia⁶.

La presente comunicazione tenterà di chiarire alcuni aspetti peculiari della strategia intertestuale nei confronti dell’Apologia di Socrate che Platone mette in atto nel Fedone nella speranza di avanzare alcune ipotesi plausibili sul suo significato letterario e filosofico.

Già nell’incipit del Fedone, il cui importante valore per la poetica implicita di Platone è stato riconosciuto dalla critica⁷, il dialogo fra Echecrate e Fedone si sviluppa intorno alla memoria del processo e della morte di Socrate. Echecrate vuole conoscere quanto Socrate disse e come si comportò di fronte alla morte. Da lungo tempo, χρόνου συχνοῦ, nessuno ξένος è giunto da Atene a Flìunte per raccontare qualcosa di chiaro, σαφές τι, sulla vicenda. Ma chi è questo τις? Al di là della finzione dello scambio fra Echecrate e Fedone è forse possibile scorgere la riflessione di Platone sulla propria produzione: dietro il τις si cela forse il profilo di Platone, dietro il racconto sul τρόπος del processo il testo dell’Apologia. Certo, in una significativa struttura ad anello, un altro misterioso τις compare nel mito che conclude dialogo quale fonte di Socrate per la descrizione della vera natura della terra, un τις in cui alcuni interpreti colgono un riferimento di Platone a se stesso (108c)⁹. Del resto il profilo di Platone e tratti della sua riflessione, persino della sua esperienza biografica si celano forse in altri oscuri riferimenti a figure dall’identità indeterminata cui Socrate e i suoi interlocutori fanno allusione in più di un dialogo: basti pensare al μέγας τις ἀνήρ del Carmide capace di distinguere quali cose rivolgano a se stesse la propria δύναμις (169a) e al τις τῶν κρειττόνων, figura divina che, per bocca di Clinia o di qualcun altro degli interlocutori di Socrate, avrebbe pronunciato considerazioni importanti sul rapporto tra dialettica e matematica durante la discussione narrata nell’Eutidemo (291a), riferimenti in cui la critica ha colto una voluta anticipazione di dottrine che saranno esposte da Platone in dialoghi cronologicamente successivi, o all’uomo in grado di consigliare un regnante pur essendo un privato cittadino del Politico, ὅστις βασιλεύοντι χώραν ἀνδρὶ παραινεῖν δεινὸς ἰδιώτης ὢν αὐτός, in cui è stata scorta una possibile allusione all’esperienza di Platone a Siracusa (259a)¹⁰.

Se nel τις autore del resoconto sul processo di Socrate si cela dunque il profilo del Platone dell’Apologia, nella stessa insistita evocazione del lungo tempo trascorso (χρόνου συχνοῦ, πάλαι, πολλῷ ὑστερον) tra la condanna e l’esecuzione, che certo Platone basa su un concreto dato rituale, forse si riflette la consapevolezza del tempo trascorso tra la composizione dell’Apologia e quella del Fedone, dialogo che completa un progetto forse concepito proprio al momento della composizione dell’Apologia

mond a sé (“the sun is new every day”) e non aver bisogno per essere compreso di una conoscenza sistematica degli altri dialoghi, innegabile è volontà da parte di Platone di creare collegamenti più o meno espliciti fra i vari dialoghi: basta pensare alla trilogia costituita da Teeteto, Sofista, Politico o ai rapporti tra Repubblica, Timeo e Crizia. Cfr. ora Capra (2015), 66.

6 Szlezák (1985), 298-333.
7 Rowe (2007), 96-121.
10 Friedländer (1975), 1029. Nel Simposio un ἄλλος … τις è fonte per un interlocutore di Apollodoro di una tradizione alternativa sugli ἐρωτικοὶ λόγοι pronunziati a casa di Agatone, risalente a Fenice figlio di Filippo: una tradizione certo inferiore, priva di σαφές (172a).
stessa: ad un ἄλλος λόγος in cui dovrà rendere conto del suo atteggiamento nei confronti della morte Socrate fa infatti riferimento già nell’Apologia (34e).

Al di là della sezione incipitaria del dialogo, come cercheremo di mostrare, il richiamo alle pagine dell’Apologia è costante in tutto il Fedone. Già Friedländer (1975), 754, evidenziava come non a caso Platone sottolinei la vicinanza tra il luogo del processo e quello del carcere, dunque la scena dell’Apologia con quella del Fedone. Ma ulteriori dettagli colpiscono. Consideriamo soltanto qualche esempio. In entrambi i dialoghi è dato uno spazio non marginale alla figura di Eveno, evocato da Socrate nell’Apologia per la presunta capacità di insegnare l’ἀρετή (20b) e, in modo più ampio, nel Fedone (60d-61c) in relazione all’attività poetica di Socrate in carcere e al tema della μελέτη θανάτου11. Il confronto fra il filosofare di Socrate e la fisica presocratica, più in particolare con Anassagora, è sviluppato da Socrate nell’Apologia in risposta alle contraddittorie accuse di Meleto (26b-e) mentre nel Fedone s’insinera nel quadro più articolato dell’autobiografia filosofica di Socrate (96a-99c). Nella sezione finale dei due dialoghi si trova inoltre il rinvio al giudizio dei δικασταί infernali di cui Apologia (41a) ci offre i nomi (Minosse, Radamanto, Eaco, Triptolemo) che sono invece tacuti nel Fedone (107d-e e 113d-114c). Ma forse è nell’insistito parallelo che Socrate stabilisce fra i suoi discepoli nel Fedone e i giudici del processo che il voluto accostamento fra i due dialoghi emerge con maggiore forza12: a 63b, ad esempio, Socrate avverte la necessità di doversi difendere davanti alle obiezioni di Simmia e Cebete come in un tribunale, χρή με πρὸς ταῦτα ἀπολογήσασθαι ὥσπερ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ13 e, a 69e, si augura di risultare più persuasivo con i propri discepoli di quanto non lo sia stato con i giudici ateniesi, ὑμῖν πιθανώτερός εἰμι ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ ἢ τοῖς Ἀθηναίων δικασταῖς. Ma ancora, in conclusione del dialogo, a 115d, Socrate prega i propri compagni di garantire per lui nei confronti di Critone il contrario rispetto a quanto Critone aveva garantito ai δικασταί: una volta morto l’anima di Socrate sarà ben lungi dal suo corpo.

Se dalla fitta trama di riferimenti ai δικασταί del Fedone emerge chiara la volontà di richiamare alla memoria del lettore l’Apologia un riferimento all’Apologia si cela forse anche nella celebre sottolineatura dell’assenza di Platone, malato, dalla cerchia degli ἑταῖροι presenti all’atto finale della vita di Socrate (59a): ad essa corrisponde infatti la presenza, evocata a due riprese (34a, 38b), del filosofo sulla scena dell’Apologia. Com’è noto, i due passi dell’Apologia e il passo del Fedone sono gli unici in cui il nome di Platone compare in tutto il corpus dei dialoghi. L’inevitabile associazione fra il passo del Fedone e i due dell’Apologia tra l’altro potrebbe essere un’ulteriore conferma del fatto che Platone volesse richiamare attraverso l’iniziale

11 Si noti come il richiamo ad Eveno si trovi nei due dialoghi nella sezione incipitaria e dia in qualche modo l’avvio al tema principale della discussione, la natura del filosofare di Socrate nell’Apologia, il problema del destino dell’anima dopo la morte nel Fedone. Il richiamo a Eveno si inserisce però in due strutture narrative curiosamente opposte dal punto di vista temporale: nell’Apologia, Socrate riporta un dialogo avvenuto nel passato con Callia in relazione all’attività paideutica del sofista, nel Fedone, Cebete si fa tramite di una richiesta di chiarimento di Eveno in relazione all’attività poetica di Socrate la cui risposta è affidata ad un dialogo tra Cebete ed Eveno che si svilupperà nel futuro.


riferimento alla narrazione del processo di Socrate ai pitagorici di Fliunte la propria opera, l’Apologia, quale resoconto di un τις che aveva assistito in prima persona ai fatti.

Come nel caso dei presunti riferimenti ad altri dialoghi, anche nel caso delle allusioni all’Apologia non ci troviamo di fronte ad una semplice riproposizione di temi e argomentazioni ma a una vera e propria loro rielaborazione. Particolarmente significativo è il caso su cui forse più si è esercitato l’impegno della critica: a 63b-c, in risposta alle obiezioni di Simmia e Cebete a proposito dell’attitudine di Socrate riguardo alla morte, il filosofo costruisce un discorso molto elaborato dal punto di vista retorico, intessuto di chiari riferimenti al testo dell’Apologia, ma che, dal punto di vista del contenuto, dall’Apologia sembra almeno in parte distaccarsi. Socrate dichiara di voler tentare di difendersi davanti a Simmia e Cebete in modo più persuasivo rispetto a quanto non abbia fatto con i giudici, πειραθῶ πιθανῶτερον πρὸς ύμᾶς ἀπολογήσασθαι ἢ πρὸς τοὺς δικαστὰς. Se infatti non pensasse di andare dopo la morte in primo luogo presso gli dei e quindi presso uomini defunti migliori rispetto a quelli in vita sulla terra, εἰ μὲν μὴ ᾤμην ἥξειν πρῶτον μὲν παρὰ θεοὺς ἄλλους σοφοὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθούς, ἔπειτα καὶ παρὰ ἀνθρώπους τετελευτηκότας ἀμείνους τῶν ἐνθάδε ἀνθρώπων, sbaglierebbe a non adirarsi davanti alla morte, ἠδίκουν ἂν οὐκ ἄγανακτῶν τῷ θανάτῳ. Ma Simmia e Cebete sanno bene che Socrate spera di andare presso uomini ἀγαθοί, senza però esserne sicuro. Sono inoltre ben consapevoli del fatto che Socrate è invece molto fiducioso di andare presso padroni davvero ἀγαθοί, gli dei, e non sosterrebbe nulla con più forza:

νῦν δὲ εὖ ἴστε ὅτι παρὰ ἄνδρας τε ἐλπίζω ἀφίξεσθαι ἀγαθούς – καὶ τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἂν πάνω δισχυρισαίμην – ὅτι μὲντοι παρὰ θεοὺς δεσπότας πάνω ἀγαθούς ἦξειν, εὖ ἴστε ὅτι ἐπερ ἵν ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων δισχυρισαίμην ἃν καὶ τοῦτο.

Così Socrate non si adira davanti alla morte, ὡστε διὰ ταύτα οὐκ ὡμοίως ἄγανακτῶ, ma, sulla base della tradizione, è εὐελπίς a proposito del fatto che gli ἀγαθοὶ dopo la morte abbian un destino migliore rispetto ai malvagi, ἀλλ’ εὐελπίς εἰμι εἰναὶ τοῖς τετελευτηκόσι καὶ, ὅσπερ γε καὶ πάλαι λέγεται, πολὺ ἁμείνου τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἢ τοῖς κακοῖς. Il richiamo all’Apologia, trasparente di per sé già nell’utilizzo del verbo ἀπολογήσασθαι, è evidente non solo nel riferimento ai giudici ma anche nella riproposizione dei temi della persuasione e dell’ἐλπίς. Dal punto di vista lessicale colpisce l’anafora della sequenza εὖ ἴστε, sequenza che singolarmente, in tutto il resto del corpus platonico, si trova, non inframmezzata da altre particelle (più comune è ad esempio la sequenza εὖ γὰρ ἴστε o l’usuale sequenza al singolare εὖ ἴσθι) soltanto in tre significative sezioni dell’Apologia in cui Socrate richiama tratti fondamentali del suo rapporto con gli Ateniesi: l’odio nei suoi confronti (28a), il beneficio apportato dal suo ἐξετάζειν (30a), la coerenza delle sue parole (33b).

Pur in un contesto permeato da una forte allusività all’Apologia il testo propone però una variazione dal punto di vista del contenuto rispetto al risultato raggiunto al termine dall’Apologia sul destino dell’uomo dopo la morte (40c-41c). Socrate considerava, senza operare alcuna scelta, due possibilità, a fondamento di una πολλὴ ἐλπίς sulla bontà di tale destino, δυοῖν γὰρ θάτερόν ἐστιν τὸ τεθνάναι: o l’ essere morti è simile al nulla, dal momento che con la morte viene meno ogni sensibilità, ἢ γὰρ οἷον μηδὲν εἶναι μηδὲ αἰσθῆσιν μηδεμίαν μηδενὸς ἔχειν τὸν τεθνεῶτα, o si verificano una μεταβολή τις dell’anima e una μετοίκησις in altro luogo, τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε ἀλλὸν τόπον. Nel primo caso la morte non sarebbe che una profonda e piacevole notte di sonno senza sogni, nel secondo caso l’anima andrebbe in un luogo dove, secondo la tradizione, troverà giudici giusti nonché semidei ed uomini illustri, poeti quali Orfeo, Museo, Esiodo e Omero, eroi quali
Palamede, Aiace, Odisseo, Sisifo con i quali poter felicemente διαλέγεσθαι καὶ συνεῖναι καὶ έξετάξειν. Nel passo del Fedone la prima possibilità non è considerata. È invece sviluppata la seconda ipotesi con l’ulteriore formulazione di due ipotesi relative rispettivamente alla presenza nell’aldilà di dei e di uomini migliori. Solo in un secondo tempo Cebete considererà la possibilità dell’estinzione dell’anima con la morte in termini però del tutto negativi (70b) e Socrate s’impegnerà da subito nella confutazione di questa ipotesi.

La critica si è a lungo interrogata su questa variazione: spesso è stata letta come la volontà di Platone di distinguere la propria posizione da quella di Socrate, che sarebbe stata più fedelmente riportata nell’Apologia, talora è stata ipotizzata uno sviluppo dottrinale. Per quanto tali punti di vista mantengano comunque una loro plausibilità, nuovi approcci alla questione permettono oggi raffinate soluzioni del problema. Da un lato alcuni interpreti hanno messo in rilievo l’importanza del diverso contesto e del diverso pubblico di Socrate nei due dialoghi (Centrone [2000], vii-x, e, pur nella prospettiva delle dottrine non scritte, Szlezák [1985], 314-318), altri hanno mostrato, al di là delle apparenti differenze, la sostanziale coerenza della prospettiva (Rowe [2007], 96-121, Notomi [2013],). Credo che entrambe le posizioni colgano aspetti reali dell’operazione messa in atto da Platone. Da un lato, come indica chiaramente il Fedro (271c-272b), il λόγος del filosofo deve essere adattato alla natura dell’interlocutore: davanti al ristretto e competente pubblico dei suoi discepoli può proporre argomenti che difficilmente avrebbero potuto essere recepiti dalla massa dei δικασταί14. Dall’altro, nello stesso brano dell’Apologia alcuni segnali indicano che l’opzione della sopravvivenza dell’anima dopo la morte sia per il Socrate dell’Apologia quella più plausibile: lo indicerebbe ad esempio il fatto che proprio alla fine della presentazione delle due possibilità relative al destino dell’uomo dopo la morte Socrate rilevi come gli dei abbiano a cuore in vita e in morte l’uomo buono a cui nulla può capitare di male, οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι, οὐδὲ ἀμελεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν τὰ τούτου πράγματα (41d). Affermazione che certo meglio si concilia con l’ipotesi della sopravvivenza dell’anima che con quella del suo annullarsi in una notte senza sogni15. Le differenze sul problema della morte fra Apologia e Fedone non avrebbero rilievo dottrinale ma si ridurrebbero nei nuovi approcci della critica alla retorica dell’argomentazione.

In ogni caso, anche lasciando aperte le questioni se l’operazione messa qui in atto da Platone si fermi al piano retorico o implichi in una qualche misura anche quello del contenuto, se essa sottintenda un’evoluzione del pensiero di Platone o una presa di distanza rispetto alla posizione del Socrate storico, la presenza di questo sottile ma evidente gioco di analogie e scarti permette forse di sviluppare ulteriori considerazioni proprio in relazione a quel più generale sguardo retrospettivo che, come abbiamo sottolineato, il Fedone sembra rivolgere ad altri dialoghi.

La riproposizione nei vari dialoghi di tematiche simili, affrontate secondo prospettive diverse, fertili di sviluppi sempre nuovi, può essere un modo con cui Platone spinge il proprio lettore a mettere in rapporto i singoli dialoghi, richiamati con sottile arte allusiva. Arte allusiva che, come è noto, gioca sui meccanismi di memoria del lettore16. Forse non è un caso che proprio nel Fedone, testo in cui, come abbiamo visto, Platone fa ampio ricorso a questo sottile gioco letterario, i meccanismi della memoria siano spiegati nell’ambito del problema dell’ἀνάμνησις (73c-74a): la visione della lira o del mantello dell’amato richiama alla memoria l’εἶδος dell’amato, la visione di Simmia suscita il ricordo di Cebete, quella di un dipinto di Simmia fa ricordare Simmia in carne ed ossa o ancora una volta Cebete. Meccanismi basati

su somiglianze, capaci ad un tempo di rivelare sottili differenze. La percezione delle somiglianze fra un dialogo e l'altro permettono dunque al lettore di cogliere l'unità di quel corpus di scritti ἀδελφοί, che nelle tarde Leggi (VII.811e) teorizzerà quale produzione letteraria ideale per l'educazione dei cittadini. Un corpus che però, come rivelano le sottili differenze fra un dialogo e l'altro che il lettore può scoprire grazie al raffinato gioco dell'allusività, non deve essere inteso quale sede di un sapere definitivamente stabilito ma quale luogo destinato, pur all'interno di un preciso quadro di riferimento, ad essere continuamente riesaminato secondo quell'esigenza intrinseca alla filosofia di Platone che il suo Socrate pratica fino in punto di morte.

Résumé

La mise en scène des dernières heures de la vie de Socrate dans le Phédon représente la conclusion de la biographie intellectuelle idéale que Platon entend donner de son maître à travers ses dialogues. Comme l'on peut s'y attendre de la part d'une œuvre qui présente une telle dimension conclusive, il est possible de reconnaître au sein même de la discussion que mène Socrate dans le Phédon des thèmes et des argumentations qui sont déjà connus des lecteurs des autres dialogues de Platon. Avec un art consommé de l'allusion, Platon semble mettre en jeu la mémoire de son lecteur. Il le fait explicitement avec le renvoi à la doctrine de l'anamnesis (72e-73b), qui semble présupposer la connaissance par le public du passage célèbre du Ménon (81a-e). Mais ce n'est pas là le seul cas. Sous la conception de la sophrosune critiquée en 68e-69b en tant qu'échange de hedonai et de lupai le lecteur peut aisément reconnaître la metretike que Socrate envisage dans le Protagoras (351b-360e). Et il est bien difficile de ne pas mettre en rapport le mythe eschatologique avec les dernières pages du Gorgias. Reste que tous ces renvois ne sont pas de simples reprises de thèmes ou d'argumentations connus, mais qu'ils font chaque fois émerger de nouvelles perspectives dans lesquelles les arguments sont réélabores et les thématiques approfondies. C'est dans la droite ligne de ce regard rétrospectif qui caractérise de nombreuses pages du Phédon que se situe également la trame serrée de renvois à l'Apologie de Socrate que Platon tisse dans ce dialogue. Assurément le lien entre les deux œuvres est tout à fait naturelle eu égard à la relation de cause à effet inhérente aux événements décrits, notamment en ce qui concerne le procès puis l'exécution de Socrate. Mais il n'a pas non plus échappé aux commentateurs les plus attentifs aux aspects littéraires du dialogue, que l'on trouve dans celui-ci une stratégie intertextuelle délibérée. Dès l’incipit (57a-59c), le dialogue entre Échécrate et Phédon se déroule dans un contexte qui renvoie au souvenir de ce qui s’est passé au moment du procès et de la mort de Socrate. Et on peut peut-être, sous le tis qui a rapporté à Échécrate et à la communauté pythagoricienne de Phlione ce qui s'était produit au moment du procès, voir se profiler le Platon de l’Apologie. Si le cas du prologue est manifeste, de nombreuses autres analogies entre les deux dialogues sont repérables qu’il suffise de penser au renvoi à Événos (Ap. 20b, Phd. 60d-61c), à la comparaison avec la physique présocratique (Ap. 26b-e, Phd. 96a-99c), à l’allusion aux juges des Enfers (Ap. 41a, Phd. 113d-114c), et surtout au parallèle que Socrate établit entre ses disciples dans le Phédon et ses juges dans le procès, parallèle sur lequel il insiste particulièrement. Le cas le plus significatif est peut-être celui sur lequel les commentaires se sont le plus attardé : en 63b-c, Socrate, pour réfuter les objections de ses disciples, prononce un discours particulièrement élaboré sur

le plan rhétorique, où il présente fermement sa position au sujet de la survie de l'âme après la mort. Bien que le texte laisse transparaître clairement l'allusion étroite qui le lie à l'Apologie, il n'en propose pas moins une variation du point de vue du contenu au regard de la conclusion sur le destin de l'homme après la mort à laquelle était parvenue l'Apologie au terme du dialogue (40c-41c). Dans l'Apologie, Socrate envisageait, sans pour autant procéder à un choix décisif, deux possibilités quant à ce destin : ou bien, au moment de la mort, il n'y a plus aucune aisthesis, ou bien il se produit une metabole de l'âme et une metoikesis dans un autre lieu. Dans le Phédon la première possibilité n'est pas envisagée et seule la seconde est développée, mais on y trouve l'énoncé de deux hypothèses supplémentaires relativement à la présence dans l'au-delà de dieux et d'hommes meilleurs. Les commentateurs se sont longuement interrogés sur le sens de ces variations, soit en soulignant l'importance du contexte qui est différent dans les deux dialogues comme sont également différents les interlocuteurs de Socrate présents dans les deux œuvres, soit en montrant que, par delà les différences apparentes, il y a néanmoins une cohérence substantielle entre les deux perspectives. Les deux positions mettent en lumière des aspects indéniables de l'opération mise en œuvre par Platon. Il est toutefois possible d'ajouter à ces observations certaines considérations supplémentaires qui ont trait au regard rétrospectif que le Phédon, comme nous l'avons déjà souligné, semble porter sur les autres dialogues. Cette manière de procéder, en reprenant dans les dialogues des thèmes similaires, abordés cependant dans des perspectives différentes, et fertiles en développements nouveaux, manière de procéder qui apparaît clairement dans le cas du rapport entre l'Apologie et le Phédon, est celle dont Platon se sert pour inciter son lecteur à percevoir l'unité de ce corpus d'adelpha grommata, que dans ce dialogue tardif que sont les Lois (VII.811e), l'Athénien théorisera comme étant la production littéraire idéale en vue de l'éducation des citoyens. Ce corpus qui ne doit cependant pas être compris comme le siège d'un savoir définitivement établi mais comme le lieu d'un savoir destiné, quand bien même ce ne serait qu'à l'intérieur d'un cadre précis, à être continûment remis en question à la lumière de cette exigence propre à la philosophie de Platon qui est celle que, dans ses dialogues, Socrate pratique jusques et y compris au moment où il est sur le point de mourir.


Los dos términos contrapuestos en la analogía se han interpretado de maneras muy diversas. En este contexto, lógoi ha sido traducido como “enunciados”, “conceptos”, “teorías”, “definiciones”, “argumentos” y “proposiciones”. También hay discrepancia a la hora de traducir érga: los “objetos exteriores”, “operaciones”.

1 Fedón 99e6-100a3: ἴσως μὲν οὖν ὃς εἰκάζω τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ ἔοικεν: οὐ γὰρ πάνυ συγχωρῶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις; trad. cast. de C. Eggers Lan.
2 Puede verse, de hecho, como una lejana prefiguración del sin salida en el que parece haber puesto el giro lingüístico a la filosofía y a los saberes fácticos, como la historia. Ya que si toda forma de investigación implica investigar en imágenes, no hay “hechos” sino sólo lógoi, palabras.
5 Murphy, 1936: 40-41.
9 Hackforth, ibid.
10 Dorter, 1986: 121.
ítems “en concreto”11, las “cosas físicas”12, las “experiencias”13 o los “hechos”14. Lógos -érgon es una fórmula de oposición que Platón emplea de manera recurrente, a lo largo de toda su obra, y con sentidos diferentes: a veces alude a la diferencia entre lo que se dice y lo que se hace (Laques 188d, Carta VII, 328c-d); otras veces, a la distancia entre la idealidad y la factibilidad de un plan (República V 473a); otras, incluso, a la vida civil como contraparte de la acción militar en una pólis (Timeo 19b-c). En el Fedón varias veces aparecen ambos términos, por separado, pero sólo en este marco, el de la analogía con el eclipse, se contraponen, y con un sentido netamente gnoseológico. Aquí indican dos modos diferentes de obtener conocimiento –eso es, justamente, lo que pretende el Sócrates platónico: explicar a sus discípulos cómo es que él, al cabo de sucesivos fracasos, intentó aproximarse a “la verdad de las cosas”15. En este mismo marco, inmediatamente después de la analogía con el eclipse, se denomina lógos a aquello mismo que Sócrates “pone como base” (hypothenemos hekástote lógon, en 100a3-4) para poder determinar cuál es la causa de que algo sea, se genere o se corrompa. De modo que los lógoi en los que Sócrates se refugia deben ser enunciados proposicionales; pueden ser incluso –como se dirá más adelante— proposiciones, de mayor o menor generalidad16. Al referente lexical de los érga podemos aproximarnos parcialmente por la negativa: están en posición antagónica respecto de los lógoi; y si estos últimos son proposiciones, los érga podrían ser “cosas” o “hechos”. Pero si identificamos a su referente con las “cosas” oscurecemos la diferencia que existe entre estos érga, concebidos al igual que los lógoi como medios para la investigación, y aquello mismo que es objeto de la investigación: tà prágmata (99e3) y tà ónta (99e6 y 100a2)17, por lo que prefiero “hechos”, que alude además al modo en que las cosas aparecen, se manifiestan en su carácter concreto18.

El carácter constructivo que tiene en este pasaje del Fedón el conocimiento obtenido mediante lógoi debería poder aceptarse al menos en principio en la medida en que el Sócrates platónico describe su segunda navegación como un refugio en hipótesis, cada una de las cuales es un cierto lógos. El método hipotético

12 Kanayama, 2000: 46-47.
14 Eggers Lan, García Gual y Vigo, ibid.
15 Cf. Fd. 99e5-6: τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν.
16 La hipótesis con la que se ilustra en primer lugar es efectivamente una proposición: “si hay alguna otra cosa bella al margen de lo bello mismo, no podría ser bella por ninguna otra cosa sino por participar de eso que es bello por sí mismo” (100c4-6). Podría objetarse que este supuesto o hipótesis, a su vez, supone otra cosa, y es que existen ítems como “lo bello en sí mismo”, y que entonces la hipótesis no es ya tan sólo una proposición sino, acaso, toda la teoría de las formas. Pero se trata, en definitiva, de una proposición de mayor generalidad, cuyas implicancias para la comprensión global del platonismo no puede dirimirse a nivel del referente lexical. Desde un punto de vista lógico y sintáctico, estos lógoi son proposiciones. Cf. lo que sigue y nota 19.
17 Mientras que tà prágmata (en 99e3) y tà ónta (en 99e6 y 100a2) refieren al objeto que se investiga (el “cada cosa” implícito en διὰ τί γίγνεται ἐκαστάν καὶ διὰ τί ἄπολλυται καὶ διὰ τί ἐστι), en 100a5, ónta no refiere a “cosas” sino más bien a “hechos” que pueden ser enunciados en un juicio, ya que a tales ónta son consideradas “como verdaderas” a la luz del lógos puesto como base.
18 Nuestras lenguas han desplegado una cantidad de significados contenidos en érgon y en su raíz –erg, que implica “trabajo”. Tanto “en concreto” como “hecho” son traducciones que convienen al contraste que Platón intenta subrayar aquí.
que propone no implica sino poner como base, en cada caso, un lógos, el que se juzga como más sólido (100a3-4), y emplearlo como provisional criterio de verdad y falsedad para el análisis básico de los fenómenos (100a4-7). La ilustración que da Sócrates de estos lógoi es la de una explicación de tipo causal, aunque admite que podrían ser explicaciones concernientes a otros asuntos, no sólo causales. La hipótesis de Sócrates es que “si hay alguna otra cosa bella al margen de lo bello mismo, no podría ser bello por ninguna otra cosa sino por participar de eso que es bello por sí mismo” (100c4-6). El carácter provisional, hipotético, de estos lógoi, es reivindicado con gran insistencia en todo este pasaje. Y si bien los resultados provisionales se muestran a los ojos del Sócrates platónico como “los más seguros”, de todos modos recomienda a los demás, ante posibles objeciones, llevar hasta el final el método evaluando la coherencia de esos lógoi que se tomaron como base (101d3-6). Incluso se prevé que habrá que dar razón de esas explicaciones de carácter hipotético, para lo cual se debería proceder “del mismo modo poniendo nuevamente como base una suposición diferente que te pareciera mejor entre las de orden superior hasta llegar a algo suficiente” (101d6-e1).

Incluso el sentido de la metáfora de la segunda navegación, entendida como second best, resulta más claro a la luz del carácter constructivo de los lógoi y en él está la clave de la afirmación del Sócrates platónico de que tanto ellos como los hechos concretos son imágenes (99e6-100a3). ¿De qué cree Platón que son imágenes los lógoi y por qué para él son imágenes? Los intérpretes del diálogo, casi sin excepción, responden aquí: son imágenes de las formas; sin embargo no me parece que sea éste el sentido fundamental que Platón está queriendo expresar. En griego, e igualmente en las lenguas romances, la noción de eikón connota básicamente dos cosas: por un lado una “semejanza” o “parecido”; por otro lado un “retrato” o “recreación” (originalmente, en pintura o escultura) que comporta la noción de semejanza pero

19 Cf. Fd. 100a6: καὶ περὶ αἴτιας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ὑποτελεῖν.
20 Como es evidente, esta hipótesis a su vez da por supuesto algo más, y muy importante, que existe lo bello en sí mismo. Sin embargo, el método se presenta como independiente de las formas. “Está claro que el método es inicialmente independiente de las formas dado que no son mencionadas ni aquí (101a-c) ni en el segundo estadio (101d) (…) sin embargo si se sigue adelante suficientemente con la investigación, la teoría de las formas se va a introducir” ya que “se vuelve de inmediato relevante y enseguida puesta como hipótesis” (K. Dorter, 1982: 127-128; el subrayado es mío). W. Wieland (1999: 154), al analizar esta oscilación –¿se trata de una proposición que afirma la existencia de la idea, o es la idea en sí misma la que se afirma en este tipo de lógoi?— admite que “en las condiciones en las que se lleva a cabo la conversación en el Fedón, no se encuentra una clara conciencia de esta diferencia. Aunque hay algunas formulaciones que podrían ser interpretadas como afirmaciones existenciales, Sócrates hace poco uso de ellas”.
21 Cf. hypothémenos en 100a3-4, 100b5-6, 101d-7, hypóthesis en 101d2, 3 y 7; además de otras expresiones correspondientes, como el requerimiento del synchorein (100c 8 y 9), y todo el pasaje 100d-e, en el que descarta toda certidumbre respecto del modo en que se produce, efectivamente, la causación.
22 Cf. asphaléstatos en 100d8.
23 Dejo de lado ahora una discusión de en qué consiste este “τι έκαβον”; aunque me inclino por la lectura que lo emparenta con el principio no hipotético de Rep. VI-VII, como argumenta Vigo, 2009: 137-142 y 156-157.
que incluye un elemento extra: la composición o elaboración de esa semejanza. En el primer caso, eikón puede expresar simplemente alguna clase de reflejo de una cosa en otra, pero en el segundo caso expresa implícitamente la idea de que hay una actividad que consiste en representar o recrear, llevada a cabo por un agente, y de la cual ese eikón es el resultado. Cuando entendemos, a la manera tradicional, que los lógoi son imágenes de las formas, estamos apuntando al primer sentido de eikón: los lógoi reflejan las formas. Pero no creo que sea esto lo que quiere decir Platón aquí, primero porque las formas todavía no han sido introducidas en este argumento y además tampoco puede explicarse, en el marco del diálogo, de qué manera o en qué sentido las proposiciones o lógoi serían sus reflejos. A mi juicio, el que está implícito aquí es el segundo sentido de eikón. Lo que afirma Platón es que las imágenes que ofrecen los lógoi, aunque son imágenes —al igual que los hechos concretos—son sin embargo desde un punto de vista cognitivo más firmes, más confiables y más aptas para proporcionar conocimiento de la verdad que esos hechos concretos. Esto es lo que se ha defendido con vehemencia a lo largo del diálogo: que el conocimiento proporcionado por el alma (y es evidente que conocer mediante lógoi es una prerrogativa del alma más que del cuerpo) es más firme, confiable y apto para la verdad que el conocimiento proporcionado por los sentidos a través del cuerpo, aunque éste, en su carácter concreto, parezca ser inmediato. Esto ya ha sido dicho. Ahora creo que Platón, con esta corrección, nos está diciendo que el conocimiento de imágenes que proporcionan los lógoi es más seguro que el conocimiento de imágenes que proporcionan los hechos porque también lo es la actividad de representación que estas imágenes implican y de la cual ellas son el resultado.

En el Fedón no se dice explícitamente que los lógoi son imágenes por ser el resultado de una actividad de representación. Pero de hecho tampoco se dice que lógon y érgon sean imágenes de las formas. En otros diálogos sí encontramos expresada esta concepción del lógos como eikón y como resultado de una cierta composición. En el Crátilo, se afirma que los lógoi son una combinación de nombres y expresiones predicativas26. Si bien allí el énfasis está puesto en confrontar dos visiones antitéticas acerca de la relación entre realidad y lenguaje, y no en el valor cognoscitivo del lógos —sólo Sócrates reclama que el lenguaje debe referir a realidades estables para poder ser vehículo de conocimiento—de todos modos en el Crátilo se sostiene más allá de toda disputa que todo lógos comporta determinadas actividades de denominación y de composición. Es sólo por esa síntesis mediadora, por el hecho de ser una imagen elaborada y no la cosa misma, que el lógos se vuelve significativo y puede asumir “un rol positivo de instrumento de indagación acerca de lo real y de búsqueda de la verdad”27. Por supuesto que la actividad de composición puede ser correcta o incorrecta, incluso engañosa. Platón analiza con lucidez en el Sofista cómo las imágenes del lógos se emplean en las técnicas sofísticas de manipulación.

Esta idea de que el lenguaje es una cierta actividad de composición y por lo tanto una cierta representación de lo que es aparece más claramente en el Critias,


27 Cf. Turrini, 1979: 303-304. Mientras que para Gorgias el lógos no puede mostrar “lo que es” porque es otra cosa distinta (e igualmente las cosas audibles no pueden verse porque son distintas de las cosas visibles, y viceversa; cf. Sexto Empírico, Adv. Math. VII.84), Platón puede “romper la continuidad entre pensamiento mágico y técnica sofística” precisamente por el “descubrimiento de la pertenencia de la palabra al ámbito del eikón”.
diálogo en el que, además, se enfatiza que esa actividad pone en tela de juicio la competencia no sólo expresiva sino también cognitiva y comunicativa (persuasiva) del que habla. Allí, Critias, perturbado por tener que dar su lógos en público luego de la apabullante presentación de Timeo, afirma que “todo lo que decimos es necesariamente una imitación y una representación”\(^{28}\). E invita a comparar toda exposición de conocimientos (de filosofía natural o de otros temas, como la historia) con una “producción pictórica de imágenes de cuerpos divinos y humanos”, considerándola desde el punto de vista de su “facilidad o dificultad para dar a los espectadores la impresión de una imitación correcta”\(^{29}\). Más allá de la desconfianza de Critias por la grandilocuencia de los filósofos de la naturaleza, su queja nos advierte que elaborar lógoi implica un cierto conocimiento sumado a la habilidad para expresarlos mediante una traducción de tipo mimético, como cualquier otra eidolopoiía.

Pero es en el Timeo donde se vuelve patente la conciencia de que el lógos es el resultado de una actividad que debe tener en cuenta no sólo al objeto del conocimiento sino también a la construcción subjetiva de su correspondiente representación\(^{30}\). En este diálogo, el personaje central –al igual que el Sócrates del Fedón, pero con mucha más decisión—busca establecer mediante axiomas\(^{31}\) e hipótesis\(^{32}\) series causales que expliquen por qué la realidad física nace, por qué muere y por qué es. Antes de hacerlo, Timeo se detiene a describir el tipo de lógos que empleará: lo llama eikós, “verosímil”, palabra que en griego tiene la misma raíz de eikón, “imagen”. Del lógos eikós de Timeo se dice que es un eikón\(^{33}\). No sólo porque todo lógos es, en cierta medida, una semejanza de lo que debe explicar, sino porque, en tanto representación, es decir: resultado de una actividad a la vez cognitiva y comunicativa, el lógos eikós debe ser asemejado hasta donde sea posible a la verdad contenida en los discursos verdaderos e irrefutables sobre objetos que admiten este tipo de saber\(^{34}\).

 Así, la corrección de Sócrates a la analogía con el eclipse en el Fedón se comprende, en primer lugar, a partir de la evidencia de que “la imagen es co-

\(^{28}\) Critias 107b: μίμησιν μὲν γὰρ δὴ καὶ ἀπεικασίαν τὰ παρὰ πάντων ἡμῶν ῥηθέντα χρεών που γενέσθαι.

\(^{29}\) Critias 107b-c: τὴν δὲ τῶν γραφέων εἰδωλοποιίαν περὶ τὰ θεῖα τε καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα σώματα γεγονομένην ἰδωμένων ῥατότης τε πέρι καὶ χαλεπότητος πρὸς τὸ τοῦ ὄρωσιν δοκεῖν ἀποχρώντως μεμιμῆσθαι.

\(^{30}\) Cf. Tim. 29c-d.


\(^{32}\) Particularmente análoga es la ocurrencia del léxico de hypóthesis / hypotíthemi en Timeo 53c-55e, donde se busca establecer por qué el fuego es fuego, y así con las cuatro partículas elementales de todo lo corpóreo.

\(^{33}\) Tim. 29c: τοῖς δὲ τοῦ πρῶς μὲν ἑκεῖνο ἀπεικασθέντος, ὄντος δὲ εἰκόνος εἰκότας ἀνὰ λόγον τε ἑκείνων ὄντας.

\(^{34}\) En otro trabajo intenté mostrar esta doble dimensión –objetiva y subjetiva—del lógos eikós y su importancia como fórmula que expresa los aspectos comunicativos involucrados (Costa, 2010: 118-120). En su reciente análisis de eikós en el Timeo, Bryan (2012: 143) admite, siguiendo una sugerencia de Burnyeat, el rol positivo de la verosimilitud de todo lógos eikós, y llega a conectarla con el “representar por medio del lenguaje”. Sin embargo, este reconocimiento no va luego más allá de una comparación con la función recreativa de la figura mítica del demiurgo y no llega a ser referido a la actividad concreta de quien efectivamente pronuncia el lógos eikós sobre las causas de la generación y la corrupción.
esencial al discurso”35. Esto no convierte a la investigación mediante lógoi en “el único instrumento que poseemos para poder apropiarnos cognoscitivamente del mundo”36, pero sí en “el más seguro” comparado con el otro disponible, esto es: investigar en los hechos concretos (en tois érgois). Precisamente, la corrección afirma que investigar por medio del lógos no es hacerlo más en imágenes que investigar mediante hechos. ¿En qué sentido, para Platón, investigar en los hechos concretos es también investigar por medio de imágenes? A mi juicio, los hechos concretos son imágenes en el mismo sentido en que lo son los lógoi: porque conocer por hechos también implica una actividad de representación y composición. Volvamos a la analogía y a su corrección. Sócrates, tras encontrar fallidos los estudios de filosofía natural y tras fallar él mismo en su estudio, tuvo que emprender una segunda navegación. Al definir el nuevo rumbo temía que le pasara como a quienes, al estudiar un eclipse, miran directamente al sol en lugar fijar la vista en alguna imagen, como su reflejo en el agua o cosas por el estilo. “Si miraba hacia las cosas con los ojos e intentaba captarlas por medio de cada una de las percepciones” temía cegar completamente su alma. Por eso prefirió refugiarse en los lógoi y examinar en ellos “la verdad de las cosas”. El que está ciego no puede ver y el que enceguece su alma no puede comprender. El conocimiento obtenido solo por los sentidos (Fd. 99e4) nos reduce a la ignorancia, por eso a la hora de buscar “la verdad de las cosas”, concentrarse en los hechos concretos, que es lo que nos dan los sentidos, es condenarse a la ignorancia37. Esto es cierto, pero incluso así planteadas las cosas, para Platón la analogía sigue siendo inadecuada. Veamos: en ella hay una única facultad cognitiva y un único órgano de captación, la vista, ya sea que se pose en el sol (y produzca ceguera e ignorancia) o en las imágenes (permitiendo así avanzar). La analogía distingue entre dos formas de aproximarse al objeto de estudio: una directa, aunque condenada al fracaso, y otra indirecta, pero promisoria. Para Platón lo inadecuado es creer que investigar en los hechos sea directo e investigar en los lógoi no: para él, insisto, los dos modos de investigación acuden ambos a imágenes38, son ambos indirectos, sólo que uno (el de la investigación en los hechos, por medio de los sentidos) nos deja en la ignorancia mientras que el otro nos permite avanzar.

No es ninguna novedad que el Sócrates platónico considere fallido “investigar en los hechos concretos” porque implica confiar excesivamente en los sentidos; el conocimiento sensible de hechos, aunque pueda seguir teniendo algún papel en la investigación que se ilustra ulteriormente en el Fedón (el propio Sócrates emplea los sentidos en su búsqueda39), es por naturaleza inexacto y falible40. Pero aquí se lo acusa, digamos, de no ser siquiera un método directo. Platón está rechazando la supuesta inmediatez de nuestro conocimiento de las realidades externas, lo que le daría un privilegio frente al lógos, postrero e impotente frente al dato inmediato de los conocidos. Si el desafío gorgiano consistía en negar la posibilidad de conocer el

35 Así lo sintetiza Casertano, 2015: 201. Debemos todavía explicar por qué deberíamos admitir también con él que “no se pueden mirar a las cosas que son en sí mismas sin el filtro cognoscitivo del discurso”.
36 Ibid.
37 Pues el conocimiento de los hechos –en eso ha insistido Sócrates durante buena parte del diálogo— depende básicamente de los sentidos.
38 Fd. 99e6-100a3: “No admito en absoluto que quien examina las cosas existentes en los enunciados las examine en imágenes en mayor medida que quien las examina en los hechos”.
39 Kanayama, 2000: 49 advierte que en Fd. 106 a-c el propio Sócrates hace uso de ellos; sólo que los sentidos precisañ la guía primordial del lógos, elaborado como hipótesis.
40 Cf. los pasajes paralelos en Rep. VII 530b-531c.
y comunicar, pues “el lógos no es ni las cosas que subyacen ni las que son” 41, Platón redobla la apuesta y afirma que el conocimiento mediante hechos concretos, por medio de los sentidos, es él también una forma indirecta, mediata, de investigación. Los hechos que llegamos a conocer también son el resultado de una mediación. Son imágenes. Por esto creo que en el contexto de este pasaje del Fedón, la advertencia de que investigar mediante hechos también es hacerlo en imágenes no apunta a que los hechos sean **semejanzas** de las formas inteligibles42 sino a que el conocimiento de hechos es una cierta **producción de imágenes**, una elaboración en la que intervienen factores sensibles y también mentales (pues involucran alguna clase de juicio), así como la capacidad de hacerlos coincidir ambas cosas, sensación y cognición, en una única representación.

Los hechos conocidos no son una manifestación inmediata que los órganos sensibles hacen posible: para que los hechos puedan darnos conocimiento sensible dependemos también de la elaboración de imágenes mentales y de un cierto juicio, un lógos. Platón lo desarrolla en el Teeteto, en la analogía del alma con un bloque de cera. Allí, al discutir la posibilidad de la opinión falsa, el Sócrates platónico lleva a sus personajes a admitir que para saber que esta actual visión de Teeteto que estoy teniendo es efectivamente mi amigo Teeteto es necesario que yo tenga ya una cierta imagen mental (eîðolon) de Teeteto. Es con esta imagen mental, conformada por anteriores percepciones “impresas” (cf. apotýpo, en Teet. 191d), que debo hacer coincidir esta nueva percepción de Teeteto para poder reconocerlo como tal. Llegar a conocer hechos sensorialmente no sólo involucra a los sentidos, también involucra a las huellas mentales (eîðolon, sgeîmeion)43 impresas en el alma al cabo de previas percepciones y a las operaciones mediante las cuales se hace coincidir, en cada caso, a una señal (sgeîmeion) –sensorial—con la otra –mental44. Esa operación no es sino un juicio, o un lógos, del tipo “Este que viene ahí es mi amigo Teeteto”. Al describirlo así, como una composición a partir de señales sensoriales y mentales, Platón está admitiendo que el conocimiento sensible es una cierta representación, y su resultado, los hechos conocidos, una imagen45.

41 Cf. Sexto Empírico, Adv. Math. VII. 83: “las cosas que son visibles y audibles, y en general las cosas perceptibles... subyacen afuera” (tà ónta óraptà èstì kai ákoustá kai koinwós aîsthntá, ἀπερ ἐκτός ὑπόκειται). Mientras que el lógos, lo que se muestra, “no es ni las cosas que subyacen ni las que son” (cf. Adv. Math. VII. 84: φ γάρ μην ομεν ἔστι λόγος, λόγος δὲ οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα).

42 Bostock, 1986: 158: “es la doctrina estándar de Platón que los objetos físicos son imágenes de las formas. Pero … a esta doctrina no se la afirma explícitamente en ningún pasaje del propio Fedón”.

43 Al describir el recuerdo, tanto de sensaciones como el de las propias concepciones (énnoia), se detalla el proceso de representación. (Aunque Sócrates se refiere al recuerdo, el ejemplo lo es de nuestra forma de conocer y reconocer.) Cf. Teeteto 191d-e: “si queremos recordar algo, entre lo que vemos, oímos o concebimos nosotros mismos, lo tomamos bajo las sensaciones y concepciones y lo imprimimos en ella [la memoria] como si estuviéramos estampando las huellas en los anillos. Aquello que es impreso lo recordamos y lo sabemos hasta tanto su imagen esté presente; lo que es borrado o no puede ser impreso, en cambio, lo olvidamos y no lo sabemos”; trad. de Boeri, 2006).

44 Teeteto 193c-d.

45 En el Teeteto lo que se discute no es el carácter constructivo del conocimiento sensible de hechos. Allí, la analogía del bloque de cera sirve para mostrar que “la opinión falsa no se da en el dominio de las sensaciones unas con otras ni en los pensamientos sino en el enlace de la sensación y el pensamiento” (Teet. 195c-d: ‘ὁ Ἔκρατες, μηνορήματα δὴ πειθή δόξαν, ὅτι οὔτε ἐν ταῖς αἰσθήσεωι ἐστιν πρὸς ἀλλήλας οὔτε ἐν ταῖς διανοιαῖς ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τῇ συνάψει αἰσθήσεως πρὸς διάνοιαν). Pero si Platón
Es cierto que nuestro brevísimo pasaje de la analogía del eclipse y su apremiante corrección no despliegan toda esta visión del conocimiento sensible de hechos como resultado de una cierta construcción, y mediado por factores mentales y lógico-proposicionales. Pero creo que el Fedón no es en absoluto ajeno a este enfoque. Antes de exponer el argumento de la reminiscencia, el Sócrates platónico ilustra cómo surge una rememoración a partir de una triple combinación: la del impacto sensible, el “ver, oír o tener otro tipo de percepción”, sumado al reconocimiento (gignóska) de esos datos –es decir, su comparación, ya no sensible sino mental, con datos previos guardados en la memoria—y finalmente el concebir o comprender (ennoéo) una cosa diferente, “cuyo conocimiento no es el mismo sino diferente” de aquello primero que se había percibido. De esta forma se llega al recuerdo de eso de lo cual se “tuvo tal representación (énnoia)”46. Se trata, claro está, de la explicación de cómo funciona un recuerdo, y es obvio que los recuerdos siempre se componen elementos sensoriales y de su elaboración mental, mediante huellas mnémicas, en un juicio. Sin embargo la ilustración de la reminiscencia sigue exactamente el mismo esquema de combinación, y allí, al final, lo que obtenemos como resultado no es un mero recuerdo sino conocimiento: epistémē. Se trata –Platón lo repite con insistencia—de conocimiento sensible. Un conocimiento de hechos cualquiera, que llega a través de los sentidos –por ejemplo, el conocimiento contenido en la proposición “estos dos leños son iguales”—, se explica como el resultado de una triple combinación: el dato sensorial de los leños, su reconocimiento como deficientemente iguales y finalmente la comprensión en un juicio de que ellos son instancias (sensibles, es decir, imperfectas) de lo igual en sí47.

Investigar “en los hechos concretos” implica, no menos que la investigación mediante los lógoi, hacerlo en imágenes: señales sensibles, huellas mnémicas y composición. Pero esas imágenes son, a juicio de Plató, insuficientes. No responden con seguridad por qué cada cosa nace, por qué muere, por qué es. Tampoco explican por qué es mejor que lo hagan así y no así. Esa respuesta exige salir de la esfera del mero constatar, que es la que nos da el conocimiento de hechos y para eso es preciso acudir a imágenes de más largo aliento. Para Platón, ese impulso deben proporcionarlo, si es que somos capaces de forjarlas, las imágenes alumbradas por nuestros lógoi.

I.C.

Abstract in English

My purpose is to analyze, just after the analogy with those who study the eclipses, the correction Plato makes in Phaedo 99e6-100a2. There he asserts that the concluye que la falsedad ocurre en determinadas composiciones de sensación y pensamiento (composiciones erradas por fallas de la percepción, o de la identificación de la huella mental, o por la falta de coincidencia de ambas: huella perceptiva y huella mental), entonces es legítimo deducir que el conocimiento, o por lo menos la opinión correcta, es para él también resultado de otra composición: en este caso, de una buena composición.

46 Fedón 73c-d: έάν τίς τί ἕτερον ἢ ἰδὼν ἢ ἀκούσας ἢ τίνα ἄλλην αἴσθησιν λαβὼν μὴ μόνον ἐκείνον γνῷ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕτερον ἐννοήσῃ οὗ μὴ ἡ αὐτή ἐπιστήμη ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλη, ἀρά οὐχὶ τοῦτο δικαίως λέγουμεν ὃτι ἀνεμνήσθη, οὗ τὴν ἐννοιαν ἔλαβεν; 47 Cf. Fedón 74c: “Y sin embargo, es a partir de tales cosas iguales, que son diferentes de aquello otro, lo igual <mismo>, como llegaste a concebir y obtener el conocimiento de esto último, ¿no?” (ἀλλὰ μὴν ἐκ τούτων γ᾽, ἐφη, τῶν ἴσων, ἑτέρων ὄντων ἐκείνου τοῦ ἴσου, ὡς αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἐννενόηκάς τε καὶ εἰλήφας). Véase también la insistencia con la que Platón enfatiza, en 74b, 74d, 75a, que se re-fiere siempre a casos de conocimiento sensible.

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The comparison he is making is not completely exact, inasmuch as he does not admit that investigating in lógoi might be to do it in images more than investigating the same things in toîs ãrâgos. After delimiting the referents of lógoi, érga and tà ónta in this passage, I will try to determine in what sense both investigations, in lógoi and in érga, should be understand as eikónes, images; and what kind of images and images of what are they. Finally, I will try to be convincing arguing that Plato is here implicitly asserting the constructive (and so mediate, indirect) character of all kind of knowledge, both intellectual and sensible one, for he is suggesting that to know or investigate in concrete facts involves nonetheless some necessary mediation of lógoi.

Referencias bibliográficas:
Bryan, J. (2012), Likeness and Likelihood in the Presocratics and Plato, Cambridge, CUP.
This paper presents a new account of “Platonic causes” – that is, the kind of cause (αἰτία) under investigation in the “Final Argument” at Phaedo 96–107. I propose, specifically, that Platonic causes should be understood on the model of ingredients: the Platonic cause of something’s $F$-ness is that thing which has been added to it, such that it is now $F$. This interpretation, unlike its alternatives in the scholarly literature, can account for all of the text’s famous causal principles, including the all-important principle that a Platonic cause of $F$-ness cannot itself be un-$F$ – a principle which has thus far eluded other interpretations. This account also challenges the conventional assumption that the Phaedo represents a radical break from Plato’s predecessors in its causal theorizing, suggesting that we see Phaedo 96–107 rather as refining a model of causation familiar from Anaxagoras and others.¹

( Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch auf Seite 14 unten.)

1 Three principles of Platonic causation

To begin, let us review what we already know about Platonic causes, and see why a new interpretation is needed. As commentators have long recognized, Platonic causes are characterized by three general principles, which Plato intimates over the course of the Final Argument.² I formulate them as follows:

- no opposite aitiai
- the same thing cannot be caused by both of a pair of opposites³
- no aitiai of opposites
- the same thing cannot be a cause of both of a pair of opposites⁴
- not oppositely qualified
- a cause of $F$-ness cannot itself be un-$F$⁵

For ease of reference, I will refer to these principles, respectively, as NOA, NAO, and NOQ.

Initially, these may seem like agreeable causal principles. If, for example, both higher taxes and lower taxes were shown to correlate with economic growth, this would rightly be taken as indication that neither in itself causes growth, in accordance with NOA. Similarly, if wealth is seen to make some people virtuous and magnanimous and to make others vicious and corrupt, this is good reason to say that wealth does not truly cause either virtue or vice, in accordance with NAO. Finally,¹

¹A clarificatory note before we begin: In its common ancient Greek usage, ‘αἰτία’ admits of several possible English translations: ‘cause’, ‘explanation’, ‘thing responsible for’, ‘that because of which’. For convenience, I will use the English ‘cause’ as a stand-in for the Greek ‘αἰτία’, but this is not meant to prejudge any questions about the Greek word’s proper interpretation, and should be heard along with the word’s other possible translations.

²This trend began in Cresswell (1971) and Burge (1971, pp. 4–5), and has become standard fare in treatments of the Final Argument ever since.

³Derived from 97a6–b3.

⁴Derived from 101a5–9.

⁵Derived from 101a9–b2. Note that ‘$F$’ and ‘un-$F$’ refer to a pair of opposites, of a piece with the “pair of opposites” in the first two principles. (For the purposes of this paper it will suffice to understand ‘opposites’ roughly, in its ordinary sense, as the category exemplified by such property pairs as big–small, beautiful–ugly, and hot–cold.)
in accordance with \textit{noQ}, if we were searching for what caused something else to become \textit{hot}, it would be counterintuitive to cite something that was itself \textit{cold}. Thus the three principles are not without intuitive appeal.

With a bit more reflection, however, the principles start to seem suspect. For example, it seems right to say, in violation of \textit{nao}, that heat is a cause of both \textit{hardness} (in clay) and \textit{softness} (in wax).\footnote{This example borrowed from Kelsey (2004, 24).} Similarly, in violation of \textit{noa}, the opposites of \textit{fasting} and \textit{gorging} both seem like perfectly good causes of unhealthiness in the body. Finally, in violation of \textit{noQ} we may cite the mundane fact that a \textit{hard} wooden meat tenderizer causes a cut of beef to become \textit{soft} – and moreover, that it does so precisely in virtue of its being hard (a squishy, pliable tenderizer would not do the job). Thus none of the three principles seems to hold true of all the things we commonly identify as causes.

In light of these seemingly elementary counterexamples, the general response in the literature has been to assume that the principles must be meant to refer, not to everything that might plausibly be identified as a cause, but only to causes of a \textit{particular kind} – call them “Platonic causes”. The general task in the literature thus has been to provide an account of what a Platonic cause is, and thereby elucidate the basic conception of causation which led Plato to accept these otherwise perplexing causal principles.

The problem with the various existing accounts of Platonic causes, in my opinion, is that they have failed to make plausible \textit{noQ}, either dismissing it as an unjustified inclusion, explaining it by reference to the even more obscure idea that “like causes like”, or simply neglecting to mention it and focusing on the other two principles instead.\footnote{This vastly oversimplifies the rich diversity in the secondary scholarship, but in the first camp I’d place first and foremost Vlastos (1969), along with Bailey (2014), Ebrey (2014), Sharma (2009), and Denyer (2007); in the second, Sedley (1998), along with Dancy (2004), Hankinson (1998), Makin (1990–1991), Bostock (1986), Annas (1982), and Lloyd (1976); and in the third, Politis (2010).} Yet \textit{noQ} is the principle we should be most concerned to account for. Not only is it the least intuitive of the three; more significantly, it is crucial to the proof of the immortality of the soul at 105c–e, which is the entire reason the causal investigation at 96a ff. is set in motion. Indeed, \textit{noQ} is the only one of the principles which the proof actually employs.\footnote{This proof goes as follows: The soul is the cause of life in the body. A cause of \textit{F}-ness cannot itself be un-\textit{F} (i.e., \textit{noQ}). Therefore, the soul, as a cause of life, cannot itself be dead. Therefore, the soul is deathless, or immortal.} Thus, if we fail to make sense of \textit{noQ}, we lose sight of the argumentative context in which the discussion of Platonic causes appears. What we need, then, is an account which does not shy away from \textit{noQ} but rather treats it as the principle to be explained first and foremost. This is the sort of account I will provide in what follows.

\textit{v}

An important preliminary point, which I argue for at length elsewhere but only have space to state here, is that within the Final Argument a cause is always a cause of an \textit{acquired} (or, as we might say, an \textit{accidental}) feature of an object. If this point seems dubious, it must at least be granted that nothing in the Final Argument contradicts it; all its example causes are causes of a feature which its object can stand to lose: Simmias’s bigness, a body’s sickness, Socrates’ being in Athens, and so on. Here it is crucial to note that although the Final Argument does include examples of features which their objects cannot stand to lose (hotness vis-\textit{Ã}-vis fire, oddness vis-\textit{Ã}-vis three, etc.), it is never concerned to \textit{explain} these features, or to specify the cause of them. It is only concerned, rather, to explain the hotness of a \textit{body}, and
the oddness of a certain number of things, etc. – and these are objects which can stand to lose their respective features. Another way to put this point is that the Final Argument is concerned to explain only features manifested by ordinary perceptible objects, and not features manifested by causes themselves.

II Ingredient causation

To review: What we are looking for is a conception of causation which will account for all three of the Final Argument’s causal principles, and especially NOQ. In this section I will set out a particular conception of causation which, I believe, will do just that.

To help introduce this conception of causation, consider the following example: Suppose I have two cups of coffee, one bitter, one sweet, but otherwise the same. Now suppose I wish to know why the second cup of coffee is sweet. One perfectly natural way of hearing this question is as asking what it is about this cup of coffee that makes it sweet. And one perfectly natural way to go about answering that question is to identify what it is that the sweet cup of coffee has and the bitter cup of coffee doesn’t. Intuitively, after all, there must be something in the one but not in the other – otherwise, both cups of coffee would be identical, both bitter or both sweet. And indeed, the relevant difference-maker in this case is not hard to come by: this cup of coffee is sweet because sugar (or some other sweetener) has been added to it, whereas the other cup of coffee has been left black. In this way, sugar is the cause of the coffee’s sweetness.

Call such a cause an “ingredient cause”. A cause in this sense is something internal to the object in question, and which has, in some sense, been added to it. To put it in a formula, this sort of cause of something’s F-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now F.

So far, I’ve only hoped to suggest that this is an intelligible way of specifying the cause. But could Plato be conceiving of the cause in this way in the Phaedo? Absolutely. Additive language pervades the Final Argument; all its accepted causes are said to “come into”, or to “occupy”, or to be “present in” or “added to” those objects whose features they are causes of. Just consider the following descriptions of such causes:

“If you were to ask me what it is that, when it comes to be in (ἐγγένηται) any body, makes that body hot, I will not give you that safe and ignorant answer, that it is hotness, but a subtler one, thanks to what we now say: that it is fire. And if you were to ask what it is that, when it comes to be in (ἐγγένηται) any body, makes that body sick, I will not say that it is sickness, but that it is fever. And if asked what it is that, when it comes to be in (ἐγγένηται) any number, makes that number odd, I will not say that it is oddness, but that it is oneness. And so on for the rest.” (105b8–c6)

“Nothing makes anything beautiful other than the Beautiful itself’s presence or association or whatever its mode and means of being added (προσγενομένου) may be.” (100d4–6)

“…those things that compel whatever they occupy (κατάσχη) to have, not only their own form, but also always the form of some opposite of something as well.” (104d1–3)

“…that thing which brings some opposite to whatever it comes into (ἐφ’ ὅτι ἄν αὐτὸ ἴῃ)” (105a3–4)

“…that thing which, when it comes to be in (ἐγγένηται) any body, makes the body alive” (105c9–10)

Furthermore, the very same additive language is also applied, earlier on in the Final Argument, to those putative causes which the argument ultimately rejects. Compare the following two remarks:

“Earlier I thought that it was obvious to everyone that [a human being grows]
on account of eating and drinking: for whenever portions of flesh from food have
been added (προσγένωνται) to other portions of flesh, and portions of bone [have
been added] to other portions of bone, and likewise, by the same principle, whenever
kindred things have been added (προσγένωνται) to each of the others, it is then that
that which was a small mass has gone on to become big, and in this way the small
person becomes big.” (96c7–d5)

“…And it seemed to me even more obvious that ten was more numerous than
eight on account of two being added (προσεῖναι) to it.” (96e1–3)

Therefore, from the very start, Plato seems to be conceiving of the cause as
that which, when added to something else, makes it become thus-and-so. In other
words, the Final Argument seeks to discover the ingredient cause throughout.9

This brings me to a second point: that, even if, in seeking the cause, one seeks
to discover only the ingredient cause and no other, there are still various means by
which one may sensibly try to discover and identify it. In particular, one may attempt
to discover the ingredient cause via perception – that is, by looking at the object
which manifests the feature in question, comparing it to a similar object which does
not manifest that feature (whether in imagination or in reality), and perceptually
discerning what is different between the two. For example, if one were seeking the
ingredient cause of why this bunch of ten grapes is greater than that bunch of eight,
perception would say that it's because the bunch of ten grapes has two more.

This may seem like a perfectly good explanation; yet it is a central contention
of the Final Argument that this explanation is not good enough, and that ingredient
causes in general are not accurately revealed in perception. Rather, the Final
Argument insists that ingredient causes must conform to an additional stricture,
which perception generally disregards: that, whatever it turns out to be, the ingredient
cause of something's F-ness must itself be F, and be F in a stricter sense than normal.
In the text, this feature is signaled by saying that a cause of F-ness “always” or “for
all time” “deserves the name” or “has the feature (μορφή)” of F-ness, and textual
citations to this effect abound:

“Therefore, it is true, concerning some things of this sort, that it is not only the
Form itself which deserves its name for all of time, but also something else, which
is not that Form, but always has that Form's feature, whenever it exists.” (103e2–5)

“The Odd, I suppose, must always be given this name that we are now speaking,
mustn't it?” (103e6–7)

“Is there also something else, which is not the same as the Odd but which
nevertheless must always be called “odd”, in addition to its own name, on account of
its being naturally such as to never be deprived of the Odd?” (103e9–104a3)

“Consider the case of threeness. Does it not seem to you that threeness should
always be called both by its own name and by the name of the Odd, even though the
Odd is not the same as threeness?” (104a5–7)

“Not only do those opposites evidently not admit one another, but there are
also those things which, though not themselves opposites of one another, always
have the opposites, and these things also seem not to admit that form which is
opposite to the one in them.” (104b7–10)

This claim, despite appearances, isn't just a point of Platonic prejudice. It is in
fact a natural extension of the concept of an ingredient cause.

9Setting aside the interlude at 97c–99d, wherein Socrates seeks to discover the
“teleological cause”. I do not believe that such explanations are ingredient-causal
in nature, but I do not think that this makes trouble for my account. As Socrates
himself admits, he was “denied” the teleological cause (99c8); the cause he goes
on to identify – what I take to be the ingredient cause – is meant to be something
different.
To illustrate this point, let us go back to our earlier coffee example. As we noted above, the ingredient cause of this coffee’s sweetness is sugar, which has been added to it, and which is itself sweet. It makes sense that this ingredient cause is itself sweet because, if the sugar had not been added, then there would be nothing sweet about the coffee, and the coffee would just be unsweet and bitter. In other words, it is in virtue of sugar’s own sweetness that it is capable of making the coffee to which it is added sweet, and thus qualify as the ingredient cause of the coffee’s sweetness.

Furthermore, the sense in which the ingredient cause of something’s $F$-ness “is $F$” is stronger than the sense in which ordinary perceptible $F$ objects “are $F$”. For example, we say that this coffee is sweet, but it is not sweet through and through. The coffee is also bitter (it is still coffee, after all), and hot, and brown, and these features do not contribute to its sweetness. In contrast, the ingredient cause of the coffee’s sweetness must be sweet through and through, as it must contribute wholly to the coffee’s sweetness. This may mean that it will “be sweet” in quite a distinct sense than the normal one. The important point for our purposes is just that it “is sweet” in a *stronger* sense – that, to generalize, an ingredient cause of $F$-ness is itself “perfectly” $F$.

To sum up, then: I have proposed that the kind of cause under investigation in the Final Argument is the ingredient cause. As I have defined it, the ingredient cause of something’s $F$-ness is that which has been added to it, such that it is now $F$; and, in addition, is itself perfectly $F$. We are now ready to follow through on the promises of §i and see how the Final Argument’s three causal principles all derive from this account of ingredient causation.

### III Deriving the principles

Let us begin with the third of the causal principles listed above, noq, as it is the easiest to derive. The Not Oppositely Qualified principle states that a cause of $F$-ness cannot itself be un-$F$. This follows immediately from our account of ingredient causation. As we saw above, something is an ingredient cause of $F$-ness only if it is perfectly $F$; and something is perfectly $F$ only if it is in no way un-$F$. Indeed, our account makes noq look rather sensible, for if we are asking what has been added to something such that it is now $F$, it would indeed be “monstrous” (101b1) if we pointed to something about it that was un-$F$ (as if one were to explain the fluffy softness of a Pomeranian by citing its hard, solid bones). Rather, we had better point to something about it that is $F$. This line of reasoning is what stands behind and motivates noq.

Let us then move on to the second principle, nao. The No Aitiai of Opposites

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10As, for example, the number two, though even, is not *even in number* (as ordinary perceptible even things are), since the number two is itself a *single* number.

11I say “perfectly” rather than “purely”, as I do not want to suggest that an ingredient cause of $F$-ness is only $F$, but just that all its features must contribute to its being a cause of $F$-ness. For example, fire, as an ingredient cause of hotness, is perfectly hot and also perfectly fiery.

12Or, more precisely, that it is not possible for a cause of $F$-ness to be itself un-$F$ (i.e., taking the modal operator wide scope).

13Recall that, as was noted above, an ingredient cause of $F$-ness must be $F$ through and through (this is part of what it means to be “perfectly $F$”). That is, an ingredient cause of $F$-ness has no features which do not contribute to its $F$-ness. Yet if something has a feature which contributes to its $F$-ness, then it is thereby not un-$F$ with respect to that feature. Therefore, since an ingredient cause of $F$-ness has only features which contribute to its $F$-ness, it is thereby un-$F$ with respect to none of them: an ingredient cause of $F$-ness is in no way un-$F$.
principle states that the same thing cannot be a cause of opposites. This also follows immediately from our account of ingredient causation: If something is the ingredient cause of something’s $F$-ness, this means that it is perfectly $F$, and thus in no way un-$F$. Yet if that same thing were also the ingredient cause of something’s un-$F$-ness, then it would also be perfectly un-$F$, and thus in no way $F$; but this is a direct contradiction. And notably, this derivation shows NAO to be grounded in the very same feature as NOQ: that an ingredient cause of $F$-ness is itself perfectly $F$.

Last but not least, the third principle, NOA. The No Opposite Aitiai principle states that both of a pair of opposites cannot be causes of the same thing. This principle, in contrast, does not follow from our account of ingredient causation so immediately, and its derivation, though possible, is significantly more complicated. Let us, then, approach this derivation by means of an example. Suppose, in violation of NOA, that both of a pair of opposites were ingredient causes of the same property. For instance, one might plausibly assume that coldness (or cooling) is an ingredient cause of hardness (or solidification) in things like water, and that hotness (or heating) is also an ingredient cause of hardness, though in things like clay. Initially, this supposition may seem to be in accordance with our account: coldness, whenever added to warm, liquid water, makes that water harden and freeze; whereas hotness, whenever added to moist, unfired clay, makes that clay harden and dry. However – and this is the key move – hotness can also be added to water, and when added to solid water, it makes that water soften and melt. Hotness, then, would be an ingredient cause of both hardness (in clay) and softness (in water). But this is prohibited by NAO. Therefore, by reductio, hotness and coldness cannot both be ingredient causes of hardness, in accordance with NOA.

There is more that could be said to make this final proof more rigorous, but I hope this example will suffice for present purposes to show that NOA derives from the same basic conception of causation which I have set out.

iv Conclusions

Despite all this, it may still seem that I have not said enough. Even if it is granted that ingredient causation is a credible conception of causation, and that ingredient causation can account for all of the Final Argument’s causal principles, and that Plato speaks of causes in the Phaedo in a way that is consistent with their being ingredient causes – still, one may wonder: Can Plato really have had this conception of causation in mind? Does this not all seem a bit too convenient? Or, more pointedly: How is ingredient causation not simply an ad hoc solution to the interpretive problem of Platonic causes?

I see at least two responses to this skeptical line of questioning. First, one may point to the broader dialogical context of the Phaedo, as ingredient causation is precisely the conception of causation we should expect to find in the Final Argument given everything we are told about being and coming-to-be in the rest of the dialogue. For instance, ingredient causation pairs naturally with the ontological framework outlined in the “Affinity Argument” at 78b–80b, according to which there are two (and only two) kinds of beings: composites and incomposites. Presumably,

14Or, more precisely, that it is not possible for something to be a cause of both $F$-ness and un-$F$-ness (i.e., taking the modal operator wide scope, as with NOQ). 15Or, more precisely, that it is not possible for both $G$-ness and un-$G$-ness to be causes of $F$-ness (yet again taking the modal operator wide scope). 16“Only two”, because it is only on this assumption that the subsequent argument about the soul can possibly be valid. That argument proceeds by showing that, since the soul is more similar to the in composite than the composite and the in- composite is incapable of being disintegrated, therefore the soul is also incapable of
what makes this twofold division of beings at all plausible is the fact that it is meant to reflect an elemental ontology, according to which the composites are composed of the incomposites. This, of course, was a pervasive ontological framework in Plato's time, common to a diverse range of natural philosophers including Empedocles, Democritus, and Anaxagoras. And in such a framework the incomposites play the role of ingredient causes, since every feature of the composite is to be accounted for by its incomposite elements. In other words, I am suggesting that ingredient causes are causes of features of objects in the same way that elements are causes of features of composites, and that this conception of causation is encouraged by the Affinity Argument's own elemental ontology. Furthermore, that argument's contention that the incomposite elements are “uniform” (78d5) and “always in the same state and condition” (78c6) fits well with the Final Argument's idea that an ingredient cause of \( F \)-ness is itself perfectly \( F \).

Ingredient causation also pairs naturally with the analysis of coming-to-be outlined in the “Cyclical Argument” at 70c–72d, according to which every object which comes-to-be some opposite comes-to-be so from its opposite. (That is, any object which comes-to-be \( F \) must have previously been un-\( F \), for any pair of opposites \( 'F' \) and \( '\text{un-}F' \)) In the Cyclical Argument this law was established inductively, via a series of examples; and in the Final Argument this law is given a deeper metaphysical explanation, via the idea of ingredient causation. Since, as we learn in the Final Argument, an object comes-to-be \( F \) by an ingredient cause of \( F \)-ness being added to it, and, as we're also told, an ingredient cause of \( F \)-ness will leave its object only when the opposite of \( F \)-ness approaches, it follows that, as the Cyclical Argument already indicated, all opposite objects come-to-be from their opposite.

These points show that ingredient causation fits well with the broader dialogical context of the Phaedo. Furthermore, it fits well with the surrounding historical context, as ingredient causation is hardly a conception of causation unique to Plato. It is, for instance, precisely the conception of causation we find in Anaxagoras (setting aside the singular efficient causal role he assigns to Nous). Consider, for example, his explanation of growth:

“For instance, we partake of food that is simple and of one kind – bread, or water – and from this are nourished hair, vein, artery, flesh, sinews, bones, and the other parts. And so, since this is what happens, it must be granted that in the consumed food there are all the things that there are, and that from these things all things grow.” (\( \delta \kappa 59 \) A46, from Aëtius P 1.3.5.)

This fragment shows Anaxagoras explaining growth (or coming-to-be big) by the addition of a particular ingredient: hair becomes longer by the addition of being disintegrated. This argument would be much more problematic if there were a third kind of being which the soul could be, other than a composite or an incomposite.

17This claim needs to be qualified; presumably, there will be some features of the composite which are accounted for, not by any one incomposite element in particular, but rather by the relations between multiple incomposite elements (à la an attunement, as at 85e–86c), and in such cases there will be no single ingredient cause of the feature. The key point for our purposes is simply that there can be some features which are accounted for by a single incomposite element, and thus a single ingredient cause. This will especially be true on ontologies which recognize a variety of qualitatively distinct elements, such as Anaxagoras's (or, I would argue, Plato's).

18And indeed, the Final Argument makes explicit reference back to the Cyclical Argument, at 103a–c.

19Clearly echoed at Phaedo 96c7–d5, quoted on p. 5 above.
portions of hair, flesh becomes bigger by the addition of portions of flesh, and so on. Furthermore, Anaxagoras does not take this model of explanation to work only with growth (to which it is, admittedly, particularly well suited). In addition to the elemental substances of hair, flesh, and so on, which are taken to be latent in everything and thus available to be added to other things to cause growth, Anaxagoras also includes among his elements a variety of opposites: the wet and the dry, the hot and the cold, the bright and the dark, and the rare and the dense.20 These, too, are held by Anaxagoras to be latent in everything, and thus also available to be added to other things. Yet when the hot (from some food) is added to the hot (in some body), the result in this case will not be growth, but rather heating – the body will become hotter. In this way, Anaxagoras's analysis of change and coming-to-be is an important precursor to the conception of ingredient causation which I wish to find in the Final Argument.

This parallel between Anaxagoras and Plato should not come as a surprise. Anaxagoras is discussed at length in the Final Argument at 97c–99c, and the affinities between his and Plato's models of explanation and predication have long been recognized by scholars.21 Yet there is another precursor to the Final Argument's conception of causation, not commonly emphasized in discussions of the Phaedo: the Hippocratic medical writers. In particular, the ingredient cause has strong affinities with the Hippocratic concept of a dunamis (δύναμις) – the various “powers” inherent in things (and specifically, in bodies), which manifest themselves as observable properties, in accordance with the particular power that they are.22 Consider this representative passage:

“In a human being are present (ἔνι) salty and bitter and sweet and sharp [acidic] and harsh [sour] and insipid and countless other things having dunameis of all sorts, both in number and in strength. These things, when all mixed and mingled up with one another, are neither apparent, nor do they hurt the person. But whenever one of them is separated out and comes to be by itself, then it is apparent, and hurts the person. And thus, concerning those foods which are unsuitable to us and hurtful to the person when administered, each one is something pure, either purely bitter, or salty, or sharp, or something else pure and strong, and on account of this we are disordered by them, just as we are by the secretions in the body.” (On Ancient Medicine, 14.23–33)23

That is, according to the author of On Ancient Medicine, a quality such as saltiness manifests itself in the body when salty food is consumed, ingested, and added to the body, thus offsetting its prior balance.24 In a similar vein, the author of De Victu devotes several chapters to analyzing the features of various foods and drinks – roughly, whether they are hot or dry or cold or moist – and then connects these features to the heating, drying, cooling, or moistening effects they have on the body.25 In other words, according to both of these analyses, observable changes or manifestations of new features in the body are explained by the fact that something

20Cf. dk59 b4(b), b12, and b15.
21Cf. in particular Brentlinger (1972), Furley (1976), and Furley (2002).
22The convergence between the Hippocratic and Platonic uses of dunamis is succinctly summarized by von Staden (1998) and Moline (1981, 84–88).
23Some, such as Diller (1952), have suggested that On Ancient Medicine might postdate Plato, in which case my evidentiary use of it here would be without warrant; cf., however, the refutation of this suggestion in Moline (1981, 212 n. 13).
24Cf. the discussion of this passage in Miller (1952, 189).
25De Victu 2.39–56; cf. especially the detailed analysis of barley in 2.40. This summary of the discussion is indebted to the synopsis presented in Miller (1959, 155 ff.)
– namely, food which has those features – has been added to it. Or, as the author of De flatibus states:

“Opposites are remedies of opposites. Indeed, medicine is addition and subtraction (πρόσθεσις καὶ ἀφαίρεσις): subtraction of what is in excess, and addition of what is wanting.” (1.25–27)

That is, according to the author of this text, medicine is the addition or subtraction of opposites to or from the body, which thereby counteracts or promotes the presence of the corresponding opposites. In this way, Hippocratic medicine, too, is guided by an inchoate conception of ingredient causation.

Taking all of these responses together, I feel there is in fact strong reason to believe that Plato had the ingredient-causal conception of causation in mind when composing the Phaedo. And if this is correct, it suggests that we must revise how we have been thinking about the dialectic of the Final Argument. Conventionally, the Final Argument is thought to represent a radical break from Plato's predecessors in its causal theorizing: typically it is assumed that Plato in this argument dismisses the materialistic explanations emblematic of various Presocratics, and in their stead introduces a hitherto unseen kind of explanation, in terms of his cherished Forms. Yet if what I have argued in this paper is correct, then Plato is not introducing a new kind of cause at all. Rather, Plato here is adopting an established conception of causation and refining it – getting more precise about its correct specification, and extending it to explain features which no one else had ever even considered. In other words, the problem with Plato's predecessors was not that they were after the wrong kind of cause; they, too, sought the ingredient cause. Their problem, rather, was one of misidentification: they got the ingredient cause wrong. As the Final Argument tells us, a person becomes big by the addition, not of food, but of bigness; a group of ten is more numerous by the additional presence, not of twoness, but of numerousness. In short, the true ingredient cause of something's F-ness must be something which is itself perfectly F. This is the real innovation of the Final Argument's causal theorizing; and this is also, as I have argued, the essence of a Platonic cause.

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch


Ein grundlegendes Problem bisheriger Interpretationen ist, dass sie den
dritten Grundsatz nicht erklären, welcher aber in größter Erklärungsnot steht. Nicht nur ist der dritte Grundsatz der am wenigsten intuitive, er ist auch entscheidend für den Beweis der Unsterblichkeit der Seele von 105c–e. Daher ist eine Interpretation platonischer Ursachen nötig, die den dritten Grundsatz nicht ignoriert, sondern ihn vor allem zu erklären sucht.

Zu diesem Zweck schlage ich vor, dass die platonische Ursache für die Eigenschaft \( f \) von einem Gegenstand (d. h., das, aufgrund dessen ein Gegenstand \( f \) wird) dasjenige ist, was dem Gegenstand hinzugefügt wurde, sodass er \( f \) wurde. Eine solche Ursache nenne ich eine „Zutat-Ursache“. (Zum Beispiel, die Zutat-Ursache für die Süße von diesem Kaffee ist der Zucker, der dem Kaffee hinzugefügt wurde.) Aus dieser Konzeption der Kausalität folgt, dass die Zutat-Ursache für die Eigenschaft \( f \) von einem Gegenstand selbst vollkommen \( f \) sein muss – anderenfalls würde die Zutat-Ursache nicht zur Eigenschaft \( f \) des Gegenstandes beitragen. Aus dieser Eigenschaft der Zutat-Ursache kann man alle drei kausalen Grundsätze ableiten.

Meine Interpretation der platonischen Ursachen wird zudem durch die folgenden Textstellen bestärkt: (1) diese Konzeption der Kausalität entspricht den Beschreibungen der Ursachen im letzten Argument; (2) diese Konzeption der Kausalität entspricht auch dem breiteren Kontext des Dialogs (besonders der ontologischen Theorie des „Affinität-Argumentes“ in 78b–80b und der Theorie des Werdens im „zyklischen Argument“ in 70c–72d); und (3) man kann die gleiche Konzeption der Kausalität in Anaxagoras und im Corpus Hippocraticum finden.

Wenn diese Interpretation richtig ist, müssen wir die Dialektik des letzten Argumentes anders als üblich verstehen. Platon sucht in diesem Argument keine neue Art von Ursache, im Gegensatz zur konventionellen Annahme. Vielmehr setzt Platon eine bereits etablierte Konzeption von Kausalität voraus, und verfeinert diese Konzeption. Das bedeutet, dass der Fehler der Vorgänger Platos nicht darin bestand, dass sie die falsche Art von Ursache gesucht haben, sondern dass sie die Zutat-Ursache falsch identifiziert haben. Im Gegensatz dazu besteht Platon darauf, dass eine echte Zutat-Ursache für die Eigenschaft \( f \) etwas sein muss, was selbst vollkommen \( f \) ist. Das ist Platons wirkliche Innovation im Phaidon, und das ist auch das Wesen einer platonischen Ursache.

References


The Theory of Forms as Natural Philosophy

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The Theory of Forms is not typically treated as Plato's major contribution to natural science. But in the *Phaedo*, that's exactly how it's packaged: as a methodological improvement on Presocratic science, designed to answer the same questions—why does fire melt snow, how do biological organisms develop?—only with greater exactitude. This exactitude is achieved by grounding cause and effect in quasi-logical relations between opposed pairs of properties, such as hot and cold, large and small, living and dead. The *Phaedo* offers us a model of scientific explanation in which all changes in the physical world can be explained as interactions between one such property and its opposite. Since these interactions are based on *a priori* oppositions—hot is, for Plato, definitionally exclusive of cold—the model gives us the tools to explain and predict the phenomena of natural science through logical analysis. It is, to some degree, a model of science immune to the problem of induction.

Of course, to achieve all this, Plato must take a rather idiosyncratic view of how properties work. I'll start by briefly explaining what I take his view to be. I won't attempt to defend the view in this short paper, either as philosophy or as Platonic exegesis, but I don't expect it to be controversial as a rough picture of how Plato seems to be thinking in the *Phaedo*.

The core of his view is this: every feature of a particular is grounded in a property it actually possesses. If Socrates is small, it's *because* he possesses smallness. When we perceive Socrates' smallness by standing him up next to Simmias, we're perceiving a genuine property of Socrates, one that was present even before we perceived it. Socrates' smallness is not a creature of the mind; it exists whether or not anyone observes it. Relations between particulars don't *create* properties; they are rather what makes relations between particulars possible: if Socrates didn't already possess smallness, he couldn't be small relative to Simmias. What's more, these properties are universal. The smallness Socrates possesses is not some special one peculiar to him; it is the same as the smallness possessed by a small meal, a small mouse, a small mountain.

In brief, the view is that if any \( x \) is perceived as \( F \) (even as \( F \) compared to \( y \)), then \( x \) must antecedently have the property \( F \)-ness. What's more, this \( F \)-ness, whatever it is, really is the same property across its various instantiations. Although Socrates, the mouse, and the mountain are all different sizes, their *smallness* is identical—this *explains why* we can call all three of them small.\(^1\) This view is in the background of the theory of science I'm about to lay out.

Socrates' account of how he became dissatisfied with natural science—his "intellectual autobiography"—is familiar enough. Having heard that Anaxagoras explained the world through the action of a beneficent guiding Intellect, Socrates rushed out to buy a copy of his book. But he was disappointed to discover that Anaxagoras' causal explanations didn't actually appeal to this Intellect. Invigorated nonetheless, Socrates struggled to invent a mode of explanation which could meet his teleological requirements: one in which all phenomena are revealed as being "for the best." But he struggled in vain, and eventually gave the project up. Having rejected previous natural science as inadequate, and abandoning teleology as unattainable, Socrates relates his "second voyage in quest of explanation" ("τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν ἐπὶ τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν," 99c 10-99d 1). The second voyage

\(^1\)Like I said, I'm not going to defend the view in this paper, but I do want to signal my belief that it's more defensible than is usually acknowledged. I don't think Plato is merely *confused* about how relative properties work. I think he offers a number of powerful arguments to the effect that relative properties and incomplete predicates simply do not exist, that all properties are absolute and all predicates are complete.
offers two methods of explanation Socrates thinks are legitimate: the first is “simple-minded,” while
the second is a “more clever” elaboration of this simple-minded answer. It is the “more clever”
method of explanation that interests me, but to understand it, we have to identify the problems it
solves, and the simple-minded answer on which it expands.

So: what is Socrates’ problem with Presocratic science? Why is teleological
explanation preferable? And if the Theory of Forms is a consolation prize for
teleology, how exactly does it qualify as “second-best”—how does it improve on
early Greek natural science?

Socrates gives us a number of examples of scientific explanations he accepted
in his misguided youth, but now rejects. By tracking the rejected explanations and
their failures, we can establish what he wants out of an explanatory method:

Explananda:Explanantia:
(1) A small person becomes big. Eating and drinking.
(2) Simmias is taller than Socrates. Simmias’ head.
(3) A two-cubit length is longer than one cubit. Surpassing it by half its length.
(4) Ten is more than eight. The addition of two.
(5) Socrates is sitting in prison. Socrates’ bones and sinews.
(6) The earth is in the centre. The vortex around it or the air under it.
(7) A thing is beautiful. Its colour and shape.

From these examples we can see that the rejected method of explaining a fact is
to identify another fact which is a necessary condition of the explanandum. Socrates
could not recline in prison without his bones and sinews, so the bones and sinews
explain why he is sitting in prison. An organism cannot grow without nourishment,
so nourishment is the cause of a thing’s being large. When natural scientists want to
explain why such-and-such is the case, they look for another such-and-such without
which the first could not be so. But this, thinks Socrates, is to confuse necessary
conditions for causes:

τὸ γὰρ μὴ διελέσθαι οἷόν τ᾽ εἶναι ὅτι ἄλλο μέν τί ἐστι τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι, ἄλλο δὲ
ἐκείνο ἄνευ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἄν ποτ᾽ εἴη αἴτιον· ὃ δή μοι φαίνονται ψηλαφῶντες οἱ πολλοὶ
ὕστερ ἐν σκότει, ἀλλοτρίῳ ὀνόματι προσχρώμενοι, ώς αἴτιον αὐτὸ προσαγορεύειν.

For they fail to discern that the actual cause is one thing, but that without which the
cause could not act as a cause is quite another. Indeed, most people seem to me gropers in
shadow: they call this a cause, using a name alien to it.

Why can’t necessary conditions do the work of explanation? Socrates gives
three reasons. First, necessary conditions have no special or exclusive relation with
their explananda. The earth may be held in the centre by whirling air, but air and
the vortex could just as well hold it in the lower left-hand corner of the universe.
There is no inherent link here between the identified “cause” and the effect we want
to explain. Second, necessary conditions can explain not only alternative states of affairs, but even
directly opposed ones. A natural scientist might say that a painting is beautiful because of its colour
and shape—but the exact same explanation would hold for its ugliness. Socrates notes that if we
say that Simmias is taller than Socrates by a head, we commit ourselves to the claim that Socrates is
smaller than Simmias by the same head (100e 8-101b 2). Finally, there is something arbitrary about

2Cf. Hippias Major 289c-d, where “a beautiful girl” fails to answer the question “what
is the beautiful?” precisely because it would also be a correct answer to a different
question: “what is both beautiful and ugly?” If your explanans works for more than
one explanandum, you have failed to provide an adequate explanation. Cf. Sedley
(1998), pp. 121-123.

3The reverse of this problem is when two contradictory explantia have a common
explanandum. When one thing is added to another, they become two—but when
a single thing is divided, it also becomes two: so two opposite processes are both
the particular necessary conditions that natural science fixes on for its explanantia. Socrates notes that his bones and sinews in some sense account for how he is sitting in prison, talking to Cebes and Simmias, but so do many other things: “φωνάς τε καὶ ἀέρας καὶ ἀκοὰς καὶ ἄλλα μυρία, ““voices and airs and hearings and a thousand others” (98d 7-8).

Necessary conditions, then, fail as causes because (1) they do not necessarily entail only those effects they are used to explain, and (2) it is impossible or impractical to identify all the necessary conditions for a particular explanandum, so arbitrary to identify any one in particular. Presocratic science, fixated on necessary conditions, works backward from what has happened, picking out some facts without which what happened could not have happened. But these facts will not logically entail just precisely what has happened. Socrates wants a science that can work forward: one whose causes are so precise that one can deduce from them only one possible effect. Since his bones and sinews could just as well have helped him escape to Megara, they are useless for understanding his stay in prison. What he needs is a cause which could explain no other fact than his imprisonment. He is looking for causes that necessarily entail this, and only this effect.4

He believes that a teleological cosmos, properly understood, can provide such stable explanations. This is why Anaxagoras’ Intellect so excited him: if the universe were arranged by a beneficent intelligence, we would have the formula for finding an adequate explanation for any fact whatsoever. The teleological hypothesis allows us to assume in advance that if something is the case, then it’s the best possible arrangement. Figuring out why it’s best will provide us with an explanation meeting all the strictures set out in the critique of natural science: in the teleological cosmos, each explanandum will have precisely one corresponding explanans, and the explanans will be valid only for that one explanandum. Everything, from a complex state of affairs to the simplest particular, will be good in such a way as to entail all of its other features including its existence, and each thing’s peculiar goodness will fail to explain anything but it.

Teleology, then, is a cosmological theory which, if accepted, allows us to conduct all inquiry by a single method with a guaranteed result. Every feature of the cosmos, from the grand arrangement of sun, moon and stars to Socrates’ imprisonment and conversation with Simmias and Cebes, has its own exclusive cause; every p can be adequately explained when we discover why p is best, and the explanation will hold for p alone.

Socrates’ great disappointment with Anaxagoras is that he utterly neglects to detail why things as set out in his theory are in fact for the best; his explanations avoid this crucial question and instead detail the mechanical workings of the arranged universe. So, teleological though his world may be, Anaxagoras has nothing to say about the teleology after he asserts that it exists (97d 6-98a 2).5

adduced as explanations for the same phenomenon, the coming-into-being of two ("τοῦ δύο γίγνεσθαι"; 96e 6-97b 7).

4Vlastos (1969), gives a different account of Plato’s issue with Presocratic explanation: in his view, the problem is that all such explanation is materialist, and cannot account for non-physical facts. Vlastos thinks Socrates, in his youth, believed that the proximity of two units resulted in the entity two. “He had been confusing the arithmetical operation of addition with a physical process—that of taking things which were ‘apart’ to begin with and putting them ‘close to each other.’ And he had been supposing that this material process was the aitia of the logico-mathematical truth that the same items which count as units, if taken disjointly, will count as a pair, if taken conjointly.” (pp. 96-97) This reading seems to me to attribute an incredible howler to Plato on slim textual evidence. Since Plato does in fact provide clearly-formulated reasons for rejecting addition as the cause of something’s being two—namely that addition can explain things other than the generation of two—I see no reason to adopt Vlastos’ reading.

5Socrates prefers a teleological universe because it would provide grounds for an adequate science of explanation. That is the appeal of teleology: not moral, but scientific. Only in this light does his otherwise puzzling criticism of Anaxagoras make any sense (98a 7-c 2). Scholars have held that Anaxagoras’ Nous just doesn’t do enough in his cosmology to qualify as a teleological guarantor. But the Phaedo critique cannot be aimed at Anaxagoras’ claims about the causal efficacy of Nous—Anaxagoras certainly attributed to Nous knowledge of all past, present and future states of affairs, along with the responsibility for those states (DK 59B12), so it
For I never thought that Anaxagoras, who claimed that things were arranged by intelligence, would adduce for them some cause other than that it is best for them to be as they are. So I thought that, once he had given the best as the cause of each thing and of all things in common, he would bring the explanation to a close by positing the good as the common cause for all things … Of this wondrous expectation, my friend, I was deprived. When I went on reading, I saw that the man made no use of intelligence nor accounted it the cause of the cosmic arrangement of things, but instead assigned responsibility to airs, aethers, waters, and many other strange things.

Of course, Socrates was never able to discover such teleological explanations on his own, either (99c 6-d 2). He abandons the project as simply too difficult to pursue. Instead, Socrates turns to the adequate method of explanation which he was able to develop, setting out two stages in its genesis: the simple-minded method of explanation, and the clever. This is the model of explanation that interests me.

Socrates calls the simple-minded method “safe but stupid.” Safe because it is undeniably true, stupid because it has a severely limited range of application; so limited that there is little to recommend the method beyond its truth. The form of the explanation is familiar to any reader of Plato: “τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλά,” “all beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful” (100e 2-3). What does this mean in the context of the Phaedo?

The simple-minded method is good at answering a very particular kind of would seem that his universe was teleological all the way down. The real critique is that Anaxagoras personally ignores the explanatory resources of such a universe, where any state of affairs will be for the best. Instead, he offers mechanistic accounts of how motion and matter produced the world as it is—the focus is not on Nous’ intent but on Nous’ tools. Although he is entitled to “for the best”-type explanations for all facts, Anaxagoras says the heavenly bodies were separated by the speed of the revolution (B9), and the moon shines because it reflects light from the sun (B18). So Graham (1991) is wrong to say that Socrates’ complaint against Anaxagoras is that his Nous does not take a continuing directorial role (“The role of Nous as an external agent is merely to provide an initial impetus: it gives a jump-start to the cosmic motor, or flips the switch on the cosmic blender,” p. 3). Since the initial impetus is for a process that brings about the order planned by Nous, there is no need for continuing direction. Creation is a single act; Nous, like God, does not have to tinker. The problem is not the cosmology itself, but that Anaxagoras fails to explain the cosmology in light of its origin in the plans of a divine intellect, beyond stating that this is so.

6That the second voyage does not pretend to be a teleological theory is not always recognized (see, e.g. Cresswell 1971, pp. 248-249), but as noted by Burge (1971), “the text explicitly says that Socrates has resorted to the ‘second best course’ because he has failed to find the teleological aitia, and because there is not a word about teleology in the whole discussion of the ‘simple-minded aitia’, the common interpretation seems clearly wrong.” (pp. 1-2, fn 2) See also Vlastos (1969), pp. 82-83 fn 15; pp. 87-88.
question: “why is $x F$?” In the critique of Presocratic science, Socrates established that particulars can’t answer this sort of question, because they can never function as adequate explanations for properties. If we want to know why Socrates is small, we cannot point to Simmias’ head. These kinds of causes don’t have a strong enough link with their effects, and can in fact have contradictory effects: Simmias’ head would explain why Simmias is large in just the same way it explains why Socrates is small, so it would be a cause of smallness and largeness. So particulars are just a dead end for explaining why $x$s are $F$.

But, thinking back to the view of properties I outlined above, Socrates can answer at least these “why is $x F$?” questions with the strict precision he demands. If every feature of a particular is caused by a property it possesses, then to explain why $x$ is $F$, all we need to do is point to the property of $F$-ness in it. Socrates is small because he possesses smallness. And this kind of cause meets our conditions. The only thing smallness will ever explain is why something is small. It will never be the cause of any other feature or state of affairs: nothing is large because of its smallness. The only thing the property of smallness does is make those particulars which possess it small. Features of particulars can always be attributed to the component properties of those particulars; the properties are the true causes of facts about what the particulars are like. Thus, beautiful things are beautiful by beauty: “παντὶ ὧν ἄν προσγένηται, ὑπάρχει ἐκείνῳ καλῷ εἶναι,” “in everything to which [beauty] is added, being beautiful inheres” (Hipp. Ma. 292d 1).

The problems with this method of explanation are pretty obvious. It seems like a bit of hocus pocus: if we reify traits into properties, they can explain themselves. Naturally the relation between some trait and the reified version of that trait will be direct and exclusive. So the simple-minded method does meet Socrates’ conditions for adequate explanation, but at a high price: the method seems totally sterile. All it can do is explain that things are $F$ because they possess $F$-ness. How can this sort of tautology solve problems like biological generation, or why fire melts snow, or why earth is in the centre? And if it cannot do this, why does Socrates think it is worth pursuing?

Let me offer some initial defenses. Plato does seem to believe in the Phaedo that particulars have features because they possess properties. If we accept this as true, then there is a sense in which all answers to the “why is $x F$?” question will boil down to the simple-minded answer. For instance, someone might ask us why a painting is beautiful, and we might answer “because of its shape and colour.” But that’s not strictly true. It might be that the painting possesses the property beauty in virtue of its shape and colour, but for Plato, this property is the proximate cause of its being beautiful, so our answer skips over the most essential metaphysical fact, the fact which ultimately answers the question. Without beauty, the painting would not be beautiful—even if its shape and colour remained the same.

Furthermore, shape and colour don’t only grant beauty; they necessitate the possession of a whole range of properties: smallness, bigness, brightness, darkness. When we say shape and colour make a painting beautiful, we’re assuming that our querent will pick out the right property among the many that proceed from shape and colour, since only this one property actually makes the painting beautiful. The expanded form of our answer, then, will be “the painting’s shape and colour grant it possession of the property beauty, which is the cause of its being beautiful.” To understand why shape and colour make the painting beautiful, we have to identify the property proximately responsible for its being beautiful—beauty—not darkness, brightness, largeness.

Now it may be that when we ask “why is $x$ beautiful?” we really want to know what physical conditions are necessary for it to possess the property beauty. And
in that case, “the painting is beautiful because of its shape and colour” will satisfy us. But then we’re not really asking what entity is responsible for x’s being beautiful, what is the cause. We’re asking how the thing got hold of that entity. And in so doing, Plato believes we have to presuppose something like the simple-minded explanation. So the Presocratic method turns out to be a circumlocution for the simple-minded method.

The advantage of the simple-minded method, then, is not just its economy or its ability to meet some conditions Socrates sets out on the basis of personal prejudice. It tracks how reality works: in the view of the *Phaedo*, there are particulars, there are properties, and the features of these particulars are literally caused by the properties they possess. Simple-minded explanations are not just neater or stricter than natural scientific ones by arbitrary standards—they are the only explanations that directly identify the causal relations that structure the world.

But as Socrates realizes, the simple-minded answer is not enough. It is true, obviously, but it is stupid, because it can only answer one type of question: ”why is x F?” Many facts do take this form: “Helen is beautiful”, “Socrates is small.” But what do we do with a fact like ”fire melts snow”? How do we explain facts besides the possession of single properties by single particulars—facts about how particulars undergo change, about how they interact?

The key is a principle established at 70d-72a: “δόσος ἐστι τι ἐναντίον, μηδαμόθεν ἀλλόθεν αὐτῷ γίγνεσθαι ἢ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτῶ ἐναντίου,” ”whatever has an opposite comes to be from no other source than its own opposite” (70e 5-6). The things that have opposites are, apparently, properties, not particulars: in Socrates’ examples, the smaller comes to be from the larger, the worse from the better; the juster from the more unjust. All changes proceed along a scale whose termina are a pair of opposed properties. This is the frame for Socrates’ explanation of the “more clever” method of explanation: a method that expands the precision of the simple-minded method to a range of questions and problems much wider than ”why is x F?”

What is a change? Take the acorn which grows into an oak. There is no clean way to treat this change as one from particular to particular, from acorn to oak. From acorn to oak is an enormously complicated process, made up of innumerable alterations. How can we explain it? Trying to identify, Presocratic-style, necessary conditions for the acorn becoming an oak is a doomed enterprise. There are thousands or millions of such necessary conditions, and none will have the relation of necessary and exclusive entailment Socrates wants in a scientific explanation. But within the shift from acorn to oak, many properties are exchanged for their opposites. Most obviously, smallness is replaced by largeness.

The trick is to treat the growth of the whole oak not as a change but a set of changes, or property-exchanges. Each of these changes will fit beautifully into the opposites-to-opposites schema laid out earlier in the dialogue. Socrates begins the account of his ”more clever” method by noting that when we take change in this way, properties themselves are only ever generated or destroyed. This generation and destruction of properties is what allows particulars to exchange properties—and this property-exchange is the basis of all changes in particulars. Every change a particular undergoes can be reduced to the replacement of some property by its opposite—macro-level changes, like acorn to oak, are really just sets of micro-level property-exchanges.

Crucially, these property-exchanges are governed by the laws of exclusion between a property and its opposite. If we analyse macro-level changes into their constituent property-exchanges, then we can analyse all the components of a change in terms of the logical relations of opposition between properties:

102d 6-103a 2

ἐμοὶ γὰρ φαίνεται οὐ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ μέγεθος οὐδέποτ’ ἐθέλειν ἄμα μέγα καὶ σμικρὸν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος οὐδέποτε προσδέχεσθαι τὸ σμικρὸν ὁδ’ ἐθέλειν ὑπέρεχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ δυνὸν τὸ ἐτέρον, ἢ φεύγειν καὶ ὑπεκχωρεῖν ὅταν αὐτῷ προσήκῃ τὸ ἐναντίον, τὸ σμικρὸν, ἢ προσελθόντος ἀπολωλέναι· ὑπομένει δὲ καὶ δεξάμενον ἑθέλειν ὑπερέχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ δύο τὸ ἕτερον, ἢ φεύγειν καὶ ὑπεκχωρεῖν ὅταν αὐτῷ προσίῃ σμικρὸν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος οὐδέποτε προσδέχεσθαι τὸ σμικρὸν οὐδὲ εἶναι, οὐδὲ ἄλλο οὐδὲν τῶν ἐναντίων, ἔτι

7Or say someone asks us why Helen is beautiful: we might say “because she’s the daughter of Zeus.” But all we’re really doing, in that case, is saying that Helen possesses the property “beauty” because she is the daughter of Zeus. That property is the actual, proximate cause of her being beautiful, even if she came to possess the property through her divine parentage. Our aetiological answer might be satisfying on some level, but within the metaphysics of the *Phaedo* Helen’s being beautiful is still a direct effect of her beauty, not of her lineage.
It seems to me that not only is largeness itself never capable of being at once large and small, but that the largeness in us is also never able to admit the small, nor to be overcome by it. Instead one of these two things happens: either it flees and yields it place whenever its opposite, the small, approaches, or as its opposite arrives it is destroyed. It cannot endure having received smallness; it cannot be other than it was. I can receive smallness and endure, still being what I am: the same person, small. But largeness dares not be small, being large—and it's just the same for the smallness in us, it can neither become nor be large. Nor does any other thing among the opposites, still being what it was, at the same time become and be its opposite: rather it either leaves or is destroyed in this event.

When an exchange of oppositional properties in a particular happens, the particular changing has nothing to do with it—in the simplest terms, all that's going on in a particular's change from large to small is smallness approaching largeness: the largeness must either yield its place, or be destroyed. If in some gruesome accident, Socrates were to lose both his legs, this account of smallness ousting bigness is in fact the only adequate explanation he would accept for why he is now small. An aetiological account of the accident—too much wine at the torch-race for Bendis, say—would fail to provide the strict entailment that he demanded in his critique of the Presocratic method: it would only identify the condition for his acquisition of smallness, one that could explain many of his other features equally well (for instance, his leglessness). But if we explained the change by pointing to the presence of smallness in that place where previously there was largeness, we would satisfy Socrates' demands. He became small because an approaching smallness was incompatible with his largeness and so booted it out. Socrates has found, in a logical relation that holds between two properties, an adequate explanation for a complex fact. Here we are not simply trying to explain how $x$ is $F$, but how an $F$ $x$ became $\neg F$. And yet we do so only by appealing to a logical fact about the properties at issue in the change: $F$ is incompatible with $\neg F$. We begin to see how Socrates' clever method works.

So, we have a method for explaining complex changes according to logical relations holding between opposed properties. Can we extend the clever method to explain causal interactions? Socrates thinks we can, by subscribing to something that approaches a theory of essences. Particulars, although they receive a predicate for each property they possess, are different from their properties. Fire is not heat; snow is not coldness. But in some cases, there appears to be a relation of dependence, if not identity, between a particular and certain of its features. Fire is different from heat, but if it were not hot, it would not be fire:

103d 5-e 5

If this is so, how does Socrates account for his own affirmation that particulars always possess both smallness and largeness? Not entirely convincingly: Simmias' largeness and his smallness have different "places" within the particular they compose. His smallness is relative to Phaedo, and his largeness is relative to Socrates. They are largeness and smallness simpliciter, but they clearly do not "approach" one another in whatever sense (surely a vague one) Socrates has in mind. On the other hand, if some smallness really were to meet the conditions for approaching the largeness in Simmias—if it tried to occupy the same "place," the place from which relation to Socrates is possible—then that largeness would indeed have to yield or perish. And as a result, Simmias would become small relative to Socrates.
τοῦ ψυχροῦ αὐτῷ ἢ ὑπεξιέναι ἢ ἀπολεῖσθαι, οὐ μέντοι ποτὲ τολμήσειν δεξάμενον τὴν ψυχρότητα ἔτι εἶναι ὅπερ ἦν, πῦρ καὶ ψυχρόν.——ἀλήθη, ἔφη, λέγεις.——ἔστιν ἀρα, ἡ δ’ ὅς, περὶ ἕνα τῶν τοιούτων, ὡστε μὴ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἀξιόσθαι τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὄνοματος εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλο τι ὃ ἔστι μὲν οὐκ ἐκείνο, ἔχει δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου μορφὴν ἀεί, ὅταν περ ἦ.

“I think you’ll agree: snow, being snow, but having received the hot (in the process we just described), will never still be what it was, i.e. snow, and be hot. Rather as the heat approaches it will either yield its place to it or be destroyed.”——“Of course.”——“And fire, as the cold approaches, will either yield its place or be destroyed; once it has received the cold it will never dare to still be what it was, i.e. fire, and be cold.”——“You speak the truth,” he said.——“Well, then,” Socrates said, “in some cases such as these, not only the Form itself will be judged worthy of its predicate always at all times, but also something else will be. This is not the Form, but it always possesses the Form's aspect, whenever it has being.”

What Socrates is imagining in the passage quoted here is an ousting of the hot in fire by cold, so that fire, in the same aspect in which it previously appeared hot, will now appear cold. The place of the hotness we experience in fire will now be occupied by coldness, and since fire cannot survive without hotness, it will cease to be fire at all.

9This may seem to be a theory of essences. (That’s how it struck White, see his 1976 and 1978 papers.) I am not sure that it needs to be, and I am certain that to make it such would needlessly complicate the Phaedo. If particulars are to have genuine natures or essences, we need some Phaedo-specific account of what an “essence” is if not a property, how it can unify properties, and so on. Until now I've been treating particulars as nothing more than sets of properties considered as a unity. To make that unity into a genuine fact, we would need to give particulars (or at least properties that don't have opposites, like humanness) a grounding in the realm of fundamental reality—the realm of Forms. We would need to posit Forms of things like Human and Stick, which Plato strenuously avoids in the Phaedo. These Forms would have to function quite differently from the Forms of the oppositional properties. To be hot, or big, or good, is just that—it implies nothing beyond the possession of a single unqualified property. But to be human is to possess a number of properties: humans are featherless bipeds with flat fingernails, or something like that. If Plato is to maintain the doctrine that Forms self-predicate (that they are themselves that of which they are the Form), then the Form of Human could only be human by being featherless, bipedal, and flat-fingernailed, since the definitional features of human specified by the Form of Human include participation in bipedality and featherlessness and planunguity. We would therefore have to posit Forms that participated in other Forms, Forms that had properties other than the property to which they correspond. A belief in essences grounded in substantial Forms would wreak havoc on the Theory of Forms, as is explored in the Parmenides, but there is just no textual evidence for such a belief in the Phaedo anyway. (No doubt Plato flirts with just this kind of Form when he discusses the Form of Bed in Republic X, but his choice to highlight uncertainty about this category in the Parmenides shows us that substantial Forms were never an unshakeable doctrine of the theory of Forms, as Forms of oppositional properties undeniably were.) It is clearly preferable to explain these “essential” properties of fire and snow without committing Plato to any robust theory of essences involving Forms.——The influential interpretation of the Phaedo's autobiographical passage given in Vlastos (1969) does rely on a category of substantial Forms that ground essences of particulars. Vlastos’ view is that such Forms have a relationship, not of participation, but of entailment with others. When a particular participates in a substantial Form, that Form entails its participation also in many others; the Form of Snow entails the Form of Cold, and
The particular we call fire, we recognize by its definitional features. “Fire” names something, for instance, bright, dry, and hot. If we were to come across some particular which had all the definitional features of fire, we would call it fire. If, on the other hand, it was bright and dry but not hot, we would refuse it that name. In fact, if this particular we first called fire exchanged hot for cold, dry for wet, and a number of other Fs for Gs, we might well decide to call it snow—since it would have come to possess all the definitional features of snow. These names, fire and snow, are used as markers: they denote specific sets of properties. Names of particulars name sets of properties, and when a set of properties does not match the set we name by x, then we do not call it x. When fire loses its property hot, it is no longer fire. We don’t need any high-powered account of essences or substantial Forms to support this—it’s just a fact of how humans use language to communicate. “Fire” and “snow” are shorthand for collections of the properties.10

To explain why fire melts snow, then, we appeal to the properties that make up fire and snow. When “fire” approaches “snow,” the coldness in the latter must yield to the hotness in the former or be destroyed. Once the coldness is gone or destroyed, the property-set no longer contains all the properties definitional of “snow.” So the “snow” ceases to exist—since the complete set of properties denoted by the name “snow” has ceased to exist. That is how fire melts snow.

This account might seem reductive—it gives us grounds for just scratching particulars out of the world; for explaining everything in terms of properties. But that’s not what Socrates does with it. The final move in his account of the clever explanation is to welcome back the banned aetiological explanations of the Presocratic method. It’s not so surprising that Socrates should desire this. If I ask my doctor “why am I sick?” and she responds “because you possess sickness,” I have some grounds for dissatisfaction with her answer—true though it may be. Socrates wants to save her ability to answer “you have a fever,” without either admitting the causal reality of particulars like fevers or declaring her answer a complete explanatory failure. He needs to show, then, that even if we accept all the principles on which so on. It is possible that with some argument, and some adjustment of the rules of self-predication in Platonic Forms, this entailment-relation could replace the participation-relation among Forms themselves, thus saving the theory of essences. But Vlastos’ reading is built upon a total misrepresentation of Plato’s text: his article is littered with lines like “when Socrates maintains that the Form, Snow, is the aitia of cold...” (p. 105) But in the whole Phaedo there appears no “Form of Snow,” nor is this non-entity ever given as the aitia of cold. Nehamas (1973) argues convincingly that fire and snow cannot be Forms in the Phaedo, since Plato clearly states that they do not have eternal and immutable being: “Our passage contrasts a Form, F-ness, which is always F, with something else which is also F whenever it exists. Because of this qualification, it is clear that the contrast is not between two Forms.” (p. 483, see also p. 488)

10This reading of Plato, which denies that particulars are subjects in which properties inhere, has received defense in Mann (2000). The entire second part of Mann’s book argues for this thesis, but it is summed up well in the following: “There are really no genuine things, because there is nothing to being a particular ‘thing’ besides being a certain mixture. So any time the mixture is changed, we have a new ‘thing’ (because the proportions of the elemental stuffs in the mixture are different). But each mixture can be thus changed in every way. Hence there is no genuine alteration (as opposed to substantial change); rather, all cases of what we ordinarily take to be change are really instances of the generation or perishing of mixtures, in other words, instances of rearranging the eternal, elemental stuffs. And hence there also is nothing the ‘thing’ actually is. Whatever it ‘is’, it merely becomes.” (pp. 124-125)
the simple-minded answer rested, the clever answer not only preserves bodies of knowledge which explain particulars by reference to particulars, but grounds them in the same logical certainty we gained by the simple-minded answer. And he does so in the following way:

105b 6-c 6

λέγω δὴ παρ᾽ ἣν τὸ πρῶτον ἔλεγον ἀπόκρισιν, τὴν ἁσφαλῆ ἐκείνην, ἐκ τῶν νῦν λεγομένων ἄλλην ὁρῶν ἁσφάλειαν, εἰ γάρ ἐροι μὲ φ ψ ἄν τι ἔν τῷ σώματι ἐγγένεται θερμὸν ἔσται, οὐ τὴν ἁσφαλῆ σοι ἐρῶ ἀπόκρισιν ἐκείνην τὴν ἁμαθῆ, ὃτι ψ ἄν θερμότης, ἀλλὰ κομψότεραν ἐκ τῶν νῦν, ὃτι ψ ἄν πῦρ· οὐδὲ ἄν ἔρῃ ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγένηται περιττὸς ἔσται, οὐδὲ ἄν ἀριθμῷ τί ἐγγέ

I can give an answer which goes beyond the first answer we spoke of, the safe one. I see another safe answer arising from what we have just discussed. For if you asked me “what is it that, should it arise in a body, causes the body to be hot?” I don’t have to give you the safe but stupid answer: that heat is in the body. Instead I can give you a cleverer answer developed from this discussion: that fire is in the body. Nor, if you asked what arises in a body to make it sick, would I answer sickness, instead I would say fever is in it. Nor, for what in a number makes it odd, would I say oddness, but rather the unit, and just so for other cases.

A specific human before us might be sick. But sickness is not a definitional property of the human; its presence or absence in the property-set conventionally labelled “human” makes no difference to whether the label “human” is appropriate to the set. In this case, when we ask “why is this human sick?” we are not really looking for the cause of its possessing the feature “sick,” which is always its possession of the property sickness anyway. Our interest, and our purpose in asking the question, is to find out what makes this human differ from other humans—why does this property-set contain sickness where others do not?

The medical answer is that this human, unlike the others, has a fever: there is a fever in the human. In this explanation, “fever” labels a set of properties, just as does “human.” Think of what is really at issue when a person gets a fever. Health becomes sickness, sure, but in addition to this, coldness becomes hotness, dryness becomes dampness, and many more properties are replaced by their opposites. By using the conventional labels “human” and “fever,” we can assign the coldness, dryness, and health to the single property-set “human,” and the hotness, dampness, and sickness to the single property-set “fever.” And once they are so assigned, we can say things like “fever arose in the human” to denote the entire set of changes observed by the doctor. There are times when speaking of properties through the shorthand of particulars is essential to human life. Bodies of knowledge like medicine are useful for those occasions when our values demand a response beyond simple analysis of facts.  

11Taylor (1969) thinks that the clever answer fails to provide anything beyond the simple-minded answer—it just asserts facts about certain particulars’ essential possession of properties. “To say that snow accounts for cold, or fire heat, in the sense that no snow can fail to be cold or fire fail to be hot is not to account for any phenomenon in terms of any explanatory entity. It is merely to say that snow must be cold and fire hot, which is itself a phenomenon in need of a causal explanation.” (p. 51) First, snow’s definitional coldness needs no causal explanation if we take snow simply to be the syndrome or concatenation of a set of properties which must contain cold if they are to phenomenally produce the entity “snow.” And second, Taylor’s objection misses the point—he thinks that the clever answer is designed to explain why snow is cold. But that was the task of the simple-minded answer,
It is not, of course, legitimate in Plato’s eyes to think that some entity “fever” really did cause health to become sickness—it was the sickness encompassed by the label “fever” that drove out health and took its place. But it is legitimate to attribute a body’s sickness to its fever, provided you have done the necessary definitional work for your conventions, i.e. you have determined what properties you mean to denote by “fever.” If you are self-consciously using “fever” to label a property-set which must include “sickness,” then to say that a fever is the cause of sickness in the body is as much a necessary truth as saying that sickness is. Your account of fever’s effect on a human is nothing more than convenient shorthand for a complex set of changes between oppositional properties.12

The clever method of explanation lets us think about change in terms which, while not yet maximally reduced to oppositional properties, are so reducible. Even though Plato-approved mathematics, medicine, chemistry, and so on, will seem to utilize particulars in their explanations, these particulars are conceived as the property-sets they really are, and so we can retain a chemistry, a medicine, a mathematics that does not contradict Plato’s simple-minded answer. And this gives us the full range of the clever method of explanation. Complex changes and causal interactions between particulars on the macro-level can always be explained by opposed properties interacting on the micro-level. And once we have accepted this, we can rebuild our natural science in such a way that its laws are not derived from experience, but from logical truths such as “hot is the opposite of cold.”13

Précis français
Quelle est la fonction de la théorie des formes ? Selon Socrate chez le Phédon, elle est une façon méthodologique de faire des sciences naturelles. Elle nous offre une approche de la réflexion sur la cosmologie qui est un progrès par rapport à ses prédécesseurs. Socrate est insatisfait des réponses des présocratiques à des questions telles que « pourquoi le feu faire fondre la neige ? » et « quelle est la cause de la fièvre ? » Mais il est d’accord que ces questions sont pertinentes et légitimes pour la philosophie. La théorie des formes est proposée comme une réponse satisfaisante.

Mon présentation examine le passage l’on a dit « l’autobiographie intellectuelle » à l’appui de cette affirmation. J’essaie de montrer comme la réponse « niaise » (« le beau est beau par le beau », « τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ γίγνεται καλὰ ») est étendue à la réponse « habile », et comme cette réponse est utilisé par Socrate pour résoudre les problèmes des sciences naturelles sans tomber dans les pièges dans lesquels les Présocratiques sont devenus empêtrés.

Je soutiens que chez le Phédon, Platon, en se fondant sur l’idée que les choses présentent leurs caractéristiques en fonction des propriétés correspondantes which told us that snow is cold by coldness. The clever answer uses the definitional coldness of snow to account for facts about the way “snow” behaves in the world. That nothing hot can qualify for the conventional label “snow” shows us why snow is destroyed at the approach of fire—any property-set we label “fire” must contain hotness, and the approach of this hotness destroys the coldness that is essential to the phenomenal being of “snow.”

12This shorthand will differ depending on the body of knowledge in question. There are some contexts, for instance medicine, where the properties definitional for the label “human” will include embodiment. But in other contexts, like Plato’s accounts of what happens to the soul after death, his use of “human” will not include the property embodiment. I owe this point to Mann (2000), who also believes that any apparent “essences” in Plato are just ordinary-language conventions (pp. 131-132).

13It is my pleasure to thank M.M. McCabe, Jeremy Reid, and Emily Hulme for their help on this paper.
possédées par eux (donc « le beau est beau par le beau »—ce qui est beau est ainsi parce qu'il possède la beauté), considère que tous les phénomènes naturels peut être réduite à des interactions entre ces qualités et leurs seules contraires. Chaud est opposé au froid, sec à humide, et ainsi de suite. Si les particuliers sensibles peuvent être considérés comme ensembles de propriétés, leurs changements peuvent être décrites comme ensembles des remplacements d'une seule propriété par son contraire naturel, leurs interactions comme ensembles des interactions entre ces paires de contraires. En concevant du changement de cette manière, Platon est capable d'éviter l'arbitraire des causes présocratiques, tout en conservant le large éventail d'applications de la science naturelle présocratique.

**WORKS CITED**


Why does Plato give his dialogue *Phaedo* a Pythagorean framework, with three significant characters identified as students of Philolaus? He makes doubly clear that the dialogue is specifically addressed towards the Pythagorean position, by doubling the Pythagorean addressees; not only is Socrates’ original discussion in prison directed towards Cebes and Simmias, but the whole dialogue is then retold to Echecrates, another Pythagorean thinker acutely interested in Socrates’ argument. Besides the Pythagorean identity of the main characters, it is widely accepted that several of the positions argued by Socrates in the dialogue have a Pythagorean

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1 The dialogue is probably reported at Phlius, during a visit by Phaedo, since it does not appear to be Echecrates who is visiting Athens. The loss of ties between Phlius and Athens Echecrates describes might have symbolic value. If (as I shall argue) Phlius stands for the mathematical Pythagorean position that has lost sight of its religious content, Athens in the dialogue represents a rationality still connected to older religious beliefs. Athens temporarily suspends its rational judgments of innocence and guilt of its citizens by holding back from executions to remain pure during the festival to Apollo, marked by the return of the ship from Delos commemorating Theseus’ heroic action from Athens’ mythological past. This same attitude is manifest in Socrates’ acceptance of the divine provenance of his dream and his suspension of his own best understanding of the meaning of the god’s message to investigate whether it means for him to devote himself to poetry. It appears again in Socrates’ attitude towards suicide – even though human life ought to strive for the separation of soul from body completed in death, the human must patiently wait for this to happen according to divine will by waiting for natural events to run their course. The breakdown of communication between Athens and Phlius points to the incomprehension of religious belief in the Pythagoreanism of Phlius with which the dialogue begins.

2 See Horky 2013: 108. “The combined traditions of Plato and Aristoxenus corroborate Burkert’s claim that Echecrates would have been considered some sort of mathematical Pythagorean, along with Philolaus, who is said to be his teacher, and Archytas of Tarentum.”

3 The view that humans are in a kind of prison is referred to as “an explanation that is put in the language of the mysteries” (62b); the view that the uninitiated and unsanctified will wallow in the mire, while the purified and initiated will dwell with the gods in Hades, is attributed to “those who established the mystic rites” (69c-d); that souls born into this world come from Hades, and that souls which enter Hades come from here, is called an “ancient theory” (70d). There is a complication in identifying all these religious views as Pythagorean, insofar as certain points seem to fit an orphic context more easily. Dixsaut points out that certain commentators have tried to evade this problem by speaking of an “orphic-pythagorean” context (see Dixsaut: 1991, p. 55). Because, however, the context of the dialogue is so obviously and explicitly Pythagorean, I think this ambiguity poses a historical question more than a textual one, and that the religious views in the dialogue can thus be treated straightforwardly as Pythagorean. On some of the
origin: the immortality and transmigration of the soul, the view of the body as a prison for the soul from which it must be freed through purification. Noting this strange connection between the Pythagorean content of Socrates’ position and the Pythagorean identity of his chief interlocutors, David Sedley draws attention to the “paradoxical spectacle of Socrates having to convince the Pythagoreans of the truth of their own doctrine” (Sedley: 1995, p. 11).

This spectacle appears less paradoxical, however, when one identifies just what kind of Pythagoreans Plato is depicting in the dialogue. I shall build on the interpretations of Gadamer (1973; 1980), House (1981), and Horky (2013), who see in these Pythagoreans mathematically oriented philosophers whose strong skepticism demands rational, demonstrative arguments as proof of anything they believe and for whom the religious beliefs of older Pythagoreanism have lost their interest. Put in terms of the development of Pythagorean philosophy (at least on its Aristotelian-Iamblichean account), Cebes, Simmias and Echecrates are mathematikoi who expect demonstrative arguments and explanations for everything and consequently have lost any meaningful connection to the religious

historical complexity of identifying the exact source of the religious ideas in the dialogue, see Dixsaut: 1991, pp. 44-65.

4 The concluding myth of the dialogue also contains all kinds of implicit references to Pythagorean views, but this topic exceeds the scope of the present paper.

5 Gadamer (1980, p. 23) writes that Cebes and Simmias are “Pythagorean representatives of contemporary science,” who “genuinely represent the modern scientific enlightenment” in their suspicions about religious belief.

6 For House, the dialogue is addressed to “the generation of Pythagoreans who succeeded Philolaus …representatives of the scientific enlightenment of the time in which the dialogue is set…men of science who will not accept anything that is not proven to them” (House: 1981, pp. 40-41). They “take number and numerical relations for existence itself,” (40) but no longer understand or care about the religious side of older Pythagoreanism (p. 41 and p. 44).


8 Socrates says admiringly: “Cebes is always on the track of some arguments; he is certainly not willing to be convinced at once by what one says.” (63a1-3)

9 See Dixsaut: 1991, p. 58, on how Cebes and Simmias are “pythagoriciens à la tendance « scientifique », for whom older religious doctrine has become unintelligible, and Burkert: 1972, p. 198, on their identity as mathematici.
ethical doctrines of the akousmatikoi. One central purpose of the discussion in Phaedo is to philosophically ground older Pythagorean religious beliefs about the soul in a way that would satisfy this new generation of Pythagorean philosophers’ and their rigorous demand for rational, necessary arguments as a condition for trusting anything. When explaining the meaning of the Pythagorean context of Phaedo, it is crucial to recognize that, in Plato’s writing, “(f)oreign material is no longer foreign, but an integral part of the Platonic structure.” Following Sedley, the dramatis personae of the Phaedo must therefore be read as “symbolic.” Plato here uses the Pythagorean...
position held by Philolaus and his followers to symbolize a view which takes mathematical objects (numbers, geometrical shapes, ratios, etc.) as the fundamental causes or *archai* of sensible existence, and elevates mathematical thinking and its emphasis on demonstrative proof as the highest way of grasping the world. The key *Platonic* structure which best unlocks the symbolism of the Pythagorean context of *Phaedo* is thus the Divided Line from *Republic* VI. Expressed according to the distinctions articulated on the Line, Socrates’ goal in *Phaedo* is to convince these mathematical philosophers, operating at the level of dianoia, that the mere beliefs trusted by the religious Pythagoreans on authority through *pistis* could actually be

ly and philosophically within the dialogue. Yet obviously some degree of historical truth is essential, since if this material is not sufficiently connected to the reader’s sense of the significance of the historical symbols, they will not be able to have the intended resonance and so will fail to achieve their philosophical purpose.

16 Ronna Burger has some suggestive comments about the ontological separability of mathematical in Pythagorean thought and forms in Platonic thought and the implications of the difference for the separate existence of soul from body, but she does not develop them at length. See Burger: 1984, p. 7. Horky refers to the “ontological subplot” of the *Phaedo*, concerning the essence of numbers: “the analysis of numbers in the *Phaedo* is a secondary project that exists for the sake of another, primary objective, which in this case is the development of an argument for the immortality of the soul. As I will show, though, the inquiry into the ontological status of numbers, and the ways they admit of some properties but not others, plays a crucial role in the formalization of Plato’s metaphysics and constitutes our best evidence of what Aristotle would go on to describe in *Metaphysics* A as the ‘intermediary objects of mathematics’.” (Horky: 2013, p. 168)

17 This is just to say that the view of the Pythagoreans found in Aristotle is already present in Plato: that there was a schism between *akousmatikoi* and *mathematikoi*, and that the latter group were distinguished by the way they identified the *archai* of all things with number and privileged demonstrations which explained why something is as it is. See Burkert’s incisive analysis of how Plato treats Pythagoreanism (1972: 83-96). He justifiably takes his conclusion to be confirmed insofar as they coincide with Aristotle’s testimony. Burkert’s conclusions about how, “in its essence, mathematics is not Pythagorean but Greek,” do not affect this identification of Echecrates, Cebe and Simmias as mathematical Pythagoreans.

18 This interpretative possibility is suggested by Horky: “In *Republic* VI (510b4-511d5), Plato associated the realm of mathematical, especially geometry of the sort practiced by Archytas and probably Philolaus, with the third section of the Divided Line, thought (δίανοια). But Plato also went to extreme lengths there to show that mathematics was not sufficient for completing the understanding of objects in the universe, instead supplying a fourth section corresponding with the Socratic intervention, dialectic, which was the realm where the philosopher could contemplate things totally as such.” (195)

19 In the initial discussion which opens Socrates’ *apologia* of the soul’s immortality, identifying what is proper to the life of philosophy, the language of *dianoia* and *dianoieisthai* (65e3, e7, e8, 66a2) and *logizesthai* and *logismos* (65c2, 66a1) is strikingly prevalent. Other more general terms for thinking employed in these passages are *phronēsis*, *gnosis*, and *eidenai* – these more general terms refer to thinking in a way that apply to *dianoia* or *noēsis* indifferently.

20 The language of *pistis* with reference to the uncomprehended religious beliefs is consistent through the dialogue. He speaks of the *apistia* nowadays concerning the immortality of the soul (70a1), and that something more than *pistis* is needed (70b2)
known by thought. Socrates’ strategy for showing them the truth of older Pythagorean views of the soul is not to encourage them to abandon rational skepticism and the authority of reason and retreat to pístis, but rather to deepen their skepticism so as to elevate their rational thinking to new heights.²¹ Pythagorean religious belief at the level of pístis can be grounded only if one rises beyond mathematical dianoia to dialectical noēsis of supra-mathematical forms and their ultimate archē: nous. If Pythagorean mathematicians can be converted into full-blooded Platonists, they could apprehend the truths of older Pythagorean belief about the immortality of the soul.²² This is why Pythagorean mathematikoi are the ideal participants in this discussion of the soul’s immortality – with just mere hours before his death, Socrates cannot establish that the soul’s thinking activity operates independently of its necessarily embodied activities unless he can begin from a position which already recognizes the existence of eternal and unchanging objects of thought which are grasped by a thinking activity distinct from bodily sense perception.²⁴ The extent to which the mind and its objects are not only distinct from the sensible, but actually exist independently and apart from all bodily involvement, is at the centre of determining whether the soul in fact survives its separation from body in death.

If this interpretation is right, we should be able to see in Cebes’ and Simmias’ perspectives both the strengths and weaknesses of mathematical dianoia, that is, both why they are the ideal addresses to this argument, and why nonetheless the argument must move them beyond the limits of their position. In Republic, Socrates identifies two chief deficiencies in the dianoetic grasp of mathematical objects:

1) while the truths of mathematics are conceptual and eternal, mathematical thinking relies on sensible models and pictures for its proofs. Implied here is that the mathematical objects themselves do not have complete ontological separability and independence from sensible extension. In contrast, dialectical noēsis requires no reference to sensible pictures. Just as the thinking itself is a purely conceptual reflection on ideas and their interrelations, the objects of this thinking, the forms and nous, have a complete independence from their sensible expressions.

2) mathematical thinking lays down hypotheses as certain axioms without investigating or explaining why they exist the way they do, and then reasons deductively from these unquestioned axioms to conclusions. It moves from

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²¹ House: 1981, pp. 40-45, is excellent on this point.
²² See House: 1981, p. 40: “the argument moves to the eide through the positions of Cebes and Simmias, who take number and numerical relations for existence itself.” As House notes (1981, p. 41, fn.5), until one arrives at a position which distinguishes forms from mathematical objects as the ultimate intelligible causes of nature, many of the properties which belong more properly to the eide will be seen to belong to mathematical being. This gives specification to Palmer’s more general claim that in the Phaedo, “one sees Plato intent on developing, rather than simply adopting, certain Pythagorean ideas in a more rigorously philosophical manner of his own.” See Palmer, 2014, p. 210. Palmer traces this view of the Phaedo as a further rationalization of Pythagorean doctrine to Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations I.17.
²³ “Really, Simmias, it would be hard for me to persuade other people that I do not consider my present fate a misfortune if I cannot persuade even you” (84d8-e2).
²⁴ See Gadamer: 1980, p. 27, where Socrates’ suggestion that perhaps no one is better positioned to take up the argument from him after his death than Cebes and Simmias indicates “that mathematicians and those knowledgeable in mathematical science have a requisite capability of which they need only to be made aware with sufficient clarity, namely, that of “pure” thinking which applies to an order of reality different from that given in sense experience.”
hypotheses towards a conclusions (epi teleuten) as opposed to an archē.25 Examples of this hypothetical and deductive thinking are geometry and arithmetic (tas geometrias te kai logismous).26 In contrast, dialectical noēsis does not treat any hypothesis as certain or self-explanatory, moving not deductively to conclusions but upward to more universal and fundamental forms, stopping only once one reaches a genuinely unhypothetical principle (anupotheton archēn).27

The first limitation of mathematical dianoia helps to explain what can seem like a strange ambiguity in Cebes’ and Simmias’ position. On the one hand, they easily and instantly accept the distinction between soul and the body, thinking and sensation, and the superiority of the former over the latter.28 They also accept without argument the existence of intelligible forms – the Just itself, the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, Bigness itself, Health itself, Strength itself, and these forms are the ousia of sensible instances of each (to think about how these could be so quickly accepted by pre-Platonic mathematical Pythagoreans, one need only think about Aristotle’s testimony about Pythagorean numbers for justice, soul, mind, and opportunity).29 On the other hand, they cannot conceive of the superiority of the soul over the body as entailing the independence of the soul from the body. Far from being materialists,31 they see the principles and causes as being intelligible and not sensible, but do not think that the intelligible is altogether separable from the sensible. That this belongs to understanding the intelligible soul according to mathematical form is clear enough through the embrace of the view of the soul as the harmony or ratio of bodily elements embraced by Simmias and Echecrates. In another way it is also evidenced by the explicit dependence Simmias and Cebes have on sensible images when articulating their view of the soul: a lyre and its strings,32 a cloak and a cloakmaker.33 Cebes himself draws attention to this dependence: “Like Simmias, I too need an image.”34 It belongs to mathematical thinking to require such sensible examples and to view the intelligible causes of things to be not completely separable from their sensible embodiment.

When Simmias recognizes the problems of his view of the soul as a harmony, he makes clear that he had previously treated this mathematized conception of the soul as necessary truth, when it was merely probable or plausible (92d). In other words, he had treated as unhypothetical or axiomatic a hypothesis which demanded further explanation. This suggests it is not only that his conception of soul that is problematically mathematical, but the way he was thinking about the soul reflects the limits of mathematical dianoia’s insufficiency hypothetic axiomatic premises.

When the Phaedo is viewed in this way as Socrates’ attempt to bring his

25 Republic 510b4-6
26 Republic 510c2-3.
27 Republic 510b6-9.
28 Phaedo 65b-69e.
29 “…in numbers they seemed to see many resemblances to the things that exist and come into being….such and such a modification of numbers being justice, another being soul and mind, another being opportunity – and similarly for almost all other things being numerically expressible.” (Aristotle, Metaphysics I.5 985b26-31)
30 Phaedo 65d-66a.
31 Contra Gadamer: 1980, p. 30: “It is self-evident that the latter’s materialistic interpretation of the soul is not actually Pythagorean but a materialistic conclusion constructed in opposition to Plato’s idealism.”
32 Phaedo 85e-86d.
33 Phaedo 87a-88b.
34 Phaedo 87b3.
Pythagorean friends from mathematical *dianoia* to dialectical *noēsis* and from math objects to forms and *Nous*, a remarkable feature of the dialogue emerges which can help explain the explicit tentativeness and incompleteness of the arguments for the soul’s immortality: *Socrates’ own second-best method proceeds according to the very weaknesses that belong to mathematical *dianoia*, in particular, the laying down of hypotheses which are treated as axiomatically unhypothetical. On the one hand, the teleological method he describes in *Phaedo* is clearly meant to have the free character of dialectical *noēsis*, treating the forms not as unquestioned axioms but as hypotheses demanding fuller and fuller explanations until one’s thinking arrives at the unhypothetical principle of *Nous* or the Good:

“And should you have to give an account of that hypothesis itself, you’d give it in just the same way, by hypothesizing in turn another hypothesis, whichever of the higher ones appeared best, until you came to something sufficient.” (101d5-e1)

“Thus, once he’s given the cause for each one and for all of them in common, I thought he’d go on to take me through the best for each and the good common to all.” (98b1-3)

Yet this is not how Socrates actually proceeds in his account of his method. Socrates explains that since he is not able to look directly to Mind (what would amount to the ‘first-best’ method), he must base his causal explanations on the separate forms as a “second sailing” or second-best method. The language in this section is striking for its emphasis on this as being a safe method employed to flee from great risk or danger out of fear. The language of safety comes from the mathematical practice of merely laying down a truth as necessary without demanding further explanation, while the dialectical practice of treating hypotheses genuinely hypothetically is risky. Socrates speaks of hypothesizing (100a2135; 100b5) the form or the x-in-itself and then clinging to it for safety (101d1-2), to avoid the indeterminacy of both the endlessly changing and multiple sensible and the blinding transcendence of Mind, as well as the risky uncertainty of treating the hypotheses genuinely hypothetically. He repeatedly asks his interlocutors to grant him or allow him that forms exist, and that sensibles get their name from these by participating in them, and then proceed from these unproven assumptions (100b7-c2; 102a10-b3). In other words, in the second-best method, it is simply laid down that Mind is the principle, that the forms are the intelligible determinations of Mind, and that sensibles are what they are by virtue of their participation in forms.

Yet by burdening his philosophical method with the same limits that belong to the mathematical *dianoia* his discussion is trying to surpass, Plato is indicating the subsequent direction the argument must take. True dialectic cannot rest with the safety of this mathematical version of itself; it must risk becoming genuinely dialectical, to give an account which explains *that* the form in question exists and *why* it exists. After the failure of Socrates’ attempt to understand the cause of natural and mathematical being in nature or in number, his second-best method is thus what Simmias earlier characterized as adopting “the best and most irrefutable of men’s theories, and, borne upon this, sail through the dangers of life as upon

35 “On each occasion I put down as a hypothesis whatever account I judge to be mightiest; and whatever seems to be consonant with this, I put down as being true, both about cause and about all the rest, while what isn’t, I put down as not true.” (100a3-7; cf. 101d3-5, where the *ormêthenta*, the things which spring forth from the hypothesis, are examined to see which agree with it and which do not). Compare the hypothetical laying down of mathematical forms described at *Republic* VI 510d1-3, where the determination of what harmonizes with the laid down beginning points (counting as true whatever *sumphonein* with the premises) is spoken in terms of coming to conclusions that agree with the premises.
a raft” (85c8-d1). It is a human theory and not a divine logos, because it is not yet grounded in the divine nous, grasped as the unhypothetical cause of both the forms and the sensible participants. In contrast, genuine dialectical noësis, whose hypothetical, non-axiomatic investigation into forms culminates in a grasp of Mind itself, is precisely that logos theios (85d3) which is ultimately safest, because the principle and cause one reaches is actually unhypothetical and not simply laid down as such.

The reader who has noticed that Socrates’ method is vulnerable to the same limits of axiomatic mathematical thinking he is trying to transcend can appreciate why Socrates announces to Simmias at 107a8-b3 that the hupotheseis protas (107b5) must be investigated and not simply trusted – that is, the move away from pistis and dianoia the dialogue initiates must be completed by further purifying this second-best method of dialectic of its mathematical residue, a move which must risk treating absolutely nothing as unhypothetical unless it genuinely is unhypothetical. Only Nous or the Good ought to satisfy this highest standard. The first best method then would involve a direct reflection on the first cause, Mind or the Good, and to see how it belongs to the very nature or essence of this principle, that it be productive of the conceptual structure of the world, the interrelated system of forms or essences.

This direct approach to the first cause, this first-best approach, is what I think earlier Simmias intimates when he spoke of the ultimate safety of understanding through a divine logos – understanding Mind as the divine Mind understands itself, so to speak. After understanding these essences to be the necessary consequences of Mind as ultimate cause, one can in turn think about these forms or essences of each thing, so that one would understand how it belongs to them necessarily by their very nature that they produce a plurality of sensible appearances. Only then could we move beyond the dogmatic character of laying down hypotheses as if they were certain, treating them as axioms and moving towards conclusions. Only then could the symbolic and literary conversion of Pythagorean mathematikoi to Platonic dialecticians become complete.

36 In this crucial passage, Simmias identifies three options: “One should achieve one of these things: (1) learn the truth of these things or find it for oneself, or, if that is impossible, (2) adopt the best and most irrefutable of men’s theories, and, borne upon this, sail through the dangers of life as upon a raft, unless (3) someone should make that journey safer and less risky upon a firmer vessel of some divine doctrine.” (85c7-d4) The first option includes Socrates’ early life searching for natural explanations of nature and mathematical explanations of the mathematical. The second option includes the second-best method described in Phaedo. The third option, I am arguing, technically lies outside the argument of the Phaedo, but the form the argument would have to take is clear enough from that dialogue – it is a method which does not simply lay down ideas but rises through them as hypotheses to a grasp of Nous as the unhypothetical principle of both forms and sensible participants.

37 “Certainly, said Simmias, I myself have no remaining grounds for doubt after what has been said; nevertheless, in view of the importance of our subject and my low opinion of human weakness, I am bound to still have some private misgivings about what we have said. You are not only right to say this Simmias, Socrates said, but our first hypotheses require clearer examination, even though we find them convincing. And if you analyze them adequately, you will, I think, follow the argument as far as a person can, and if the conclusion is clear, you will look no further.” (Phaedo 107a8-b9)

38 What exactly is meant by unhypothetical or self-grounding here? For a principle to be unhypothetical, first, and final I take it to mean that (foreshadowing more developed ontological arguments for the existence of a first principle), we arrive at a principle whose existence is entailed by its form, by what it is or its ousia.
Perhaps the closest we get in the dialogues to the free, risky dialectic that treats hypotheses absolutely hypothetically is the daunting dialectical gymnastic in the second half of Plato’s Parmenides. Such a way of proceeding would be excessive and inappropriate, however, to the occasion of the Phaedo, an apologia of Socrates’ confidence in the face of death (63b). We have seen instead that Socrates has tailored his argument to the mode of understanding of his Pythagorean audience. While the argument seeks to move his Pythagorean friends away from mathematical dianoia to Platonic noēsis, Socrates does so, perhaps out of expediency, perhaps out of rhetorical necessity, from within the limits of dianoia itself. Yet in pointing explicitly to the incompleteness of the argument in Phaedo, Plato has also laid out a roadmap of where thinking must lead from this new standpoint.

Résumé
Pourquoi Platon donne-t-il un contexte pythagoricien au Phédon? Echécrate, Cebes et Simmias, en tant que disciples de Philolaus, représentent un pythagorisme mathématique pour lequel les anciennes croyances religieuses du pythagorisme sont devenues absurdes et incompréhensibles. Dans ce dialogue, Socrate veut montrer à Cebes et Simmias que la raison philosophique et démonstrative permet de comprendre la dimension religieuse du pythagorisme. Le pythagorisme des personnages dans le Phédon symbolise une position philosophique où les objets mathématiques (nombres, figures géométriques, ratios, etc.) sont les causes et principes (archai) de chaque être sensible et où la pensée mathématique et son exigence d’une preuve démonstrative sont le mode de compréhension du monde le plus élevé.

La structure platonicienne qui révèle le mieux le symbolisme du contexte pythagoricien du Phédon est l’analogie de la ligne de la République VI. Au moyen des distinctions de cette analogie, Socrate, dans le dialogue, tente principalement de convaincre ces philosophes mathématisants, qui opèrent au niveau de la dianoia, qu’il est possible de comprendre rationnellement, et sans abandonner la rigueur philosophique, les croyances acceptées par les pythagoriciens religieux au niveau du pístis. Pour convaincre Cebes et Simmias que l’ancienne croyance en l’immortalité de l’âme est vraie, Socrate ne doit pas encourager les pythagoriciens à abandonner leur scepticisme rationnel et leur respect pour l’autorité de la raison, mais plutôt à approfondir ce scepticisme et à élever leur pensée philosophique à de nouveaux sommets. Selon l’analogie de la ligne, les croyances religieuses de l’ancien pythagorisme au niveau du pístis est compréhensible philosophiquement seulement si la pensée peut progresser au-delà du dianoia mathématique pour se transformer en noēsis dialectique des idées supra-mathématiques et de leur principe ultime : l’Intellect.

Si cette lecture du Phédon selon l’analogie de la ligne est plausible, on devrait repérer les points forts et faibles de la dianoia mathématique dans les interventions de Cebes et Simmias. L’analogie de la ligne devrait nous aider à comprendre pourquoi Cebes et Simmias sont des interlocuteurs idéaux dans cette discussion, tout en clarifiant la raison pour laquelle l’argument doit néanmoins dépasser les limites de leur position. Quelles sont les points forts et les points faibles de la dianoia mathématique selon Platon?

1) Les vérités mathématiques sont immatérielles et éternelles, mais elles sont néanmoins dépendantes des images sensibles. Les objets mathématiques n’ont pas une séparabilité complète du sensible. La noēsis dialectique, en revanche, n’est pas dépendante des images sensibles et les objets de la noēsis, les formes intelligibles, sont entièrement séparables de toute image sensible.
2) La dianoia pose une hypothèse avec la certitude d’un axiome, sans tenter d’établir l’existence ou la raison de l’existence de l’hypothèse, procédant déductivement vers sa conclusion. La noēsis dialectique, en revanche, ne traite pas ses propres hypothèse comme établies et évidentes, mais cherche à les établir et à les expliquer.

En lisant le Phédon comme la conversion de la pensée mathématique de ses personnages pythagoriciens à la pensée dialectique, et des objets mathématiques aux idées platoniciennes, la qualité manifestement hésitante et incomplète des conclusions du dialogue peut s’expliquer d’une nouvelle manière. La « seconde navigation » de Socrate manifeste les mêmes faiblesses appartenant à la dianoia mathématique des pythagoriciens du dialogue, spécifiquement, l’établissement des hypothèses qui ont un statut axiomatic et non-hypothétique. On voit que la méthode décrite par Socrate, où l’Intellect, les idées intelligibles et les objets sensibles sont posés comme des axiomes, est une méthode que Simmias a caractérisée antérieurement comme « choisir en tout cas parmi les discours tenus par les humains ce qui s’y trouve de meilleur et de moins contestable » (85c8-d11). Ce résidu du dianoia dans la dialectique téléologique est la raison pour laquelle Socrate avoue à la fin de ses derniers arguments que les premières hypothèses auront besoin d’être examinées de nouveau (107b). Cette étude future serait une « première navigation, » un logos divin (selon l’expression de Simmias) qui pourra dépasser les défauts de la pensée mathématique plus exactement que les arguments et les méthodes employés par Socrate dans le Phédon.

**Works Cited**


La tensión psykhé-sôma en Fedón y las implicaciones de lo sensible en el conocimiento de lo real.

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El cuerpo y el alma aparecen, en el planteo general del Fedón, en una relación de tensión que llega frecuentemente a una abierta oposición. El filósofo, que se ejercita máximamente en vivir según el alma (64c) y en separarla lo más posible del cuerpo (67c), reconoce en este último una cárcel (62b), un principio al que no debe constituirse centro de la actividad humana. En diversos pasajes (62a-b, 63c, 64a, 65b, etc.), el personaje Sócrates manifiesta que la muerte no puede entrañar nada sustancialmente negativo para el hombre, debido precisamente a que el alma, al liberarse de un principio perturbador, se encontrará en mejores condiciones para realizar aquello que la plenifica: la actividad intelectiva, el contacto con la verdad, la reflexión.

Este planteo, a primera vista tan claro en Fedón, se opaca en algunos pasajes del diálogo, en que ciertas actividades, necesidades y demandas propiamente corporales aparecen proyectadas en compromisos del alma. Entre las actividades propias de la psykhé están la percepción, el conocimiento, pero también en cierto grado los deseos o apetitos. Todo esto compite a la consciencia (D. Bostock, 1986; 22-ss.), pero el último punto difícilmente podría pensarse como puramente anímico, ya que obedece a aquello que el cuerpo mismo demanda. El alma “alcanza la verdad” (65c), no intenta examinar las cosas junto con el cuerpo, sino sola (zetēi autè kathautèn gignesthai 65c). Pero, por otro lado, si es posible la reminiscencia de los entes trascendentes, es por intermediación del cuerpo, con lo cual su consideración por parte de Platón no puede ser completamente negativa (76a-ss). El pasaje 73c-d coloca al cuerpo, con su constitución sensible, en un lugar fundamental dentro del proceso de recuerdo. Así, declara el personaje Sócrates:

 cuando alguien, tras haber visto (idón) o escuchado (akoú̂sas) o habiendo tenido cualquier otra percepción sensible (aísthesis), no sólo conoce aquello [que ha visto, escuchado, etc.], sino que también piensa (gnôi) en otra cosa cuyo conocimiento (ennoë̂gei) no es el mismo sino distinto, ¿no diremos con justicia que [lo que ahora percibimos] nos ha hecho acordar (anemné̂sthe) de aquello de lo cual nos ha venido el pensamiento?1

A partir del ver cosas semejantes o desemejantes -explica el personaje-, se lleva a cabo la reminiscencia (74b). En el pasaje 75a, insiste en que, sólo a partir de la percepción sensible (tón aísthéseon) es posible pensar la igualdad (dynatòn einai ennoë̂gei). La semejanza se vuelve aquí un punto fundamental para el alma, y esto tanto en la necesidad que tiene del cuerpo como instrumento de percepción, como del objeto sensible percibido, para llegar a lo que es de manera verdadera.

Entonces, ¿cómo debe entenderse precisamente esta relación entre cuerpo y alma en el contexto de Fedón? Los planteos de República IV 439c o Fedro 246a-ss., donde la tripartición del alma organiza sus diferentes motivaciones, y se marca claramente que una de sus partes escucha al cuerpo en sus necesidades y da satisfacción -según la parte racional lo permita- a los apetitos del epithymetikón, el compromiso del alma con el cuerpo es más fácil de ver. Pero la argumentación de

1La versión española de Fedón que presentamos aquí corresponde a C. Eggers Lan, Eudeba, Buenos Aires 1983.
Fedón es diferente, ya que aquí no se discriminan motivaciones diversas de la psykhé, y se opera un cierto desplazamiento de lo propio del cuerpo, al alma misma. De hecho, en algunos pasajes (82e) el mismo personaje Sócrates dice que puede hacer una suerte de contaminación (sympephyrméne, 66b; memiasméne, 81b) del alma, por parte de lo corporal. Este detalle, que podría no tener mayores implicaciones, parece dejar al cuerpo en una posición de fuerza respecto del alma, al punto que Sócrates puntuiza “[el alma] cuando intenta examinar algo (epikheirěi ti) junto con el cuerpo, le sucede evidentemente que es engañada (exapatátai) por éste” (65b-c). El personaje continúa explicitando que, ejercitando la razón (logizetai) y no dejándose afectar por las cosas que la molestan (paralýpei) -es decir, por lo que escucha o ve, lo que le duele o le da placer-, desentendiéndose (e ôsa khaírein) del cuerpo, y sólo así, es como puede aspirar a lo real (tò ón). ¿Tal es la fragilidad del alma, que el cuerpo puede engañarla, desarticularla, anularla?

En esta perspectiva general, analizaremos en tres momentos argumentativos la dýnamis del cuerpo frente a la de la psykhé, para entender qué valor da Platón aquí a la percepción sensible.

1. Capacidades del cuerpo y características de lo sensible

a. Como vimos, cuando el personaje Sócrates quiere caracterizar lo sensible, lo hace especialmente en relación con el proceso de recuperación de lo olvidado. En el pasaje en que desarrolla el problemático ejemplo de la Igualdad y de las cosas iguales (74a), al marcar que hay semejanza entre ambos tipos de entes, no tarda en aparecer la anómoia que acompaña esta relación, y que hace posible, por un lado, el reconocimiento de la cualidad en cuestión y, por otro, la insuficiencia del sensible. Pero en el pasaje 76e leemos que “sólo después de haber usado los sentidos (aisthéseis) con respecto a las cosas, recuperamos los conocimientos que antes poseíamos” (hypárkhousa próteron aneurískontes hemetérán oûsan). Los sentidos son conditio sine qua non del conocimiento. Pero, contrariamente, el personaje Sócrates pronto los caracteriza a través de la falta (elleipeí), de la inferioridad (phaulóteron, 74d) y de la deficiencia (endeestéros, 74e, 75a) que tienen, y que el perceptor capta, al mismo tiempo que la cualidad que sí posee. Es esto lo que hace posible, a su vez, la percepción de la existencia de dos instancias, ya que tal falta denuncia la existencia de las entidades en-sí. No se hace esperar una interesante ampliación de esta caracterización, que Platón parece tener dificultades de hacer en términos no poéticos. Así, dice que lo sensible “quiere (buûletai) ser semejante a otra cosa” (74d), “aspira (orégetai) a ser tal como lo Igual” (74e, 75a), “desean (prothymeîsthai) ser como [lo en sí]” (75b), expresiones todas ellas pertenecientes a seres con voluntad, podríamos decir, cosa de la que no gozan los sensibles. Pero es la manera en que Platón encuentra posible acercarnos a la particular relación de las cosas sensibles con lo en-sí. En ese querer, aspirar, desear hay un reconocimiento de la tendencia que relaciona el ámbito sensible con el inteligible. No se trata solo de que el primero sea inferior; es también siempre medido a partir del otro. Pero sólo porque esto medido a partir del otro existe y funciona como disparador del recuerdo, el recuerdo es posible. El reconocimiento del valor de lo corporal queda declarado en este juego. Una simple observación de las formas léxicas que Platón utiliza en el pasaje 72a-79d permite verificar un importante número de formas pasivas del verbo anamimnésko (72e, b, c, 73e, etc.). Así, en 73c, por ejemplo, Sócrates argumenta:

(….) cuando alguien, tras haber visto o escuchado o habiendo tenido cualquier otra percepción sensible (tis álll aisthghsis), no sólo conoce aquello [que ha visto,


3 D. Ross, Teoría de las Ideas de Platón, Madrid, Cátedra, 1993; pp. 40-42.
escuchado, etc.] sino que también piensa (ennoései) en otra cosa cuyo conocimiento no es el mismo (autê epistême) sino distinto (allê), ¿no diremos con justicia que [lo que ahora percibimos] nos ha hecho acordar (anemnésthe) de aquello de lo cual nos ha venido el pensamiento (énnoian élaben)?

En cierta forma, la manera de expresar la acción de recordar, mostrándola desde el punto de vista de algo que la hace recordar, pasiva el alma en este proceso, insinúa el real valor de lo sensible en el planteo. Es la cosa –y el peso de la expresión está puesto allí–, la que activa el proceso de recuperación de lo conocido.

b. Ahora bien, entre las cosas sensibles, pero de una naturaleza un tanto diferente, encontramos el cuerpo. Sus características aparecen detalladas en el momento en que el personaje Sócrates quiere explicar qué es, dentro de nuestra naturaleza, lo mejor y más valioso. En el pasaje 79e-80a, leemos:

[Sócrates] Mira ahora también de este modo: cuando alma y cuerpo están juntos, la naturaleza asigna a uno ser esclavo y ser mandado (douleúein kai árkhesthai), al otro mandar (árkhein) y ser amo (despózein).

Platón declara entonces una superioridad del alma respecto del cuerpo, en su carácter de conductora. Pronto se abre el paralelo entre lo mortal y lo inmortal, y en cuerpo vuelve a quedar en el lugar de lo más débil: es mortal, pero con ello le viene su humanidad, su no inteligibilidad, su naturaleza múltiple en aspectos (polyeidês), disoluble (diálytos), y siempre distinta de sí mismo (medépote heautôi homoiótaton) (80b). Es precisamente de todas estas características que Sócrates concluye que el cuerpo se disuelve rápidamente al morir. Las características del cuerpo quedan definidas entonces, en numerosos aspectos, en relación con lo que no es el alma; el cuerpo es una forma de ser degradada respecto de lo más divino en nosotros.

Es aquí donde el problema parece encontrar su núcleo, si bien el lugar natural del cuerpo es el de ser esclavo y obedecer (douleúein kai árkhesthai), aparece como una gran amenaza de que alma pierda su rumbo.4

Se adscribe al cuerpo un valor ambiguo, y se esboza una cierta debilidad en el alma y sus capacidades, frente a él. Si es el cuerpo quien puede imponerse fácilmente al alma –como piensa la multitud (65a)–, ¿de quién depende que podamos realizar fehacientemente una vida pura, la única que nos salvará y que merece la pena ser vivida?

2. El alma, su relación con lo que es en-sí y con lo sensible

Además de decirnos que el alma es quien gobierna, Sócrates agrega en el mismo pasaje 80a que es lo más similar (syngenésteron, homoióteron) que hay a lo divino, inmortal, inteligible, de un solo aspecto e indisoluble (tôi theîoi kai athanâtôi kai monoeideî kai adialýtôi). Pero, como pregunta C. Eggers Lan, ¿qué significa en este contexto que el alma sea más similar a lo invisible, y el cuerpo a lo visible? El crítico recuerda pasajes de Sofista, Timeo y Político, entre otros, donde sôma y psykhé aparecen aplicados a ámbitos diferentes del que aparece en Fedón: el kósmos, los elementos llamados ‘primarios’ –agua, fuego, etc.–. Concluye que

Esta composición mezclada del mundo se vuelve una corroboración de la particular manera del ser del hombre, cuya alma ha declarado “más parecida a las Ideas, mientras que el cuerpo es “más similar” a las otras cosas sensible que nos rodean.5

4 Pl., Fd. 66b-ss.
El alma, además, es algo que “marcha a un lugar distinto, es noble (gennaîon) y puro (katharón)”. Es ella quien encontrará “al dios bueno y sabio”. Incluso si Platón nos dice claramente que, en un estado que le permita conservar su naturaleza, donde sus rasgos de similitud con lo divino la hacen invisible (aidés), inmortal (athánaton), sabia (phrónimon) y, por lo tanto, feliz (eudáimon), y está libre de temores y de pasiones humanas,7 incluso en ese caso, decimos Platón no puede concebir el alma humana (o cualquier alma) sin cuerpo. Ni tampoco puede dispensar del cuerpo el alma de los dioses (Fedr., 246d1, Tim., 40 ss., Leyes X 889b5-7)8

Esta afirmación encuentra su confirmación en la preocupación que Platón muestra en diversos diálogos al ocuparse de su relación con el cuerpo, y de ir – posiblemente – determinando con mayor precisión su relación con el cuerpo, a partir del establecimiento de su tripartición. El contexto y el desarrollo de Fedón no avanza en ello, y entonces la manera en que Platón debe resolver la relación psico-corporal es diferente, guardando siempre en sus caracterizaciones la preeminencia de la primera por sobre el segundo, pero dibujando cierta ambigüedad al describir cómo funcionan juntas. A ello se debe lo que leemos en el pasaje 81b. Para que el alma pueda partir al Hades invisible tras la muerte, debe cumplir con ciertas condiciones en el momento de la muerte. Sócrates hipotetiza:

Supongamos, por el contrario, que se separa del cuerpo mancillada y sin purificar (akáthartos), en cuanto se ha asociado (synoûsa) con el cuerpo, lo ha cuidado y amado y ha sido hechizada (gogeteuoméne) por él, por los deseos y placeres (hypò tôn epithymiôn kai hedonôn). De este modo llega a creer que no hay otra cosa verdadera que lo corpóreo, y aquello que se puede tocar, ver, beber, comer o usar para los placeres sexuales; y en cambio, se ha acostumbrado a odiar, temer y huir de lo que está oculto para los ojos y es invisible, aunque inteligible (noetón) y captable para la filosofía (philosophía iairetôn). ¿Crees que el alma que así se comporte partirá pura, sola y en sí misma?9

De modo que la clave acerca del valor que Platón da al cuerpo, está en la asociación que mantuvieron cuerpo y alma durante la vida. No sólo en este pasaje, sino también en el siguiente, se explicita que todo depende del trato y la asociación (synousia) que el alma haya tenido con el cuerpo, que la continua convivencia (synéinai) con él y el ejercitarse (meléte) en el cuerpo provoca una interpenetración de lo corpóreo en el alma (hypò toû somatoeidoû: literalmente, ‘tiene forma de cuerpo’), que produce entre ellos una connaturalidad (sýmphytos). Lo corpóreo se torna connatural con el alma y esto hace posible una desnaturalización del alma misma, embruteciéndola y haciéndola fuertemente sensible –que se somete– a lo corporal, al punto que parece somatizarse. Platón lee esta relación como algo “embarazoso (embrithés), pesado (barý), terrestre (geodés) y visible (horatón)” (81c) y, recordando los modos en que puede producirse el ascenso del alma descripto en Fedro,10 estaríamos aquí con una que ha perdido sus alas. El último adjetivo que el personaje Sócrates predica del alma, visible (horatós), da pistas acerca de cuál es la connaturalidad (sýmphytos) de alma-cuerpo, la corporización de la primera. El proceso que se lleva a cabo entonces es una especie de inversión de naturalezas.

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6 Pl., Fd. 80d.
7 Pl., Fd. 81a.
8 C. Eggers Lan, O.c.; p. 110.
9 Pl., Fd. 81b-c.
10 Pl., Fedr. 246a-ss.
Ahora el alma “pesa demasiado y se arrastra nuevamente hacia el lugar visible” (81c), y es visible a tal punto que es vista rondar las tumbas, como fantasma o espectro (phantásmata, eídola, 81d). De modo que las “almas que no se han liberado con pureza” (81c) quedan manchadas, cargadas o contaminadas por lo corporal, y atrapadas por lo tanto en el orden sensible.

Nuevamente, el cuerpo, y lo sensible que atrapa, son –contrariamente a la aparente pretensión platónica– más fuertes que el alma; al punto que la someten a una situación que le resulta perjudicial y dolorosa, y que la dejan fuera de lo que le es propio. Es deseo (epithymía) de lo corpóreo (81e) lo que la fuerza a volver a incorporarse una y otra vez en un cuerpo que, a su vez, la encadene. Como el alma queda aprisionada en aquellos caracteres semejantes a los que han cultivado (memelegetukiai) durante la vida, cuando se ha dedicado a hacer del cuerpo el centro de sus preocupaciones y cuidados, ya sólo hay lugar para volver a vivir en otro cuerpo.

3. La psykhé como hegemon en el hombre

Para comprender la relación que Platón piensa entre alma y cuerpo en Fedón, debemos pensar que allí parece plantear una antropología doble. Las motivaciones, intención e interés del hombre lo colocan en una determinada concepción antropológica o, si se quiere, en un ámbito antropológico determinado. La tensión no debe verse tanto –proponemos– en el núcleo relacional cuerpo-alma, sino en la dinámica misma del lugar que se le da al cuerpo. El siguiente pasaje proporciona elementos para pensarlo:

supongamos que <el alma> se separara pura, sin arrastrar consigo nada del cuerpo, por no haberse asociado (koingnoûsa) voluntariamente (hekoûsa) con él durante la vida, y en cambio haberlo rehuido, y habiéndose recogido sobre sí misma, en la medida en que se ha ejercitado continuamente en ello.12

El personaje Sócrates utiliza aquí el adjetivo hekoûsa, que C. Eggers Lan traduce ‘voluntariamente’, y que refiere a una acción hecha de modo consciente y de buen grado, sin compulsión externa ni por algún impedimento. Este complejo término, aparentemente derivado del sánscrito váč-mí, ‘deseo’ –raíz desaparecida en griego pero retomada por las formas boúlomai y ethélo–, menciona sin duda no sólo un consentimiento a algo que sucede, sino una adhesión activa a una acción; de hecho, está especialmente, en principio, aplicado a acciones humanas y a acciones queridas por los dioses. Se trata de algo que nos concierne y que compromete nuestra capacidad de decidir.13 Nos dice aquí Platón que es el alma la que ejerce la voluntad de purificarse y la que, tomando conciencia de su naturaleza, se aparta de la asociación con el cuerpo. No es éste entonces el que tiene en su capacidad la decisión de comenzar un proceso que pondrá al alma en un estado más o menos genuino, más o menos acorde a su naturaleza, sino sólo el alma. En cierta forma, el pasaje nos dice que es allí donde reside su fortaleza y su hegemonía. Es ella, el alma, la que decide el modo de vida que el hombre llevará. De esta declaración deriva la responsabilidad moral del alma respecto de tal modo de vida elegido. El verdadero filósofo va a abstenerse de centrar su vida en los placeres y deseos “en la medida de lo posible” (kath’hóson dýnatai),14 en la medida en que se ejercita en la verdadera filosofía...

11 C. Eggers Lan (O.c.; p. 112) habla de una “antropología de dos dimensiones”, retomando el concepto de H. Marcuse.
12 Pl., Fd. 80e.
13 Cf. LSJ y P. Chantraine.
14 Pl., Fd. 64e 1 y 5, 65c, 83b, 107b.
y en la medida en que se ejercita continuamente en ello (80e, 82b, 83b). Filosofar es entonces en primer lugar cuidar (meléo) el alma. Como en República VII, el filosofar implica una responsabilidad del hombre, un compromiso moral, con su orientación hacia el conocimiento de la verdad, y de las implicaciones que este saber tiene en el ámbito político, por ejemplo, lo cual está en total consonancia con el pasaje final de la alegoría de la caverna, y la responsabilidad moral del filósofo de volver a ayudar a los demás en su ascenso.

Esta idea se confirma en el marco del mismo Fedón, en la explicación del lugar de la filosofía en la vida feliz:

Y la filosofía ha vislumbrado que la astucia de ese encarcelamiento se sirve del deseo de este modo: quien más colabora (málista sylléptor) para encadenarlo es el propio encadenado.15

Todo el peso de la responsabilidad de la salvación del hombre reside en su propia alma. Su autonomía, su voluntad, y no el peso que pueda ejercer lo corporal sobre ella, son las causas del compromiso del hombre con un tipo de vida.16 El ‘encadenador’ es el encadenado —dice Sócrates—, y en esto gravita la calidad de vida del agente mismo. Debe mantenerse firme (karteroûsi) en su decisión de centrar su vida en las cosas afines al alma, y no entregarse (paradidóasi heautoús) al cuerpo y sus demandas (82b). Entonces,

El cuerpo significa primero un obstáculo (émpodion) que surge de la naturaleza humana y que el filósofo debe sobreponer, y en este sentido es como la caverna de la cual los prisioneros deben irse. Pero el cuerpo significa además la condición sin la cual el filósofo no puede alcanzar ningún grado de verdad. Entonces, el cuerpo es para el hombre, al mismo tiempo, origen de la esclavitud y de la libertad.17

Vemos entonces con un poco más de claridad el lugar del cuerpo en este planteo de Fedón. Elemento que esclaviza, si nuestra pereza filosófica no nos mantiene firmes en el cuidado y desarrollo de la vida que cultiva el alma, pero elemento que libera, en la medida en que es el primer escalón del puente que nos lleva a un mundo sin cuerpo.

La relation entre le corps et l’âme dans le Phédon est ambigüe et elle semble avoir des différentes nuances dans différentes parties. Ainsi, la première image du corps que le personnage Socrate nous transmet est négative : il est un principe dont on devrait se libérer (67d), une prison (62b), un facteur de dissipation de l’âme (64c). Socrate ne se soucie pas de sa mort prochaine, justement car il sait que cela représente une libération (62a-b, 63c, 64a, 65b, entre autres). Mais au même temps, notamment dans le passage de la réminiscence (72e1-78b3), la valeur donnée au corps et au sensible est fondamental pour pouvoir récupérer la connaissance oubliée.

Dans ce travail, nous présentons les concepts de sôma et de psykhé, tels que Platon nous le transmet dans le Phédon, en vue de montrer qu’il n’existe pas de contradiction réelle entre ces deux valeurs données au corporel, et la valeur de

15 Pl., Fd. 82e.
16 Y decimos esto porque nos parece que la filosofía en Fedón propone una especie de anteproyecto al arte de vivir estoico, especialmente en el hecho de que la filosofía no se propone como un ejercicio teórico, sino como una práctica que da sentido a la totalidad de lo humano.
17 C. Eggers Lan, O.c.; p. 112.

Nous allons donc relever, d’une part, le passage de Phédon 80d, où le personnage Socrate dit que l’âme s’enchaîne volontairement (hekoûsa) au corps – quand elle le fait –, de façon à ce que ce dernier aura une place ou une autre sous l’exclusivité responsabilité de la psykhé. D’autre part, dans le passage 82e, on lit aussi que “des passions [qui] font que le prisonnier aide lui-même à serrer sa chaîne (autòs ho dedeménos sylléptor eìe toû dedésthai)”. Ces deux affirmations vont dans le même, et placent dans le philosophe la totale autorité sur sa façon de vivre et le chemin transcendent qu’il produit pour lui-même. À partir de cette lecture, nous trouvons deux idées conclusives : la première, que Platon n’a pas pu concevoir l’âme sans le corps (C. Eggers Lan, 1995) ; la deuxième, que la responsabilité morale du philosophe se manifeste dans el Phédon dans un sens similaire à celui qu’on trouve dans la République VII ; en effet, tant le philosophe de Phédon que le philosophe de la caverne, c’est-à-dire tout homme dont l’âme à la connaissance de la vérité – soit dans la perspective transcendantale, soit dans le domaine politique–, charge lui-même la responsabilité de sa situation.

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La mort, estimons-nous que c’est quelque chose ?

Dixsaut, Monique

Très tôt, on s’est référé au Phédon comme à l’écrit Sur l’âme. Pourtant, la question qui fait passer du prologue au dialogue et en indique le thème central ne porte pas sur elle mais sur la mort. « On peut douter que le problème de la mort soit à proprement parler un problème philosophique » écrit Jankélévitch. On peut à vrai dire douter que la mort soit un problème : c’est un phénomène naturel auquel tout vivant est soumis du simple fait d’être un vivant, et un événement scandaleux quand il frappe un individu irremplaçable. Bien qu’il soit structuré par trois définitions de la mort, le Phédon commence justement par démontrer que la mort n’est pas pour le philosophe un problème. Socrate en est la preuve, qui la prend comme occasion d’affirmer en quoi les vrais philosophes diffèrent des autres et d’accorder à l’âme une puissance inconnue jusqu’alors. Il ne cherche pas à définir la mort, il parle chaque fois à partir d’une définition, révélatrice de la nature du sujet qui la propose et du type de discours qui lui est propre. Cela se marque par un emploi insistant du mot « nous », et c’est en prenant comme fil conducteur ce terme sélectivement englobant, donc fondé sur un jeu d’oppositions, que je vais une fois encore parcourir le Phédon.

La première définition, la mort séparation de l’âme, est formulée par un « nous, philosophes », « nous » que cette définition permet de constituer ; la deuxième, la mort destruction de l’âme, est opposée par un autre « nous », un « nous les savants » qui enquêtons sur les rapports de l’âme et du corps. Mais lorsque la Mort est définie comme Idée contraire de la Vie, le discours se déroule selon sa propre logique et engendre un sujet dédoublé en questionnant et répondant. Il n’y a plus de « nous » – jusqu’à ce que, concluant son dernier argument, Socrate affirme : « et nos âmes à nous seront réellement dans l’Hadès », et rappelle pour finir à Criton que « nous devons un coq à Asclépios ».

Le Prologue (57a1-64c1)

Au début de son récit, Phédon dit que ce jour-là il n’a pas éprouvé de pitié mais pas non plus un « plaisir semblable à celui qui était le nôtre lorsque, comme nous en avions l’habitude, nous étions plongés dans de la philosophie (οὔτε αὖ ἡδονὴ ὡς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἡμῶν ὄντως ἑώθεμεν) – car telle était bien la nature de ces discours » (59a3). Le « nous » de Phédon est un « nous » restreint aux habitués du cercle socratique dont il va énumérer les membres et parmi lesquels figurent « quelques étrangers ». Étrangers, Simmias et Cébès ne le sont pas seulement parce qu’ils sont Thébains, mais parce qu’ils vont introduire des discordances dans le « nous » de Phédon. Simmias répond à la première question posée par Socrate dans le Dialogue, « Événos est-il philosophe ? » : « À moi du moins il semble l’être » (Ἑμιογε δοκεῖ 61c6-7) – entendant sans doute le terme en son sens large de « qui aspire à toute forme de culture intellectuelle », raison pour laquelle Socrate l’accompagnera chaque fois d’une détermination restrictive. La facilité à mourir de Socrate paraît « insensée » à Cébès, et indigne « d’un homme vraiment sage » à Simmias. Cébès et Simmias ne s’accordent donc avec Socrate ni sur qui mérite d’être nommé philosophe, ni sur ce que signifie s’appliquer droitement à la philosophie. Pour lui, face à la mort, le problème n’est pas d’être sensé et sage, la question est de savoir si on a été bon au mauvais. Son espoir est que « pour les morts, quelque chose existe […] de bien meilleur pour les bons que pour les mauvais » (63c6-7). Les « mauvais » étant ceux qui se sont enchaînés à leur corps, les « bons » ne peuvent être que ceux qui se
sont efforcés de s’en délier : « ceux qui sont vraiment philosophes » (ὁι ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφοι, 64b9) – sous-entendant probablement que ce n’est pas le cas d’Événos. Aussi, quand Socrate déclare « envoyons promener ces gens-là » (64c2) je ne crois pas qu’il entende par eux seulement « la foule », mais tous les « philosophes » qui cessent de l’être dès qu’il s’agit de penser la mort. À quelle espèce appartiennent Cébès et Simmias ? Sans doute à l’espèce instable des incrédules néanmoins désireux d’apprendre de Socrate « en quel sens réclament la mort ceux qui sont vraiment philosophes, en quel sens ils méritent la mort, et laquelle »2. C’est donc d’abord cela qu’il faut tenter de leur expliquer.

« Parlons-nous donc à nous-mêmes » (εἴπωμεν γάρ […] πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτούς, (64c1). « À nous-mêmes » et non pas « entre nous » (πρὸς ἀλλήλους), comme j’avais étourdiment traduit. Car ce qui va être dit, chacun de nous doit d’abord se le dire à soi-même pour faire naître en lui une certaine opinion. « La conséquence nécessaire de tout cela, dira plus loin Socrate3, est qu’une opinion comme celle-ci vienne à l’esprit des philosophes authentiques, de manière à pouvoir aussi échanger entre eux (πρὸς ἀλλήλους) des propos comme ceux-ci. » Une doxa sur la mort à laquelle n’aboutira que celui qui se parle à soi-même est la condition nécessaire pour que s’échangent des discours qui soient authentiquement philosophiques, puisque c’est elle qui fait de chacun un γνησίως φιλοσόφος. La phrase de Phédon était naïve mais elle n’était pas fausse : entendre ce que dit Socrate est bien le chemin capable de nous y conduire.

I. La mort, séparation de l’âme (64c2- 85b9)

L’opinion des vrais philosophes

« Estimons-nous que la mort, c’est quelque chose ? » (ἡγούμεθα τι τὸν θάνατον εἶναι; 64c 2). Cette question n’a pas la rigoureuse impersonnalité de la question définitionnelle, elle ne porte pas sur une essence et n’ouvre pas un examen dialectique. Elle ne questionne pas non plus le sens de ce mot, « mort », mais s’assure que pour « nous » il dénote bien quelque chose. Curieuse question : quel mortel pourrait nier en effet que la mort soit quelque chose ? Certains sages ont pourtant estimé qu’elle n’était qu’un mot, ou la dénomination erronée d’un phénomène de dissociation d’un mélange4, exorcisant ainsi la terreur que ce mot inspire. En ce cas, il n’aurait pour contenu qu’une image. S’agissant de la mort, le lien entre nom, image et affect est circulaire : c’est la peur qui engendre l’image suscitée par le nom, et le nom donne à l’image une réalité confirmée par la peur qu’il inspire. Les savants réduisent l’image à leur façon, mais « nous » philosophes en avons une autre, puisque pour nous la mort est bien quelque chose. Socrate ne dit cependant pas ce qu’elle est, – le τι indéfini n’est pas, comme on pourrait l’attendre, repris par un τι interrogatif – et sa réponse formule interrogativement une hypothèse : « Se peut-il qu’elle soit autre chose que la séparation de l’âme d’avec le corps […] Se pourrait-il que la mort soit autre chose que cela5 ? ». L’expression ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλαγή pourrait signifier « distance prise », mais la suite indique qu’il s’agit d’une séparation radicale, l’âme et le corps s’isolant chacun soi-même en soi-même. Pour les vrais philosophes, la mort ne peut pas être autre chose, mais pourquoi nomment-ils « mort » leur vie « dans la philosophie », reprenant ainsi à leur compte le mot et avec lui l’opinion du plus grand nombre ? Pourquoi n’opposent-ils pas plutôt une vraie vie à une vie qui n’est vivante qu’en apparence ? Sans doute parce que c’est leur manière de définir ce mot, « mort », qui permet à cet autre mot, « philosophe », de s’attribuer en toute vérité.

La séparation de l’âme est pour un philosophe déliaison et délivrance car le corps a mille manières d’accaparer l’attention de l’âme et d’envrir tout le temps de la vie. Et même s’il laisse un peu de temps libre, il impose à l’âme ses valeurs, ce qu’il tient pour lui être utile et agréable, et en outre l’opinion que savoir c’est percevoir
et que percevoir c'est savoir. Sa manière de connaître paraît offrir le seul accès à l'extérieurité des choses du monde, elle semble être la médiation nécessaire à toute expérience et toute connaissance nouvelles, alors que, source d'affects et d'opinions contradictoires, de conflits intérieurs et extérieurs, le corps s'interpose entre la pensée et la vérité des êtres. « Car c'est seulement dans l'acte de raisonner (ἐν τῷ λογίζεσθαι), et nulle part ailleurs, que l'un des êtres en vient à se manifester à l'âme avec évidence (κατάδηλον αὐτῇ γίγνεται τι τῶν ὄντων, 65c2-3»). Parce qu'il n'est ni philosômatos ni philosômatos ni filôsòtikos (68c1-2), ni filôròchès (82c7), ni filôtopos (91a13), le philosophe peut enlever à ce mot, mort, sa puissance d'épouvanter les vivants. Mais c'est seulement une opinion (66b2) que les philosophes opposent à l'homodoxie avec le corps. Comme c'est une manière de vivre et de penser qu'ils défendent, c'est de leur manière de mourir qu'ils parlent, pas de la mort. Ils peuvent seulement affirmer que ce que les hommes nomment « mort » n'exclut pas son contraire, la vie, pas plus que ce qu'ils appellent « plaisir » n'exclut la douleur. Ces « choses » contraires étant « attachées par une unique tête », elles peuvent naître de leurs contraires. Deux logiques vont donc alterner, celle de la génération des contraires impliquée par le devenir, et celle, renversante, qui exige la référence à des êtres toujours mêmes.

L'âme raisonne le plus parfaitement quand elle s'attache à ce qui est. Lorsque Socrate explique de quelle sorte d'êtres il parle, le τι indéfini réapparaît : « affirmons-nous que le juste lui-même est quelque chose, ou rien (φαμέν τι εἶναι δίκαιον αὐτὸ ἢ οὐδὲν; 65d4-5) ? », et de même pour le beau, le bon, la grandeur, la santé, la vigueur. Chacun de ces êtres a sa manière propre d'être, son ousia, c'est-à-dire « ce que chacun se trouve être » (ὁ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὄν, 65d10-65e1). Seul peut la saisir celui dont l'âme s'est concentrée en elle-même et sur elle-même. Dans ce premier moment du Phèdon, les philosophes tiennent un discours affirmant que pour être vrai, un discours doit porter sur ce qui est et non sur ce qui devient. Mais de ces êtres, Socrate ne nous dit rien, sinon que les poser doit amener à avoir une opinion de ce genre : « croire fortement (σφόδρα [̣δοξείς] δοξεί) que c'est là-bas et nulle part ailleurs » que se rencontrera « la pensée dans toute sa pureté » (68b3-4). Croire, et non pas savoir.

Il faut donc commencer par croire si on désire savoir, affirmation paradoxale puisque savoir impose une rupture d'avec l'opinion, mais avoir cette opinion est nécessaire si on veut soumettre toutes les autres à examen – nécessité toute relative que seuls les vrais philosophes éprouvent. Comment la justifient-ils ? En disant que le vrai est ce à quoi ils aspirent, que la pensée est ce dont ils sont amoureux, et que « nous ne posséderons jamais suffisamment ce que nous désirons » ; tant que nous ne serons pas séparés de la folie du corps. Aspiration, désir, amour ne sont pas des raisons, ce sont des pulsions, pulsions de l'âme seule mais néanmoins pulsions. Sa séparation d'avec le corps ne fait donc pas de l'âme pensante une pure puissance de raisonner d'où tout désir serait absent. Dans le « sentier » (ἀτραπός) capable de mener droit au but doivent donc se mêler raisonnement, croyance et désir amoureux. Socrate n'a apporté jusque là ni preuve ni démonstration, il s'est borné à renverser ce qu'il semblait absurde de croire en ce qui, pour certains, est le plus vraisemblable. Comme toute expérience, celle des philosophes ne prouve rien, surtout à ceux qui ne l'ont pas faite et ne désirent pas la faire, et qui ne voient en elle qu'une mort métaphorique. Car lorsqu'une âme se sépare de son corps et se met à philosopher, elle ne fait pas plus mourir l'homme dont elle est l'âme qu'elle ne se fait mourir elle-même. Entre la mort qui sépare de ce qui est illusoire ou inessentiel, et la mort qui fait réellement périr l'homme, quel rapport peut-il donc exister ?

Cette première définition reposant sur une expérience exceptionnelle, elle ne saurait susciter qu'une grande incrédulité chez les hommes, et Cébès s'en fait l'interprète. À ses yeux, la mort n'est pas un état qu'il faut atteindre, c'est un événement...
qui advient quand l’âme se sépare rapidement du corps le jour où l’homme meurt (70a3-4), lors de ce bref moment que tous nomment « mourir » ; il faut savoir ce qui arrive à l’âme ensuite, être certain qu’elle ne sera pas dissipée comme un souffle et ne soit alors « absolument plus rien ». Cébès réclame donc une πίστις, une preuve au sens judiciaire, qu’après la mort d’un homme son âme « conserve quelque puissance et de la pensée ». Πίστις est associée par lui à παραμυθία, à un discours qui rassure et console. Les arguments qui suivent sont des réponses à cette demande de Cébès et, chaque fois, c’est le doute de l’un des deux interlocuteurs qui contraint à passer à un autre argument ; l’αποστία est le ressort dynamique du Phédon ; aucun argument n’est réfuté, il n’est simplement pas assez convaincant. « Alors, que fera-t-on ? Veux-tu que nous racontions toute l’histoire (διαμυθολογῶμεν), pour voir si cela est vraisemblable, ou pas ? » (70b5-7). Socrate va raconter toute l’histoire, promener l’âme dans un espace qui s’étend d’ici vers l’Hadès et retour et dans un temps antérieur à la naissance, temps et espace qui sont ceux du mythe. Mais les arguments sont encadrés par l’« apologie » prononcée par Socrate, discours d’un philosophe s’adressant à des philosophes (63b-69e), et par la distinction entre deux espèces de réalités qui fait réapparaître les termes « philosophe » et « philosophie » (78b-84b). Ces deux arguments nous feraient donc passer d’un contexte philosophique à un contexte mythique pour revenir ensuite à un contexte philosophique, et Socrate ne les présenterait que pour rassurer Cébès et les vivants en général. Leur but est-il de donner un habillage logique à des mythes – la palingénésie, l’existence prénatale de l’âme – afin de les rendre plus vraisemblables ? Ou Socrate tient-il un double langage autorisant une double lecture, dont l’une permettrait de les réinscrire dans le contexte philosophique qui les précède et qui les suit ?

L’argument des contraires

Il propose d’examiner la question à peu près de cette façon : « les âmes des hommes ayant péri (τελευτησάντων) existent-elles ou non dans l’Hadès ? » (70c4-5). Mais il déplace aussitôt la question des âmes des hommes vers les vivants : « si les vivants naissent à nouveau de ceux qui moururent (εἰ [...] πάλιν γίγνεσθαι ἐκ τῶν ἀποθανόντων τοὺς ζῶντας) », ne serait-il pas évident « que nos âmes existent là-bas (ἄλλο τι ἢ εἶεν ἂν αἱ ψυχαὶ ἡμῶν ἐκεῖ) ? ». Elles ne pourraient en effet jamais naître si elles n’existaient pas (70c6-d4). Nos âmes à « nous hommes », ne sont donc qu’un cas particulier d’une palingénésie générale, et Socrate prescrit de « ne pas examiner seulement ce point à propos des hommes, mais aussi de tous les animaux, toutes les plantes, et en général de tout ce qui a un devenir »11. La formule générale et affirmative : « les vivants ne naissent d’absolument rien d’autre que des morts » permet de passer d’un récit de la pérégrination des âmes à l’élaboration d’une logique du devenir. Son premier principe est que les contraires ne naissent de rien autre que de leurs contraires, par exemple le laïd du beau, le juste de l’injuste, mais quand il s’agit d’examiner (σκεψώμεθα) si un contraire peut naître d’autre chose que de son contraire, Socrate met tous les adjectifs au comparatif : plus grand-plus petit, plus fort-plus faible. Un terme qui possède un contraire ne peut devenir que ce contraire : le juste peut être beau, mais s’il devient, – s’il est et reste le sujet du verbe devenir – il ne peut devenir que plus juste par rapport à ce qui, du coup, devient moins ijuste, ou devenir moins juste par rapport à ce qui en devient par là même plus juste. Cette relativité réciproque est impliquée par le terme « devenir », et il faut se garder de donner à ce verbe un sujet capable de posséder ou d’acquérir ces propriétés contraires. Quand il rapporte l’antique sentence, Socrate met le verbe mourir deux fois au participe aoriste (τελευτησάντων, ἀποθανόντων, 70c4, 7), temps de l’action dépourvu d’aspect duratif, et deux fois au participe passé (τεθνεώτων, 70c8, d4), qui indique l’état ou la propriété résultant d’une action. La difficulté de cet argument tient à ce que, s’agissant de « vivant » et de « mort », il
semble impossible de pas supposer un sujet qui vivrait, mourrait, revivrait, de sorte que les propriétés contraires, vivant et mort, seraient des états résultant d’actions – vivre, mourir et revivre – propres à ce sujet. Si ce sujet est l’âme, on aurait donc affaire à une remarquable pétition de principe, relevée par Archer-Hind et reprise par Dorothea Frede, car l’âme serait dotée d’une existence qui transcenderait les propriétés qu’elle acquiert successivement. Or c’est précisément ce que la logique du devenir exclut : dans le devenir, il n’est possible que de devenir, sans jamais être.

Mais avec le second principe, la nécessité d’un double parcours allant d’un contraire à l’autre en sens opposé, cette nécessité n’est plus logique : l’antapodosis s’impose pour que « la nature ne soit pas boîteuse ». La genesis particulière qui va de vivant à mort ne peut pas se poursuivre en ligne droite car si tout ce qui était vivant dans l’univers finissait par être mort, l’univers lui-même périrait. En outre, dans son résumé de l’argument, Socrate dit que c’est notre âme (ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχή, 77c3) qui « même après que nous ayons péri (« mouru », si j’osais) existera encore » (καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἀποθάνωμεν ἐτι ἔσται, 77d3-4). Aoriste et futur marquent que l’on n’est plus dans une atemporalité logique mais dans le temps et l’espace des pérégrinations mythiques de l’âme. C’est à un mythe qu’est confiée la tâche de quitter la logique pour donner à cette histoire une significance réelle. Les contraires sont alors en effet les limites réelles d’un devenir censé être réel, devenir cyclique dont « vivant » et « mort » ne sont que les points de passage. Il n’y a donc pas de raison d’avoir plus peur d’une genesis allant dans un sens que dans l’autre. La nécessité « réelle » d’une palingénésie vient donc doubler la nécessité logique de la génération des contraires.

Le premier argument a-t-il cependant démontré que « notre âme » est immortelle ? A priori, non, puisqu’elle meurt. De plus, Socrate ajoute « et même que du meilleur est réservé aux âmes bonnes et du pire aux mauvaises » (72e1-2) – conclusion si incongrue, que Stallbaum y voit une glose inspirée de la phrase de 63c6-7 et la supprime. Elle s’impose pourtant, car la première affirmation concernait les hommes : il fallait donc dire qu’elle vaut aussi, et surtout, pour les âmes. Mais il y a bien saut d’un langage à un autre, Socrate passant brusquement d’un « nous, vivants » à un « nous philosophes » caractérisé par cet espoir du meilleur. Socrate, en outre, n’a pas prouvé que l’âme conserve « une certaine puissance et de la pensée ». Comment aurait-il pu le faire, étant donné la perspective adoptée : considérer les âmes de tous les vivants, plantes et animaux compris ? Incohérence involontaire et absence de précision quant à la nature de l’âme, telles seraient les insuffisances d’un argument dont on a toutes les raisons de se demander ce qu’il vient faire dans un contexte dominé par la définition de la mort comme séparation de l’âme d’avec son corps : il n’est à aucun moment question du corps dans cet argument. Pour l’incohérence, elle n’est peut-être pas du côté de Socrate, qui ne tire pas la conclusion de son argument mais rappelle ce que cet argument ne permet pas d’établir : qu’il existe une différence entre les âmes que même la mort ne peut abolir. C’est l’attente de Cébès qui est contradictoire : il veut à la fois l’immortalité d’une âme vivante et la pérennité d’une âme pensante. Ce serait donc pour le rassurer que Socrate conjuguerait deux langages difficiles à accorder, et qui tous deux détonnent avec celui des « amoureux de la pensée ».

Je voudrais formuler l’hypothèse suivante, parce qu’il m’est justement difficile d’admettre que cet argument « détonne ». Peut-il nous dire quelque chose de la pensée ? En 89b9-c1, Socrate dit à Phédon : « nous devrons couper nos cheveux si notre logos en a fini de vivre et si nous ne pouvons pas le faire revivre » (ἐάνπερ ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τελευτήσῃ καὶ μὴ δυνάμεθα αὐτὸν ἀναβιώσασθαι). Le logos, apparemment, est au nombre des choses vivantes et, comme elles, il peut « cesser de vivre ». Qu’est-ce qui l’a fait mourir? Le fait qu’un autre raisonnement l’ait réfuté ; le faire revivre, c’est avoir le courage de réfuter celui qui l’a réfuté, ce que va faire
Socrate. On nage dans les métaphores? Certes. Mais c’est aussi le cas d’un autre passage des Dialogues. Dans le *Banquet* (203e1-3), il est dit d’Éros, qui « philosophe toute sa vie durant » et qui n’est ni mortel ni immortel : « Tantôt, le même jour, il s’épanouit, il vit (τοτὲ μὲν τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας θάλλει τε καὶ ζῇ) – quand il trouve un moyen / un chemin (ὅταν εὐπορήσῃ) –, et tantôt il meurt (τοτὲ δὲ ἀποθνῄσκει), mais de nouveau il reprend vie (πάλιν δὲ ἀναβιώσκεται) ». Vivre, mourir, revivre ne sont donc pas réservés aux seuls vivants corporels, ils sont aussi le lot de ces « choses vivantes » et invisibles que sont le désir et le discours. La pensée en est inséparable, et elle aussi peut naître, périr et renaitre – sauf à y voir un exercice linéaire et tranquille, et je ne pense pas que ce soit là la représentation que nous en donnent les Dialogues. Il y a des moments où la pensée, et le logos qu’elle tient ou se tient, s’empêtent, se bloquent, moments où ils sont moribonds, et d’autres où se découvre ce qui va leur permettre de renaitre. La logique apparemment absurde qui aboutit à mettre « vivant » et « mort » au comparatif cesse de l’être si on admet, d’une part, que devenir « plus vivante » signifie pour l’âme se délier davantage du corps, devenir « plus morte » s’unir davantage à lui, et d’autre part, que devenir plus vivante signifie pour la pensée découvrir les moyens d’aller plus loin, devenir plus morte rester dans l’aporie. Le devenir a sa logique, il exclut tout immobilisation définitive et relativise toute propriété, mais son mouvement se meut dans un temps qui lui n’est pas logique, qui n’est pas non plus le temps inflexiblement progressif des vivants, mais qui défait autant qu’il fait, fait advenir autant qu’il fait disparaître, fait naître autant qu’il fait mourir et autant qu’il fait renaitre.

*L’argument de la réminiscence*

Le temps impliqué par la réminiscence n’est pas le temps ponctué d’interruptions et de relances du premier argument, mais il n’est pas moins surprenant : il renverse la succession « de bon sens » qui irait d’apprendre à savoir. Dans le *Ménon*, l’accent était mis sur la préexistence de l’âme : elle permettait de résoudre le problème sophistique posé à propos de l’apprendre. La dimension mythique y était plus présente que dans le *Phédon*. Cependant, alors qu’il est possible de juger que le premier argument n’a de rapport ni avec la philosophie, ni avec les essences, ni avec la *phronèsis*, il n’est pas très difficile d’interpréter philosophiquement le mythe de la réminiscence, et je suis loin d’être la seule à le faire ; je peux donc aller plus vite. Si la perception d’une égalité ou d’une inégalité entre deux choses sensibles peut éveiller en l’âme la pensée de l’Égal lui-même, ce n’est pas parce qu’il existe une ressemblance entre les deux : la différence entre ces deux espèces de réalité est radicale, et telle est d’ailleurs la difficulté souvent opposée à la notion de participation. Pour qu’il y ait passage du percevoir au concevoir, la perception doit être perception non d’une chose mais de sa déficience. Peu importe alors que la chose soit semblable ou dissemblable (74d) puisque ce n’est pas elle qui éveille un ressouvenir mais le manque éprouvé par l’âme d’un amoureux. Omettre la dimension érotique rend la réminiscence incompréhensible et la participation impossible. Nous avons de toutes les réalités elles-mêmes un savoir qui n’est pas abstrait de nos perceptions sensibles et c’est à elles « que nous imprions le sceau de “ce que c’est” quand nous interrogeons et quand nous répondons »13. Ce ne sont pas les expériences faites « après la naissance » qui fournir à la pensée ses contenus, même si elle a besoin pour se ressouvenir de perceptions sensibles. De quoi donc se ressouvient-on ? Le savoir que l’âme a possédé en totalité et oublié n’est pas une somme de connaissances dont certaines se rappelleraient à son bon souvenir à l’occasion de perceptions sensibles, mais un savoir de la sorte de réalités dont elle se ressouvient. Non pas des Idées ou d’une Idée en particulier – eidos au sens d’Idée n’apparaît dans le *Phédon* qu’en 100b4 – mais de l’*ousia*, de « la manière d’être » de chacune (εἰ μὲν ἔστιν ἃ θρυλοῦμεν ἀεί, καλόν τέ τι καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ πάσα ἡ τοιαύτη οὐσία, 76d7-9). Seuls les philosophes en saisissent
le manque dans les choses perçues – auxquelles ils vont même jusqu'à attribuer une aspiration à ressembler à ce dont elles manquent. Leur insatisfaction, née de leur désir du vrai, les rend capables de convertir toute présence sensible en signe d'une absence d'intelligibilité.

C'est donc un pathos, un état de l'âme, qui suscite l'anaphore du sensible à l'intelligible. Simmias avait raison de déclarer que l'exposé de l'argument ne lui suffit pas : il a besoin d'éprouver cela-même dont parle le logos (73b6-7 : αὐτὸ δὲ τοῦτο, ἔφη, δέομαι παθεῖν περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος, ἀναμνησθῆναι). Quiconque est dans cet état comprend que l'âme ne peut apprendre que d'elle-même en retournant à elle-même : il se ressouvient de sa puissance. Mais si sa puissance est toujours la même quand elle pense, cesse d'errer au gré des choses en devenir pour s'interroger à propos de ce qui est, elle ne réussit pas toujours à répondre. Ainsi se trouve résolu le problème que le Théétète (165b) affirme être « le plus scandaleux » : savoir et ne pas savoir doivent être pensés dynamiquement, comme des mouvements psychiques qui se relancent l'un l'autre quand l'âme s'efforce de penser ; ils peuvent coexister à la condition que ne pas savoir se double du désir d'apprendre, et que savoir s'accompagne du plaisir de chercher. La réminiscence ne se réduit pas à l'instant de l'anaphore, elle coïncide avec le mouvement de l'apprendre. Elle réaffirme ainsi explicitement la différence du philosophe – laissée implicite dans l'argument des contraires – et elle rappelle à l'âme sa véritable puissance.

Socrate dit à un Cébès encore incrédule qu'il doit prendre les deux arguments ensemble. Celui de la génération des contraires démontrait la nécessité pour l'âme de continuer à exister en parcourant le cycle mort-vie-mort : il faut bien qu'elle soit quelque chose pour renaître. La réminiscence a démontré que l'âme, même non incarnée, conserve de la pensée et de la puissance ; elle a démontré la préexistence de l'âme. Tel est en effet le contenu mythique et rassurant des deux premiers arguments. Ils se complètent, mais comment s'articulent-ils ? En changeant de point de vue, et en comprenant le premier comme une manière de ne pas refuser à l'âme pensante son mouvement et sa vie, et le second comme l'affirmation qu'elle seule peut saisir des êtres qui ne deviennent pas mais qui sont en vérité. Ce qui est suggéré, du moins je le crois, par Socrate dans le Phédon sera explicité, comme on sait, par l'Étranger dans le Sophiste (248c-249c).

**L'argument dit de la parenté**

La crainte « enfantine » de ses interlocuteurs conduit Socrate à poser la question en ces termes : « à quelle sorte de chose peut-il bien convenir de subir une dispersion ? À propos de quelle sorte de chose convient-il de craindre qu'un tel accident ne se produise, et sous l'action de quelle sorte de chose ? » Chaque être est déterminé par sa puissance d'agir mais aussi et peut-être surtout de pâtir : ne peut lui arriver comme accident (pathos) que ce que sa nature rendu possible. Il est « hautement vraisemblable » que les réalités qui sont toujours mêmes qu'elles-mêmes et se comportent toujours de la même façon dans leurs relations avec les autres soit des choses incompuestas, et que les réalités qui sont et font tout le contraire soient des choses composées. Les seconds se décomposeront de la façon dont elles se sont composés : il s'agit de processus inverses, ce qui évite toute référence à la simplicité d'une âme humaine qui ne l'est guère, comme à celle d'Idées qui peuvent parfaitement être divisées en leurs espèces. Est composée une âme qui s'est intimement mélangée avec son corps ; elle ne se séparera pas de lui de la même façon qu'une âme qui aura eu le moins possible commerce (koinonia) avec lui. La distinction entre composé et non-composéd conduit à poser deux espèces de réalités aux déterminations strictement antinomiques, les invisibles et les visibles. Reste à intégrer l'âme dans l'une ou l'autre espèce. Cela ne se fera pas en fonction de sa nature, mais de « la nature des hommes », c'est par rapport à elle qu'il faut comprendre.
« visible et « invisible » (79b7-11)18. Mais qu'est-ce qui peut voir le visible et ne pas voir l'invisible ? Une âme unie à un corps : c'est pour elle que l'invisible est ce qu'elle « ne peut pas voir »19. Car même si l'on dote métaphoriquement l'âme séparée d'une capacité de « voir », ce que cette « vision » verra, « c'est l'intelligible et l'invisible » (ὅ δὲ αὐτῇ ὁρᾷν τὸ πάθημα φρόνησις κέκληται, 79d-7) au contact de ce qui est toujours, mais si c'est la puissance de les penser qui apparaît l'âme à des êtres toujours mêmes, qui lui confère fidélité à elle-même, stabilité et autorité sur le corps, cette puissance n'appartient au plus haut degré qu'à celui qui, ayant philosophé, est désireux d'apprendre (82e). La parenté (suggeneia) entre l'âme et les intelligibles n'équivaut à aucune relation logique, elle n'est ni une identité, ni un rapport sujet-objet, ni même une ressemblance (qui apporte toujours avec elle la difficulté de la symétrie : si l'âme ressemble aux idées, les Idées ne ressemblent pas à l'âme). Elle implique une spontanéité, un élan de l'âme, doù résulte une connaturalité acquise. Pour les autres, les âmes des « mauvais », alourdies par l'élément terne qu'elles contiennent, elles sont tirées par lui vers le lieu visible, elles tournent autour des tombeaux, ombres et fantômes, images que l'on peut voir et qui errent jusqu'à ce que leur désir d'un corps les pousse, en fonction d'une « similitude d'occupation », à se réincarner dans des espèces animales stupides ou sauvages. Cela vaut également pour les plus apprivoisées et politiquement correctes qui se réincarneront en animaux grégaires. Théorie de la réincarnation ou typologie ironique, tout dépend de l'esprit de sérieux de chacun. Quoi qu'il en soit, une chose est sûre : seules iront chez Hadès l'Invisible les âmes qui, leur vie durant, se sont efforcées de s'installer dans un lieu qui n'est pas seulement invisible mais intelligible.

L'argument reprend donc ce qui avait été affirmé dès le début, que toutes les âmes n'ont pas la même destinée : « Tous ne te semblent donc pas avoir un savoir de ces réalités », demande Socrate à Simmias » (76c1-2). Puisque, en effet, tous ne l'ont pas, à quelles âmes Socrate pourrait-il attribuer une nécessité d'exister égale à celle des êtres qui sont toujours, immortels et toujours mêmes ? De quelles âmes pourrait-il dire que « si ces êtres n'existent pas, elles n'existent pas non plus (εἰ μὴ ταῦτα οὐδὲ τάδε) », sinon de « nos âmes » à nous vrais philosophes20, qui sommes les seuls à les poser et seuls désireux de les penser ? Nos âmes iront donc dans l'Hadès, royaume où règne un dios philosophe qui ne supporte les hommes que morts, une fois que leur âme est purifiée « de tous les maux et désirs qui se rapportent au corps » (Crat., 403e7-404a2). Il faut vraiment être philosophe pour transformer ainsi un objet de terreur en objet de désir. « Là-bas », l'âme y va d'ailleurs moins qu'elle n'y est toutes les fois qu'elle pense, et des âmes des hommes, nous voici revenus à celles des philosophes. Il serait donc non seulement absurde que les philosophes aient peur de la mort, il serait absurde de croire qu'ils puissent en avoir peur. La seule paramuthia dont ils aient besoin est celle que leur adresse la philosophie (83a3-4 : ἡ φιλοσοφία [...] παραμυθεῖται), On est parti du désir de séparation propre aux philosophes, et on débouche sur le travail de Pénélope de la philosophie. La boucle est bouclée et une chose est devenue claire : il existe une différence entre les âmes, toutes ne vivent pas la même vie et ne meurent pas de la même mort. L'immortalité ne doit donc pas non plus être la même.

Il me semble que ce passage ne développe pas un argument supplémentaire,
mais développe les conséquences que son opinion sur la mort a sur la manière de vivre, de mourir, de penser et de parler d'un philosophe. C'est bien le même « nous », un nous philosophes, qui parle tout au long de cette première partie, où Socrate a chanté son chant de cygne et qu'un long silence sépare de la seconde, ce qui, comme en musique, annonce un changement de rythme et de tonalité.

II. La mort destruction de l'âme (85b10-100a2)

Qu'il y ait quelque chose de meilleur pour les âmes bonnes et que cela consiste à penser est la seule chose dont Socrate soit certain ; c'est aussi la seule chose dont il n'arrive pas à persuader ses interlocuteurs. Simmias et Cébès ne sont toujours pas convaincus. Selon Simmias, l'âme, c'est-à-dire la vie du corps, subsiste aussi longtemps qu'une combinaison harmonieuse s'y maintient, et quand le corps se détend ou se tend à l'extrême, l'âme périt (86b-c). Pour Cébès, ce n'est pas la mort, en elle-même, qui fait périr l'âme, mais l'épuisement causé par un trop grand nombre d'unions et de séparation d'avec le corps ; la mort est la destruction passagère mais finalement inéluctable d'une âme conçue comme effort perpétuel de restauration du corps (88b). La mort de l'âme étant pour l'un liée à sa nature, et pour l'autre imprévisible et accidentelle, il est légitime d'en avoir peur. Dans les deux cas, l'âme pèrit au moment où elle quitte son corps, ou son dernier corps. En présentant son objection, Simmias dit à Socrate « or, – et je pense qu'à présent tu l'as déjà compris toi-même – nous soutenons, nous, principalement que l'âme est une réalité de ce genre »21. Le « nous » de Simmias est probablement celui des pythagoriciens de sa génération, c'est un « nous, les savants ». Réfuter Simmias, ce sera donc réfuter une conception « scientifique » des rapports naturels entre l'âme et le corps qui annule toute différence entre les âmes et refuse à l'âme toute autorité sur les corps.

Lors du premier résumé qu'il donne de l'objection de Cébès, Socrate dit que celui-ci craint « que ce soit cela, la mort, une destruction de l'âme (ψυχῆς ὄλεθρος, 91d 6-7) ». Socrate ne va pas réfuter son objection, il va substituer φθόρα à ὄλεθρος, déplacer le problème, et s'attaquer aux théories des causes de la génération et de la corruption (95e9). Il accepte donc de se situer sur le terrain « scientifique » commun à ses deux interlocuteurs, de sorte que c'est son autobiographie, histoire d'un philosophe d'abord ébloui par cette sophia qu'on appelle historié, qui constitue, me semble-t-il, la véritable réfutation de leurs deux thèses. Il y raconte combien l'ont tourmenté des problèmes comme l'origine de la vie, de la conscience, de la genèse de la connaissance à partir des sensations. Il tente d'expliquer les phénomènes biologiques à partir de phénomènes physiques, et les phénomènes psychologiques à partir de phénomènes biologiques (96a-c). Il commence donc par partager avec les savants deux postulats : il y a entre tous les phénomènes homogénéité et continuité, et expliquer consiste à décrire un mode d'engendrement du supérieur par l'inférieur. Mais les solutions proposées recèlent des contradictions telles, et jusque dans le domaine des mathématiques, que Socrate en devient aveugle (99d, cf. 96d et 99b), et même « antilogique ». Si la voie directe de la science de la nature risque d'entraîner la corruption de l'organe même de la connaissance, la déception ressentie à la lecture d'Anaxagore offre au moins le mérite de lui faire entamer une seconde navigation. Ayant abandonné l'espoir d'un Monde qui serait l'œuvre d'un Intellect se livrant au calcul du meilleur, il fuit vers les logoi.

Ayant ainsi raconté pourquoi il a finalement refusé de s'inclure dans un « nous » savant et ayant réussi à persuader Simmias et Cébès d'en faire autant, il peut revenir à un discours qui soit philosophique, mais qui le sera différemment, car la confrontation avec la sophia des savants lui a permis d'élaborer un savoir (epistèmè) différent, d'en définir la méthode (101d-e) et de tenir un autre discours. Il va donc procéder à un examen dialectique de « l'Idée (eidos) de cause », ce qui va le
conduire en examiner d'autres. La forme particulière de la question et de la réponse qui ouvraient la première partie du Dialogue avait lancé un va-et-vient constant entre « nous » philosophes, « nous » vivants », « nous » hommes et « nous » savants. Il s’achève avec le passage de l’image de la mort à son Idée. S’achève-t-il d’ailleurs vraiment ?

III La mort, Idée contraire de la Vie (100a2-107d5)

Que les Idées soient causes n’est pas une conséquence déduite à partir de la position des Idées, elle est la seule détermination de la cause compatible avec leur position. Les Idées sont les causes véritables parce que, étant seules intelligibles, elles peuvent seules rendre intelligible. En ne raisonnant plus que sur elles, Socrate espère démontrer que l’âme est immortelle (100 b-c). Le dernier argument du Phédon va donc s’appuyer sur les rapports d’articulation et d’exclusion entre Idées, et sur les rapport de participation des choses à leurs Idées. Je vais ici résumer très rapidement la façon dont je le comprends et survoler avec désinvolture les sérieuses difficultés qu’il présente, ce que j’espère n’avoir pas fait dans mon édition du Phédon.

Ἀλλ’ ἰτέον. Toute acquisition d’une propriété résulte de la participation à une Idée, ce qui n’exclut pas qu’il existe certaines conditions expliquant comment une chose en vient à participer à une Idée. Quand une chose participe à une Idée, elle en reçoit son nom et son essence pour tout le temps qu’elle existe, et aussi ses propriétés quand elle vient à participer, toujours ou provisoirement, à l’une ou plusieurs d’entre elles. Cela vaut donc pour ces propriétés que sont « vivant » et « mort » : est vivant ce qui participe à l’eidos de la Vie (et non plus « ce qui participe à vivre » comme dans le premier argument (72c6 : πάντα ὅσα τοῦ ζῆν μεταλάβοι), tandis qu’est mort ce qui participe à l’Idée contraire. La Mort est l’Idée contraire de la Vie, et cela suffit à la définir. Pourquoi cela suffit-il ? Parce que, quelles qu’en soient les causes savantes, c’est toujours par la Mort qu’on meurt. Il faut donc démontrer que « mort » est un prédicat qu’on ne peut attribuer à l’âme.

La stratégie va consister à étendre le principe d’exclusion des contraires. Appliqué à des Idées directement contraires comme Froid et Chaud, Pair et Impair, le principe est indiscutable. Mais il s’impose aussi à toutes les Idées et toutes les choses qui, sous peine de cesser d’être ce qu’elles sont, ne peuvent pas recevoir le contraire de ce qui est pour elles une détermination essentielle de plus. Si la neige sensible participait seulement à sa Idée éponyme, la Neige, qui n’a pas de contraire, elle n’aurait pas de contraire. Cependant, comme l’Idée de Neige participe essentiellement aussi à celle du Froid, la neige sensible en participe essentiellement et possède ainsi un contraire indirect, la Chaleur, qu’elle exclut. L’exclusion du contraire s’étend donc à toutes les Idées possédant un contraire direct ou indirect. Pour les choses, elles ne s’étendent qu’à celles qui possèdent un contraire indirect : une chose froide peut le devenir plus ou moins, mais la chose neige ne peut pas cesser d’être froide et rester neige. Il y a donc des choses qui ne naissent pas de leurs contraires, qui ne peuvent ni aller d’un état à un état contraire ni présenter des propriétés contraires selon la relation dans laquelle elles sont prises. Inscrites dans le devenir, elles ne peuvent pas devenir : ou bien elles restent ce qu’elles sont, ou bien elles sont menacées par le contraire du contraire indirect qui les détermine essentiellement, et l’alternative qui s’ouvrait aux choses ayant un contraire direct : périr ou s’enfuir, vaut également pour elles (103c-d).

Il faut cependant encore étendre encore le principe aux choses qui apportent toujours avec elles un contraire (104e-105b). Car l’âme n’est pas une réalité analogue à la neige, au feu ou au trio, elle ne participe pas comme eux essentiellement à deux Idées, puisqu’il n’y a pas d’Idée d’âme. Mais elle est liée essentiellement à l’Idée de Vie puisqu’elle l’apporte toujours avec elle, et comme « jamais ce qui apporte n’admettra
le contraire de ce qui est apporté par lui» (105d10-11), elle a pour contraire indirect la Mort, et elle l’exclut toujours. Elle est donc la cause, non pas essentielle mais subtile, qui fait qu’un corps est vivant. N’étant pas une idée, elle ne lui impose ni son idea ni son nom, mais elle le détermine complètement – et non pas essentiellement – comme vivant. Cela suffit pour appliquer le principe d’exclusion des contraires, car une participation partielle tolère soit une participation simultanée à deux contraires, soit une cessation de participation. En vertu du corollaire sémantique énoncé par Socrate (105d-e), – l’α privatif signifie « qui ne peut pas recevoir » – l’âme ne peut pas rester et recevoir la mort, elle est immortelle : a-thanatos. De quelle mort est-il ici question ? De la mort-séparation ? Il est impossible que Socrate dise que l’âme ne peut pas admettre la séparation d’avec son corps ; c’est l’homme qui ne le peut pas, et en conséquence, il meurt – pas l’âme. Elle ne peut pas davantage signifier une destruction, puisque la destruction est le contraire de l’existence, pas de la vie. « Mort », ici, ne peut désigner que la propriété contraire à celle apportée par l’âme : l’âme ne peut pas être dite morte. Si le chaud est là, la neige n’y est plus, et si la mort est là, l’âme n’y est plus. Mais la seconde branche de l’alternative reste ouverte : la neige peut s’enfuir (là-haut sur la montagne) ou fondre, c’est-à-dire périr comme neige. Pourquoi, quand la mort s’approche, l’âme ne pourrait-elle que s’enfuir ? Il reste donc à prouver qu’elle est non seulement immortelle mais indestructible. Ce que Socrate va faire de façon assez expéditive, en faisant d’Éternel (αἰδιόν, 106d3) le moyen terme entre immortel et indestructible. Or si « Éternel » à un sens duratif, il introduit une notion de temps dans une démonstration logique ; et s’il signifie « atemporel », il ne peut s’appliquer à une âme dont il vient de dire qu’elle apporte la vie en tout vivant.

On peut démontrer logiquement qu’un prédicat appartient nécessairement à un sujet, donc immortel à âme, mais comment pourrait-on démontrer la nature éternelle, incorruptible, indestructible d’une existence ? Tout cela, ou bien cette existence l’est par essence, comme l’est celle des dieux ou des Idées, ou bien on ne peut qu’épouser qu’elle le soit. Rien ne peut légitimer le passage de ce qui est logiquement immortel à ce qui est réellement indestructible. Pourtant Socrate ajoute « et bien réellement nos âmes à nous existeront dans l’Hadès » (καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἔσονται ἡμῶν ἐν Ἅδῃ, 107a 1). Autre « conclusion » qui, comme en 72e1-2, ne découle pas de l’argument qui précède mais impose de le lire autrement. Nos âmes, quelles âmes ? Nos âmes à nous vivants ? Ce n’est pas dans l’Hadès que vont les âmes de tous les vivants, elles ne cessent de naître, mourir et renaître. À nous hommes ? Mais les âmes de ceux qui sont agrippés à leur corps retournent vers le lieu visible par crainte de l’Invisible, Hadès (πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὄρατον τόπον φόβῳ τοῦ ἀιδοῦς τε καὶ Ἅδου, 81c 10-11) et participent encore au visible (τοῦ ὄρατος μετέχουσαι, 81d 4). Alors nos âmes à nous philosophes ? Oui, puisque c’est précisément ce que Socrate a dit d’elles quand il parlait de leur parenté avec les êtres toujours mêmes (81d). Mais pourquoi met-il pour finir cette existence au futur, alors qu’il sait pourtant bien que quand elle pense, elle y est, son âme, dans l’Hadès ? Ce qui ne l’empêche pas de dire : « Même si après, il n’y a rien… » (91b3) et de conseiller pour finir à Simmias d’aller aussi loin que le logos peut aller et de ne pas chercher plus avant. Un doute en effet subsiste, et l’άπιστα passe du côté de Simmias (107b2). Non qu’il ne soit pas persuadé par le dernier raisonnement, mais parce qu’il n’est pas convaincu qu’il soit possible de résoudre logiquement une question de cette importance, et pas convaincu que la faiblesse humaine soit capable de répondre à la question. Socrate lui dit qu’il a raison. Simmias en effet, a vu, ou entrevu, le paralogisme : le logos a démontré l’immortalité d’un principe de vie, immortel comme tout principe ou plutôt « a-mortel », mais aucun logos ne peut conclure « que nos âmes à nous existeront dans l’Hadès ». Ce n’est pas la preuve de son immortalité qu’il faut donner à l’âme humaine, il faut la
persuader de vivre comme si elle était immortelle, et de prendre soin de ce qui en elle est indestructible et divin.

La réponse du Phédon est donc… que tout dépend : tout dépend de la puissance que l'on reconnaît à l'âme et de la nature de ceux dont elle est l'âme. En d'autres termes, il n'a pas été rigoureusement établi que la mort ne signifie pas la destruction de mon âme, mais ce qui l'a été est la présence en l'âme d'une puissance de penser ou, si on préfère, la différence entre le « je » de « je vis » et le « je » de « je pense ». Si, comme Criton, on continue à ne pas la voir, alors Socrate aura vraiment parlé pour ne rien dire. Comment comprendre alors les dernières paroles de Socrate :

« Criton, dit-il, nous devons un coq à Asclépios » (Ο Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα, 118a7-8) ? De quoi ce dieu nous a-t-il guéri ? Je suis tentée de penser qu'il nous a guéri « de l'errance, de la folie, des terres, des amours sauvages et des autres maux humains » (πλάνης καὶ ἀνοίας, καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπείων), puisque en être délivrées est ce qui permet d'espérer que nos âmes iront dans un lieu où il leur sera donné d'être heureuses et où, selon l'antique sentence, « c'est dans la compagnie des dieux, en vérité » qu'elles passeront « tout le temps qui reste » (81a6-9). En ce cas, ce « nous » serait toujours le « nous philosophes » qui ouvre et achève la défense par Socrate de sa facilité à mourir, et Socrate n'aurait cessé de nous dire, dans le Phédon, de quoi la philosophie peut nous guérir. Ma réponse va certainement sembler trop simple et très naïve, mais aucune interprétation plus savante ne m'a jusqu'ici, je l'avoue, paru totalement convaincante.

Conclusion
Ma conclusion tiendra en une seule question : après avoir écrit le Phédon, était-il nécessaire que Platon écrive le Philosophe ?

(Endnotes)
1 La première occurrence de l'adjectif substantivé (ὁ φιλόσοφος, 61d5) est mise dans la bouche de Cébès. Cet emploi est absent de tous les Dialogues antérieurs (avec toutes les précautions d'usage) à la République. Il revient 9 fois dans la première partie du Phédon : 61d5, 62c10, 64b9, e3, 65a1, c11, 66b2, 67d9, 68d12, 82c3, 83b6, et ne réapparaîtra qu'en 101e3. C'est, après la République, le plus grand nombre d'occurrences rencontré dans les Dialogues.
2 ἥ τε θανατῶσι καὶ ἥ αξιοίεισιν θανάτου καὶ οἵος ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφοι, 64b8-9.
3 ὥστε καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους τοιαῦτα ἄττα λέγειν, 66b1-3.
4 Parménide, Β VIII, 40 DK ; Empédocle, Β VIII et ΙΧ DK.
5 ὥστε καὶ τὸ ὑπάρχοντα ἀποθεωθηνύμονα, [...] ἄρα μὴ ἄλλο τί ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἐπιθυμεῖν τε καὶ φαμεν ἐρασταὶ εἶναι, φρονήσεως, 66e2-3.
6 πολλὴν ἀπιστίαν παρέχει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, 70a1.
7 ὥστε καὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπων διῆκεν καὶ πίστεως, ὡς ἔστι τοῖς ἀνθρώπων τοῖς ὑπάρχοντας, 70b2-4.
10. Le nombre des occurrences du substantif et du verbe ἀπιστῶ en témoigne :
69 e7, 70a3, 73b4, 6, 77a9, 86e5, 87a8, c1, 88c4, 7, d3, 89d8 ; 91c8, 107a3, b2.
11 Μή τοίνυν κατ’ ἀνθρώπων, ἢ δ’ ὅς, σκόπει μόνον τούτο, εἰ βούλει ῥέον μαθεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ ζῷων πάντων καὶ φυτῶν, καὶ συλλήβδην ὅσαπερ ἔχει γένεσιν, 70d7-9.
12 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
13 Μὴ τοίνυν κατ’ ἀνθρώπων, ἢ δ’ ὅς, σκόπει μόνον τούτο, εἰ βούλει ῥέον μαθεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ ζῷων πάντων καὶ φυτῶν, καὶ συλλήβδην ὅσαπερ ἔχει γένεσιν, 70d7-9.
14 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
15 Μὴ τοίνυν κατ’ ἀνθρώπων, ἢ δ’ ὅς, σκόπει μόνον τούτο, εἰ βούλει ῥέον μαθεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ ζῷων πάντων καὶ φυτῶν, καὶ συλλήβδην ὅσαπερ ἔχει γένεσιν, 70d7-9.
16 ὅτι προθυμεῖται μὲν πάντα τοιαῦτ’ εἶναι οἴον ἔκειν, ἔστιν δὲ αὐτοῦ φαυλότερα, 75b7-8.
17 ὅτι προθυμεῖται μὲν πάντα τοιαῦτ’ εἶναι οἴον ἔκειν, ἔστιν δὲ αὐτοῦ φαυλότερα, 75b7-8.
18 ὅτι προθυμεῖται μὲν πάντα τοιαῦτ’ εἶναι οἴον ἔκειν, ἔστιν δὲ αὐτοῦ φαυλότερα, 75b7-8.
19 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
20 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
21 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
22 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
23 οὐδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν γίγνονται οἱ ζώντες ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεθνεώτων, 70e1-2.
Socrates faces two objections to his affinity argument for immortality: Simmias’ *harmonia* objection (85e-86d) and Cebes’ cloak maker objection (87b-88b). Socrates provides a very thorough response to Simmias’ objection (92a-95a). What sort of response does Socrates provide to Cebes’ objection? After Socrates restates the objection (95b-e), we are told that:

Socrates paused for quite some time and considered something by himself, and then said: ‘What you’re seeking is no small matter, Cebes; we must study thoroughly and as a whole the cause of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be. So, if you like, I’ll recount my experiences concerning them; then, if you see something useful in what I say, you’ll use it to convince yourself about the points you have raised. (95e-96a)

This investigation into natural science (*περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία*, 96a7) ultimately leads to Socrates’ final immortality argument. What is the relationship between Cebes’ objection and the final argument? Some commentators don’t address this question. However, most say that the final argument responds to Cebes’ objection simply by providing a new, independent argument that shows that the soul is completely immortal and imperishable. On these readings, there is no suggestion that he is responding to the details of Cebes’ objection.

In this paper I argue that the final argument extends the affinity argument, filling in a gap it left open. Of course, it is not wrong to think that the final argument is a new argument, but we can better understand the structure of the dialogue, and the final argument itself, if we see how it is connected to the affinity argument. In Socrates response to Cebes’ objection, which I just quoted, he says that Cebes will be able to use what he says to convince himself about the points he has raised (*πρὸς τὴν πειθὼ περὶ ὧν δὴ λέεις χρήσῃ*). It is not clear how receiving a new, unrelated argument for immortality would help convince Cebes about the points in his targeted objection to the affinity argument. Moreover, we expect a response to an objection speak specifically to it, not simply to bypass it and provide a new argument. Occasionally bypassing an objection is appropriate, but has the disadvantage that the objector typically does not learn what is wrong with her objection; at best, she is simply convinced that it somehow must be wrong. If Socrates were addressing the specifics of Cebes’ objection, this would provide a more satisfying response, since he

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1 Ο οὖν Σωκράτης συχνὸν χρόνον ἐπισχὼν καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτόν τι σκεψάμενος, ὦ φαῦλον πράγμα, ἐρή, ὦ Κέβης, ζητεῖς ὑποκεῖσθαι δὲ περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς τὴν αἰτίαν διαπραγματεύσασθαι. ἔγιν ὁ σι σι δεύτερον αὐτῶν, ἄρα βούλητα, τα γε ἐμί πάθη ἐπειτα ἣν τί σε κρίνεις φαινήται ὁν ἃν λέγω, πρὸς τὴν πειθὼ περὶ ὧν δὴ λέεις χρήσῃ. Translations from Sedley and Long, occasionally modified.

2 Damascius, Burnet, and Bluck.

3 Bailey, Hackforth, Dorter, Gallop, Bostock, Rowe, and Frede: Hackforth 1955, 104; Gallop 1975, 153, 168; Rowe 1993 note on 88b5-6, 210; [add references] – see also next note. These readings typically draw from the end of Cebes’ objection, where he says “now if this is so, nobody who is confident in the face of death can fail to be displaying unintelligent confidence, unless he can prove that the soul is altogether immortal and imperishable” (88b5-6). Note that Cebes is simply saying here that if his objection is a good one, then Socrates is wrong to be confident in the face of death, unless he has another argument – he is not telling Socrates what his strategy should be in responding to his objection.
would not only provide stronger reasons to accept his conclusion, but also explain where Cebes’ objection went wrong.

On my reading, the final argument fills in the affinity argument by explaining in more detail one way that the soul is akin to and more like the forms. By doing so, it shows why the soul is not like a cloak maker, something that is merely closer to immortality than a cloak. It is not that the soul is a defective or incomplete form, closer to the forms than sensible things. Instead, the soul explains why the body is alive, in a way that closely ties it to the form of life. It explains this because it is one of the “bringers” that always bring some opposite with them. (I will call these “bringers” rather than “sophisticated causes,” since it is debated whether Socrates thinks of them as causes.) The soul is also exactly like a form because, due to the specific thing it explains, life, it does not admit death. Since it explains life, it is more like the forms than other bringers like fever, fire, and three. This is one reason why Socrates presents the soul in the affinity argument as having a special status, being most like the invisible things. On my reading, the affinity argument and the final immortality argument are one long investigation into the nature of the soul, an investigation made more precise by Cebes’ objection.

The Affinity Argument and Cebes’ Objection

The affinity argument is an investigation into what sort of thing (ποίον) the soul is (78b). Socrates argues that it is more like and akin to the invisible things (whose only identified members are the forms, 78b-c) than the sensible things, and so since the forms always are and are immortal (79d, 80b), the soul is too. Unlike the earlier immortality arguments, the affinity argument aims to explain the immortality of the soul in terms of its nature: the soul is the sort of thing that is most similar (ὁμοίότατον) and akin (συγγενής) to the forms, which are “divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, and incapable of being disintegrated, and which always stays in the same condition and state as itself” (80b).

Cebes’ objection relies on an analogy, suggesting that the soul might have the features Socrates describes, and yet not be immortal, because it might be like a cloak maker and the body like a cloak. Just as a cloak maker is longer lived and superior to his cloaks, and yet eventually perishes, so, Cebes suggests, the soul could wear out many bodies over the course of a single life (87d) or over many lives (88a), but eventually perish. In several ways, Cebes’ objection is stronger than Simmias’. Both objections aim to provide something that is akin to and like the immortal things without being immortal. It is not clear that Simmias succeeds, since a harmonia is ruled by its elements (93a) and, of course, it is destroyed when they are. What is

4 To my knowledge, White 1989 is the only other scholar who suggests the final argument extends the affinity argument; however, we offer quite different accounts of how Socrates does this. He argues that Cebes’ objection requires “not just to establish the nature of the soul but to do so in a way justifying one’s confidence about death.” He argues that this is not met until the end of the myth, and so Socrates’ response to Cebes does not end until then. See also White 1989, 155 ff.
5 Denyer 2007, p. 89, and Bailey 2015 argue that these are not actually causes. Bailey calls them “sophisticated things,” but that could perhaps suggest that the things themselves are sophisticated, whereas what Socrates says is that they are part of a sophisticated answer. I discuss Denyer and Bailey’s position below, and tentatively adopt it, but not for the reasons they provide.
6 Note that Socrates does not take the soul to be an invisible thing, but rather to be more like them and akin to them than the sensible things. Similarly, he says the body is more like the sensible things. Thus, I do not think we should take the term “invisible things” to refer to the class of things that are, in fact, invisible, and the term “visible things” to refer to the class of things that are, in fact, visible. Instead, the invisible things are a narrower class of things, whose only named members are the forms, but may also include the gods.
ingenious about Cebes’ objection is that the cloak maker rules over the cloaks and, in general, is longer lived than them, and so genuinely shares in the features of the invisible things to a greater degree than the cloak does.

How the Final Immortality Argument Responds to Cebes’ Objection

Socrates needs a clearer account of the precise respects in which the soul is like the forms in order to show that it shares genuine immortality with them, rather than merely being closer to immortality than the body is. He cannot show that the soul is precisely an invisible thing, since they are always the same as themselves (κατὰ τὰυτὰ ἔχει) (78d), whereas the soul, at least sometimes, is not (79c). In fact, it is only the rare soul with genuine wisdom that reaches a state where it is the “same as itself” (79c). Thus, since the soul cannot be one of these invisible things, Socrates’ strategy in responding to Cebes’ objection is to show that it shares relevant features with them that make it imperishable.

We can think of the groundwork for the final argument as coming in three stages. First, Socrates presents his method of hypothesis and hypothesizes that there are forms, which are the causes of things (99c-101e). Second, he argues that, in addition to the forms which always are and are unchanging, there are forms in us, which can flee or be destroyed when their opposite approaches (102b-103c). I will refer to the former group as the forms themselves, and the latter as the inherent forms (102d ff.). Third, Socrates argues that there is another sort of thing, other than the forms themselves and the inherent forms, what I call “bringers,” which brings along an opposite, and do not admit the opposite of what they bring (103c-105c). With this groundwork in place, he argues that the soul is a bringer of life (105c-d). Next he argues that since it is a bringer of life, it cannot admit death, and so is immortal (105d-e). The final step is that anything immortal is imperishable, and so the soul is imperishable (105e-107a).

Recall that the affinity argument is an investigation of what sort of thing (ποῖον) the soul is. To my knowledge, commentators have not noted that the final argument explicitly picks this topic back up. Socrates makes a point of determining what sort of thing threeness, fire, and snow are (104c11-12). The final immortality argument tells us much more precisely what sort of thing the soul is: it is not merely near to and akin to the forms, it is the sort of thing to always bring an inherent form with it. Of course, merely knowing that it is broadly of this sort is not sufficient, because things like snow and fire are destructible. Socrates provides a more precise description by arguing that the soul is a bringer of life. This idea was entirely missing from the affinity argument. There the soul is shown to be similar to the forms because it is invisible and by nature such as to rule over the body. But those features seem incidental to the soul not being destroyed. By contrast, the final argument picks out precisely the relevant feature that is the basis of its being immortal and indestructible. It explains what it unique about the soul that makes it most like the invisible things.

7 This general approach is unlike White’s interpretation -- the other interpretation that suggests that Socrates is responding to the details of Cebes’ objection. [Fill in details.]
8 In fact, I do not think this is the best translation of this difficult phrase, but it is the standard one, and for my purposes here it does not matter what the correct translation is. For my discussion of how to translate this, see “The Asceticism of the Phaedo: Pleasure, Purification, and the Soul’s Proper Activity” (forthcoming, Archiv). I would want to translate in such a way that the κατὰ has its own translation, so that we can see how this relates to the claim that the forms are αὐτῆ καὶ αὐτὴν.
9 Thus, I agree with Devereux 1994 that this is a separate group.
10 Although, confusing, Socrates use the term “opposite itself” to refer to the members of both groups from 10db-c. There he contrasts them as “the opposite in nature” and the “opposite in us.”
The Bringers

Let me start my discussion of the bringers with a broader question: do they merely resemble the forms, or do they have a specific relationship to them that explains why they resemble them? Compare how a picture might just happen to resemble somebody versus how it can do so because it is a portrait of them. I’ll argue that the bringers bring the forms, and this specific relationship is why they resemble them. The bringers are not merely form-like.

One key way that the bringers resemble the forms is that they, like the inherent forms and like the forms themselves, do not admit an opposite. They either flee or are destroyed when the relevant opposite approaches. Another important way that the bringers resemble the forms is that they possess the feature that they provide other things with. I discuss this feature further in the next section.

Throughout most of his discussion of bringers, Socrates simply says that they bring an opposite with them. However, he is occasionally clear that this opposite is a form that both characterizes them and the thing that they bring the form to (105a-b). And while he is not explicit about why the bringers don’t accept the opposite of what they bring, surely this is because they are characterized by this form. After all, he says that the bringers bring what they do by nature. They are not accidentally connected to this inherent form. This is why, when the opposite approaches, not only the inherent form, but also the bringer itself must flee or perish. There is a tricky issue, which I will not discuss here, of exactly what the relationship is between the forms themselves and the inherent forms. For our purposes the important point is that bringers have the characteristics they do because of their connection to the forms.

This interpretation provides a different reason to accept something that Denyer and Bailey have argued for recently: that we should not think of the bringers as causes. They both note that Socrates never explicitly calls them causes. This, I think, is their strongest evidence. They both claim that Socrates does not use the same sort of causal language for these bringers that he uses with the forms. It is true that Socrates doesn’t use some terminology, such as poiein. However, like almost all translators and commentators, it seems to me that we have the same sort of causal dative in 105b ff. Thus, I think Sedley and Long are basically correct in translating, e.g., “And if asked what it is that, when it comes to be present in any body, makes the body ill, I will not say that it is illness, but that it is fever” (οὐδὲ ἂν ἔρῃ ᾧ ἂν σώματι τί ἐγγένηται νοσήσει, οὐκ ἔρω ὅτι ᾧ ἂν νόσος, ἀλλ’ ᾧ ἂν πυρέτος;) It is by the presence of fever in the body that it is ill.

But this does not mean that the bringers need to be thought of as causes. Let me suggest instead that they are akin to causes, close to causes, but not strictly speaking causes. As Sedley has emphasized, Socrates, in looking for a cause of something, is looking for what is ultimately responsible for it. He connects this to the legal context of the Greek word aitia. Typically, what is ultimately responsible is not what is most proximate to the effect; thus, in a legal context we normally find the murderer responsible, not his weapon. My suggestion is that the bringers are not strictly speaking causes because they are not ultimately responsible. Instead, they bring what is ultimately responsible, the form. The bringer is not the means. Thus, they are less like the murder’s weapon, and more like someone who goaded on the murderer; the murderer is the primary one responsible, but this other person did

11 For a discussion of how to understand the idea that things like the “large in us” could be said to flee, see Gallop 1975, 196 ff.
13 The view I develop here fits nicely with, but is not necessary for, the view I argue for in Ebrey 2014: that Socrates in the Phaedo is committed to each thing having only one cause.
14 Sedley 1998, esp. 116. Note that Sedley does think of these bringers as causes.
bring the murderer to the scene. Note that this does not make the bringers merely that without which the cause cannot be a cause (those things discussed at 99a-b). At least typically such things are neutral between one result and its opposite: the bones and sinews are no more responsible for Socrates staying in prison than his leaving. By contrast, the fire brings heat and never brings cold, and so it is closer to a cause than most of those things without which the cause cannot be a cause. This is why I claim that the bringers are similar to a cause, akin to a cause, but not strictly speaking one.

The soul brings the form of life; it is not a replacement for this form. This is why Socrates says that the final argument rests on his earlier hypotheses (107b). Keeping the forms as causes retains their crucial role in the explanation of life.

The Soul as Bringing Life

I think the key step in the final argument is Socrates' claim that the soul is a bringer. As noted earlier, it is a feature of all bringers that they are characterized by the opposite that they bring: fire is hot and it brings heat to whatever it is in; threeness is odd and it brings odd to whatever it is in. Socrates explicitly identifies this feature of the bringers at 104b-c. Notice that this means that the soul will itself be alive. Frede suggests, I think rightly, that in the final stage of the argument Socrates relies on the idea that for a living to be destroyed just is for it to receive death, so if a living thing cannot receive death, it cannot be destroyed. However, note that if this is right, then it is crucial that the soul not only brings life, but is itself alive. If the soul brought life without being alive, then it might be that the way in which it is unable to receive death is the way a rock is unable to do so – it is not the right sort of thing. Note that Socrates simply gets Cebes to agree that it is by the presence of the soul that the body is alive (105c). Socrates seems to be relying on the idea that bringers have the feature (in this case, life) that they bring.

If Socrates did not rely on the idea that the soul is alive because it brings life, then he would need some other principle to establish the soul's indestructibility, other than the claim that when a living thing admits death, it is destroyed. It seems to me that the most plausible interpretation, and the most charitable one, is that Socrates is relying on this principle that he articulates, that all bringers having the characteristic that they bring. Is this a problematic principle? I am not sure. However, it seems to me that it fits very closely with the idea that the genuine causes are the forms, and other things are cause-like because they bring forms. Due to Socrates' commitment to self-predication, the forms-in-us have the characteristics that they impart. The bringers bring one of these inherent forms, thereby bringing something that is f and so makes things f. Given this model, and given that the bringers draw their characteristics from what they bring, it is natural that they too would be f, since they possess the inherent form within them that they bring to something else.

Conclusion

We can now appreciate why Socrates says that responding to Cebes' objection requires a thorough discussion of causation. The giant build-up to the final immortality argument, from the beginning of the autobiographical section to the claim that the soul is a bringer (95e-105b) is not just an excuse to discuss causation,

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15 “not only do those opposites evidently not admit one another, but there are also all those things that are not opposites of one another, but always possess the opposites, and they too seem not to admit whatever form is opposed to the form inside them; instead, when it attacks, evidently they either perish or retreat”


17 To my knowledge, Aristotle never claims that the soul is alive, although it is certainly the principle that brings life to the living body.
the method of hypothesis, forms, and inherent forms. Instead, each of these steps plays a crucial role in the final argument. This last argument extends the affinity argument, showing more precisely the soul’s relation to the forms and why it is like the forms in such a way that it is immortal and indestructible. In fact, now we can appreciate that without understanding the forms, we will never be able to fully understand the soul or why it is immortal.

I do not want to suggest that we could dispense with the affinity argument once we have the final argument. Socrates’ view in the affinity argument is that the soul is naturally drawn to wisdom, and this is the appropriate state for the soul to be in, because it is akin to the forms (79d). I do not see any way in which the soul, by being a bringer that brings life, would be akin to the forms in a way that would make wisdom its natural state.18 In general, the affinity argument provides a broad account of the sort of thing the soul is. This account helps Socrates explain, after the affinity argument, various claims he had more earlier in the dialogue, for example that there is reincarnation (81b-e), that the philosopher desires to be dead (80e-81a), that the body is a prison (82e), and that we should avoid bodily pleasures and pains (81b, 82e, 83b-84b).19 All of these explanations rely on the soul’s ontological flexibility: since the soul can be more or less form-like, and since being a philosopher makes the soul more form-like, a philosopher can avoid the problems of the body. This flexibility is crucial for explaining several of Socrates’ ethical claims. However, precisely this flexibility makes the affinity argument easier to object to in its narrow aim of establishing the soul’s indestructibility. The final immortality argument provides a tighter argument for this precise conclusion, by focusing in on one respect in which the soul is exactly like the forms.20

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18 I am not saying no such connection is possible, but I do not see what it is.
19 Most of these are discussed in Ebrey (forthcoming). One general thesis of my book project is that Socrates makes claims earlier in the Phaedo that often seem unjustified, but whose underlying explanation is found later in the dialogue.
20 I have received valuable feedback on this paper from Emily Fletcher and the audience at the University of Chicago. For a longer version, email me. Eventually, it will be on my website.

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Kurzfassung in Deutsch

Es werden zwei Einwände gegen die sokratische Affinitätsargument für die Unsterblichkeit erhoben: Der harmonia Einwand von Simmias (85e-86d) und der Webereinwand von Kebes (87b-88b). Sokrates gibt auf den simmiaschen Einwand eine gründliche Erwiderung (92a-95a). Nachdem Sokrates den kebeschen Einwand wiederaufnimmt (95b-e), sagt er: “Es ist keine schlechte Sache, o Kebes, die du zur Sprache bringst. Denn wir müssen nun im allgemeinen die Ursache vom Entstehen und Vergehen behandeln. Ich also will dir, wenn du willst, darlegen, wie es mir damit ergeht. Scheint dir dann etwas von dem, was ich sage, brauchbar zu sein zur Überzeugung von dem, wonach du fragst, so brauche es” (95e-96a, Übersetzung von Schleiermacher). Diese Erörterung über die Naturwissenschaft mündet sich in das abschließende Unsterblichkeitsargument von Sokrates. Was ist nun die Beziehung zwischen dem kebeschen Einwand und diesem Argument? Einige Kommentatoren nehmen diese Frage nicht auf.1 Die meisten aber behaupten, dass das abschließende Argument den kebeschen Einwand begegnen soll, indem es einfach ein neues unabhängiges Argument ausmacht, das zeige, die Seele durchaus unsterblich und unvergänglich zu sein.2 So gelesen spricht Sokrates die Details des kebeschen Einwandes gar nicht an.

Ziel dieses Beitrag ist, zu zeigen, dass das abschließende Argument das

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(Endnotes)
1 Damascius, Burnet, und Bluck.

2 Bailey, Hackforth, Dorter, Gallop, Bostock, Rowe, and Frede: Hackforth 1955, 104; Gallop 1975, 153, 168; Rowe 1993 Notiz zu 88b5-6, 210…

The Song of the Nightingale: Word Play on the Road to Hades in Plato’s *Phaedo*

**Edmonds, Radcliffe**

But men, because of their own fear of death, misrepresent the swans and say that they sing for sorrow, in mourning for their own death. They do not consider that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or has any other trouble; no, not even the nightingale or the swallow or the hoopoe which are said to sing in lamentation. I do not believe they sing for grief, nor do the swans; but since they are Apollo’s birds, I believe they have prophetic vision, and because they have foreknowledge of the blessings in the other world they sing and rejoice on that day more than ever before.¹

Plato’s *Phaedo* may be considered the swan song of Socrates, his final and glorious burst of philosophic music-making before his death.² Socrates himself brings up the image of the swan song, but he couples it with other bird songs, the famous songs of the nightingale, swallow, and hoopoe, which are associated with the myth of Procné, Philomela, and Tereus. According to the traditional understanding, these birds, once human, lament the brutal murder and cannibalism of Itys.³ Socrates, however, argues that this traditional mythic idea is wrong, that the songs are not laments of death, but joyful celebrations. Just so, he urges his companions not to lament his death but to join in singing the joyful celebration of his release.

The words Plato uses in this passage help weave together a number of important ideas in the dialogue as he corrects traditional misapprehensions about death and redefines Hades as an image for the eternal divine realm of ideal realities, inaccessible to the senses and beyond the sensations of the body, something to be approached without fear. The singing (ἁϊδεῖν) of the nightingale (ἁηδὼν) links together the realm of Hades (ἅιδου) with the unseen (ἄιδη) and eternal (ἄίδιον) realm of the Forms (εἰδή), which the soul can perceive by knowing (εἰδέναι) when it makes itself without the pleasures (ἀηδὲς) and pains of the body. Rather than a lament, the song of the nightingale is transformed into an incantation that permits the philosopher to face death without fear (ἀδεῶς). All of these words, with their combination of a*, i/e*, and d* sounds, resemble each other sufficiently to remind the reader of each other whenever they appear in the dialogue. Plato uses this set of word plays to remind his readers of the ideas discussed in the dialogue, spurring their recollective associations of unseen Forms, absence of pleasure and pain, and

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¹ 85ab οἱ δ᾽ ἄνθρωποι διὰ τὸ αὐτῶν δέος τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τῶν κύκνων καταψεύδονται, καὶ φασὶν αὐτοὺς θρηνοῦντας τὸν θάνατον ὑπὸ λύπης ἑξάδειν, καὶ οὐ λογίζονται ὅτι οὐδὲν ὄρνεον ἢδει ὅταν πεινῇ ἢ ῥιγῇ ἢ τινα ἄλλην λύπην λυπῆται, οὔδὲ αὐτὴ ἢ τὰ ἁηδών καὶ χελιδών καὶ ὁ ἔποι, ἄ δὴ φασὶ διὰ λύπην θρηνοῦντα ἢδειν. ἀλλ᾽ οὕτε ταῦτα μοι φαίνεται λυπούμενα ἢδειν οὔτε οἱ κύκνοι, ἀλλ᾽ ἂτε οἴμαι του Ἀπόλλωνος οἴντες, μαντικοὶ τέ εἰσί καὶ προειδότες τὰ ἐν ᾽Αἴδου ἄγαθα ἢδους καὶ τέρπονται ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν διαφέροντως ἢ ἐν τῷ ἐμπρόσθεν χρόνῳ.
the absence of fear, with the traditional name of Hades. The swan song of philosophy is therefore not a nightingale's lament but rather an incantation against fear of death.

The Invisible Realm of Hades

Of all the word plays in the dialogue, the most obvious and explicit connection is between the traditional mythic name of Hades and the unseen. The word play on the name of Hades and the unseen realm of the dead can be found in Homer and no doubt relates to the magical dogskin cap of invisibility that appears in myth as Hades'. Because of Socrates' impending execution, the dialogue resounds with references to the journey to the realm of Hades (ἐις Ἅιδου) or conditions in Hades (ἐν Ἅιδου); Socrates will soon no longer be visible among his friends but unseen in Hades. The connection is made explicitly in 80d, when Socrates is referring to “the soul, then, the invisible (τὸ ἀιδές), departing into another such place which is, like itself, noble and pure and invisible, to the realm of Hades (ἐις Ἅιδου) in truth.” For not only is Hades the realm of the invisible, but the souls who go there after death are likewise invisible, even during life. Socrates questions Cebes on the nature of the soul:

“And the soul? Is it visible or invisible? (ὁρατὸν ἢ ἀιδές;)”

“Invisible, to man, at least, Socrates.”

“But we call things visible and invisible with reference to human vision, do we not?”

“Yes, we do.”

“Then what do we say about the soul? Can it be seen or not? (ὁρατὸν ἢ ἀόρατον εἶναι;)”

“It cannot be seen. (οὐχ ὁρατὸν;)”

“Then it is invisible? (ἀιδὲς ἀρα;)”

“Yes.”

The shifts in terminology between unseeable (ἀόρατον) and invisible (ἀιδές) serves to emphasize the final conclusion that the soul is ἀιδές invisible. Only the souls that do not complete the transition to Hades but linger around the graveyards as ghosts are visible at all; they are not invisible (ἀιδές) precisely insofar as they are not in Hades.

Souls, however, are not the only things invisible to human sight; the objects of knowledge are repeatedly characterized as ungraspable by the senses, in contrast to other phenomena. “And you can see these [phenomena] and touch them and perceive them by the other senses, whereas the things which are always the same can be grasped only by the reasoning of the mind, and are invisible and not to be seen?” Those things that can only be grasped by the reasoning of the mind (τῷ τῆς διανοίας λογισμῷ) are just as invisible (ἀιδές) as the soul.

The word for this reasoning of the mind is knowing, εἰδέναι, yet another word that recalls the invisible realm of Hades. We can be certain that such a word play was in Plato's mind because, in the Cratylus, Socrates denies that the name of Hades

4 Cp. Homer Iliad 5.844-845, where Athena puts on the dogskin cap so that Ares will not see her on the battlefield.
5 εἰς or ἐν Ἅιδου: 79b58 ,14e68 ,5a68 ,5b69 ,1c70 ,6c71 ,4e81 ,2c83 ,11d85 ,9b,2 107a107 ,1d107 ,3d108 ,8a115 ,1a2.
6 80d6 ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἄρα, τὸ ἀιδές, τὸ εἰς τοιοῦτον τόπον ἐτερον οἴχωμεν γενναῖον καὶ καθαρόν καὶ ἀιδή, εἰς Ἅιδου ὡς ἀληθῶς.
7 81c.
8 79a1-4. Οὐκοῦν τούτων μὲν κάν ἄψαιο κάν ἰδος κάν ταῖς ἄλλαις αἰσθήσεις αἰσθοῖο, τῶν δὲ κατὰ ταύτα ἔχομεν οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτω ποτὲ ἀν ἀλλὰ ἐπιλάβοι ἢ τῷ τῆς διανοίας λογισμῷ, ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἀιδή τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ οὐχ ὁρατά. Cp. 83b4, 81b7.
really comes from the invisible. "And the name 'Hades' is not in the least derived from the invisible (ἀιδές), but far more probably from knowing (εἰδέναι) all noble things, and for that reason he was called Hades by the lawgiver."9 Although there are other words for knowing, the verb εἰδέναι appears nearly twenty times throughout the *Phaedo*, and each time it appears, the connection with Hades is recalled.10 Not only is the verb of knowing reminiscent of Hades, but even the objects of knowledge themselves recall the invisible realm. When something is grasped by the mind in the process of recollection, the thing that is grasped is not a material object or sense perception but rather an idea (εἶδος). Socrates prompts Simmias to think about the way such ideas work. "Well, you know that a lover, when he sees a lyre or a cloak or anything else which his beloved is wont to use, perceives the lyre and in his mind receives an image (εἴδος) of the boy to whom the lyre belongs, do you not?"11 The form in the mind is not the thing seen by the eyes, but the invisible mental image formed by the thinking process. The term εἴδος is of course famously used elsewhere in the dialogue (102b-106d, 64d) to describe the ultimate object of recollection, the Form (given a capital letter in modern scholarship to indicate its technical usage). These Forms are such things as Beauty itself (ἀοτό καθ’ αὐτό), Equality itself, Threeness, etc., and they are grasped not by the senses but by the mind.12 The εἰδή, the Forms, therefore, are invisible to the senses (ἀιδές).

These objects of knowing (εἰδέναι) are also the things that are always the same (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον), impervious to the flux that characterizes the phenomenal world. Both souls and the objects of knowledge are thus undying (ἀθάνατον), since they do not come into being or perish. The invisible (ἀιδές) that does not perish or change is thus characterized as eternal (ἀίδιον), an unusual word undoubtedly chosen to recall the other words with similar sounds.13 The Forms, εἰδή, which are the objects of knowing (εἰδέναι), are thus eternal (ἀίδιον) and invisible (ἀιδές), like the realm of Hades (Ἅιδου) is in truth, for the place of the dead is not an unpleasant place to be feared but a destination to be welcomed with joy.

Escape from Pleasure, Pain, and Fear

Hades is in fact linked with the absence of bodily pain and pleasure, the sensations that come from the experience of the phenomenal world and its endless variations. Pain and pleasure are never constant and stable, but are always succeeding one another in the body. Socrates jokes near the beginning of the dialogue, when he

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9 Crat. 404b καὶ τό γε ὀνόμα ὃ 'Ἄιδης,' ὃ Ἐρμόγενες, πολλοῦ δεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄιδους ἐπανομαζόμεθα, ἄλλα πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντα τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι, ἀπὸ τοῦτον υπὸ τοῦ νομοθέτου 'Ἅιδης' ἐκλήθη.
10 95c9 ἦδει; 98b5 εἰδείην; 60a3 εἰδὲν; 66e6, 67a3, 75d8, 75d9, 85c3, 88b2, 96a9, 96c6, 96e7, 97d4, εἰδέναι; 65d9 εἰδές; 117c6 εἴδομεν; 82d4 εἰδόσιν; 75d8, 95d7 εἰδότας
11 73d5-8 Οὐκόκοιν οἴοθα ὅτι οἱ ἔρασται, ὅταν ἰδωσιν λύραν ἢ ἰμάτιον ἢ ἄλλο τι οῖς τὰ παιδικά αὐτῶν εἰσε ἥρσθαί, πάσχουσιν τούτο- ἐγνωσάν τε τὴν λύραν καὶ ἐν τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔλαβον τὸ εἴδος τοῦ παιδός οὗ ἢ ἦν ἡ λύρα;
12 The term εἴδος is also used in non-technical senses elsewhere in the dialogue, to refer to the human form into which the soul comes (73a2, 76c12, 79b4, 87a2, 92b5) and the abstract kind or category into which things may be divided (79a6, 79d9, 91d1, 98a2, 100b4). All of these uses, however, still refer to something that is intellectually perceived rather than a phenomenon grasped by the senses. The most unusual uses of the term occur in the myth (110d1 and d2) to describe the way that the entire earth appears as a blend of colors if one were to view it from above. The fact that the verb here is φαντάζεσθαι may be significant, indicating a mental activity rather than a sensual perception.
13 106d3 τὸ γε ἀθάνατον ἄιδιον ἄν.
experiences the pleasure of the removal of his prison chains, that pleasure and pain are inextricably linked together, as if fastened together in a fable by Aesop. Indeed, the soul that is too closely tied to the pains and pleasures of the body cannot succeed in making the journey to the realm of Hades. As Socrates explains,

Because each pleasure or pain nails it [the soul] as with a nail to the body and rivets it on and makes it corporeal, so that it fancies the things are true which the body says are true. For because it has the same beliefs and pleasures as the body it is, I think, compelled to become also of like character and nurture to it, and to become incapable of entering Hades in purity.

Intense pains and pleasures make one suppose that the phenomena that cause them are real, and these phenomena are explicitly things that are seen, rather than the unseen ideas. If the ever-changing perceptions of the bodily senses are taken to be true and real, the soul is bound to the body that senses them so clearly, rather than being able to depart to the realm of the unseen ideas. The soul therefore must do without pleasure (ἀηδὲς) of the body to go the realm of Hades.

The true philosopher, therefore, does not care for sensible pleasures and pains, the transitory affects of the body, but rather cares for the eternal (ἀιδίον) and invisible (ἀιδές) objects of knowledge (εἰδέναι), and this care (μελέτη) is the famous practice of death (μελέτη θανάτου) that brings the philosopher close to the realm of Hades (Ἄιδου). The only truly unpleasant (ἀηδὲς) thing that could bring grief for such a philosopher is the failure of argument. Socrates counsels Phaedo not to
cut his beautiful hair the next day in mourning for the death of Socrates, but rather that they both should cut their hair in mourning immediately if they are not able to conclude their argument successfully and the logos dies.  

This true pain and pleasure that the philosopher feels associated with arguments, in contrast to the pains and pleasures of the body, resembles the true fear a philosopher feels about an argument going awry, in contrast to the misguided and illusory fears of the unphilosophic. In explaining the procedure of his 'second voyage', Socrates refers repeatedly to the fear of the argument being refuted. This fear provides the rationale for the cautious and laborious procedure of explaining things in terms of their participation, "in the peculiar being of any given things in which it does participate." However, the philosopher need not fear anything in the phenomenal world, least of all death. While others who are called brave only appear brave through fear of other things, choosing death as the lesser evil because they fear other evils in the world, the philosopher alone does not fear death because he knows that death is not an evil. A philosopher, then, like Socrates, is able to face the prospect of death and the journey to Hades (eis Αἰδου) without fear (ἀδεῶς), as Phaedo himself mentions at the beginning of the dialogue. Others not only fear death before it comes to them, doing all sorts of terrible things because of their fears, but, even after death comes, those most attached to their bodies and the sensible world fail to separate from their bodies and go to the realm of Hades, held back by a fear of the invisible and of Hades.

And thus encumbered, such a soul is weighed down and is dragged back into the visible world, through fear of the invisible and of Hades, and so, as they say, it flits about the monuments and the tombs, where shadowy shapes of souls have been seen.

By contrast, those who practice philosophy, the practice of dying, says Socrates, have no fear that the soul might blow away and disperse with the death of the body. This passage concludes the first set of arguments in the dialogue, and it also immediately precedes the image of the swan song – and the song of the nightingale.

Philosophical Incantations

Simmias and Kebes, however, have already asked for a song to help them with...
their fears of death, fears which they admit are irrational, even childish.

Assume that we have that fear, Socrates, and try to convince us; or rather, do not assume that we are afraid, but perhaps there is a child within us, who has such fears. Let us try to persuade him not to fear death as if it were a hobgoblin (mormolukeia).24

Socrates prescribes an incantation, to sing the fear away, “You must sings spells (ἐπαίδευν) to him every day, till you have charmed it out of him (ἐξεπάσητε).”25 The philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul serve as an incantation against the fear of death, and the philosopher who can makes such arguments is thus an enchanter (ἐπωρδόν), a singer of a potent and magical song.

The song (ὑδεῖν) of the nightingale (ἀηδὼν) likewise picks up the associations with Hades, not, as traditional myth would suggest, because of its lament for a brutal cannibalistic murder, but as a similar kind of philosophic incantation. The practice of philosophy is repeatedly associated in this dialogue with making music, from Socrates’ dream commanding him to make music to the requirement that arguments must be in tune with (συμφωνεῖν) the initial hypothesis in Socrates’ method in his second sailing.26 All this philosophical singing, like the song of the nightingale, is a way of reminding the listeners, not of the fear of death, but rather of the immortality of the soul, and Socrates urges his interlocutors to repeat the arguments of the dialogue (and the accompanying myth) over and over to themselves like an incantation.27

Recollection

What is the significance of all these associations? The mythical realm of Hades is no more identical to the invisible objects of knowledge than the philosopher is actually an enchanter, but the connections drawn between all these things serves to bring them together in the minds of Plato’s readers. The word play that associates Hades, ἀδές, εἰδέναι, εἶδος, ἀδιόν, ἀηδές, ἀδεώς, ἀδείν and ἀηδὼν does not amount to a serious argument that equates all these things; the connections are too tenuous, too inexact, too ambivalent. On the other hand, this unusual concentration of terms with similar sounds should not be dismissed as merely play, a relic perhaps of Plato’s frustrated poetic ambitions.28 Plato uses this cluster of similar sounding words as a kind of serious play, to highlight another issue in the dialogue, the nature of recollection. In addition to the higher level of recollection of the things in themselves Forms, the Phaedo is notable for references to more mundane kinds of recollection – being reminded of a boy from seeing his lyre or of earlier arguments by hearing a new one. The set of words that resemble Hades, I would suggest, serves to stimulate this lower level kind of recollection. Each of these words sets off a chain of recollections that leads the reader from one idea to another, reminding him or her perhaps of the way that knowledge takes invisible ideas, rather than concrete

24 77e3-7. Ὡς δεδιότων, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, πειρῶ ἀναπείθειν· μᾶλλον δὲ μὴ ὡς ήμων δεδιότων, ἀλλ’ ἵσως ἐν τις καὶ ἐν ἡμῖν παῖς ὅστις τὰ τοιαῦτα φοβεῖται. τοῦτον οὖν πειρῶ μεταπείθειν μὴ δεδίνει τὸν θάνατον ὡσπέρ τὰ μορμολύκεια. 25 77e8-9. Ἀλλὰ χρή, ἔφη ὁ Σώκρατης, ἐπάδειν αὐτῶ ἐκάστης ἡμέρας ἐως ἃν ἔξεπάσητε.
26 The dream to make music 60e; the arguments that sing together 100a5. See Bailey 2005 for an exploration of just what συμφωνεῖν might mean in this context. For the association of philosophy with incantation, see Belfiore 1980, Entralgo 1970, esp. 108-138.
27 114d6-7. καὶ χρή τὰ τοιαῦτα ὡσπέρ ἐπάδειν ἐκατω.
28 Cp. Zeller 1881: 163, “it becomes evident that as yet [Plato] cannot be wholly a philosopher, because he is too much a poet.” For the stories of Plato’s early ambitions to writing poetry, see Riginos 1976: 43 and following commentary.
phenomena, as its objects. Or the recollective chain triggered by the words might remind the reader that the reliance on knowledge of stable and eternal ideas instead of sense perceptions in flux saves one from the fears and ever-shifting pleasures and pains that attend taking sense perceptions as reality.

The word plays thus serve to illustrate the process of recollection discussed in the dialogue, adding another example of the mental process of reasoning involved. Socrates defines recollection as not simply recognizing some object of perception, but also thinking about some other thing in connection with the first thing.

If a person, on seeing one thing—or hearing it or getting any other perception of it—not only recognizes it but also thinks of something different, which is the object not of the same knowledge but of another, do we not rightly say that he is reminded of the thing he gets the thought of?29

The chain of associations is key to the process of recollection, which is always a process, not an instantaneous flash of insight.30 The thinker moves from a sense impression to an associated mental image, from the sight of a lyre or a cloak to the image (εἶδος) of the beloved boy to whom it belongs. This first example of recollection involves only one step, but Socrates points out that longer chains of association occur as well. “Can a person on seeing a picture of a horse or of a lyre be reminded of a man, or on seeing a picture of Simmias be reminded of Cebes?”31 Just as a lyre can remind one of a boy who is not physically present to be the object of sense perception, and a picture of a lyre can remind one of the lyre that is not physically present to be the object of sense perception, so too a picture of the lyre can remind one of the lyre and that thought of the lyre remind one of the boy. Such chains could, in theory, be extended endlessly by the process of reasoning, which can move through similar things or dissimilar things with equal facility.32

The difference between the thing perceived and the thing remembered always strikes the one recollecting.

But whenever it is from like things that anyone is reminded of something, does it not also necessarily happen to him, that he thinks whether or not this falls short, in respect of likeness, of that thing of which he has been reminded?33

To be sure, some will ponder the differences more deeply than others, so while

29 73c6-9 ἐάν τις τι ἐτέρων ἢ ἰδὼν ἢ ἀκούσας ἢ τινα ἄλλην αἰσθήσεων λαβὼν μή μόνον ἐκεῖνον γνῶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐτέρων ἐννοήσῃ οὐ μή ἣ αὐτή ἐπιστήμη ἄλλ' ἄλλη, ἢρα οὐχὶ τοῦτο δικαίως λέγομεν ὅτι ἀνεμνήσθη, οὐ τὴν ἐννοιαν ἐλαβεν; (trans. Ackrill) Cp. Aristotle, de memoria, 453a on the distinction between remembering and recollecting, where the latter likewise involves the extra steps of moving from the first object to others associated with it.
30 As Gonzalez 2007: 300 emphasizes, “anamnesis is a practice.”
31 73e5-7. ἔστιν ἵππον γεγραμμένον ἰδόντα καὶ λύραν γεγραμμένην ἀναμιμνῄσκει, καὶ Σιμμίαν ἰδόντα γεγραμμένον κέβητος ἀναμιμνῄσκει; 32 Cp. Aristotle, de memoria 451b18-20. And this is exactly why we hunt for the next thing in the chain, starting in our thoughts from the present or something else, and from something similar, or opposite, or neighboring. By this means recollection occurs. διὸ καὶ τὸ ἐφεξῆς θηρεύομεν νοήσαντες ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἢ ἄλλου τινός, καὶ ἢρ’ ὁμοίου ἢ ἐναντίου ἢ τοῦ σύνεγγυς, διὰ τοῦτο γίγνεται ἢ ἀναμίμνησις. Aristotle uses the letters of the alphabet as an example of the neighboring thing in such a chain.
33 74a5-7 Ἀλλ’ ὅταν γε ἄπο τῶν ὁμοίων ἀναμηνήσκεταί τις τι, ἢρ’ οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον τὸν προσπάσχειν, ἐννοεῖν εἴτε τι ἐλλείπει τι κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα εἴτε μή ἐκεῖνον οὐ ἀνεμνήσθη;
some will merely think that the picture looks very much like Simmias (without actually being Simmias), other more philosophically minded thinkers may continue the chain of associations, moving further from the initial stimulus of recollection. While the first element in the chain is always a sense perception, contingent upon the particular appearance in a particular moment and place, the subsequent elements must each be an idea one grasps in the mind (ἐν τῇ διάνοιᾳ ἐλαβόν τὸ έιδος). In some circumstances, perhaps after an elaborate series of dialectical arguments or internal mental maneuvers like Diotima’s famous Ladder, the idea that is grasped will be the thing itself (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτὸ), Beauty or Equality or Justice, the Form (εἶδος) in the modern technical sense, but in the Phaedo, the discussion of recollection focuses on more concrete things – Simmias or his lyre, for example, or a previous argument. The interlocutors often ask to be reminded how a particular argument works, most trenchantly when Simmias asks to be reminded how the argument about all learning being recollection goes. One logos can thus trigger the process of recollection for another logos, whether it is Socrates’ apodeixis of the argument for recollection that helps Simmias recall the argument that he had known previously or whether it is one word that reminds the reader of another. If the reader’s recollective process is initiated by the sound (or appearance) of the word Hades, the chain of associations may lead her back to other words that are similar, such as invisible, eternal, knowing, idea, and even incantation.

The song of the nightingale can thus provide the reader with the stimulus for recollection of all the other concepts linked by the sounds of the word, as well as of the arguments that are built upon each of those words throughout the course of the dialogue. The singing of the nightingale is a reminder that Hades is not fearsome and unpleasant but that the practice of dying is rather a movement of the mind to the invisible world where the unseen and immortal soul is with the eternal and unchanging objects of knowing. Such a reminder serves as an incantation against the fear of death, a charm against the mormolukeia who haunts the child in us

34 Although Scott 1995 asserts that recollection must be confined to philosophers who grasp the Forms, others (notably Frede 2001, Kahn 2003, and Gonzalez 2007) rightly include a much wider scope under the heading of recollection. In his discussion of the Meno, Vlastos 1994: 97 defines recollection as “any advance in understanding which results from the perception of logical relationships,” and this definition works well for the Phaedo as well, even if the logical relationships are not as tightly defined as the mathematical ones in the Meno.

35 Aristotle de mem. 451a14-16 likewise defines the object of memory as an image in the mind. τί μὲν οὖν ἐστι μνήμη καὶ τὸ μνημονεύειν, εἴρηται, ὅτι φαντάσματος, ὡς εἰκόνος οὗ φάντασσαμαι, ἔξες. In 451a29-452a30, Aristotle discusses the significance of the starting point for recollection, noting that some starting points work better than others.

36 73a4-5 ἀλλὰ, ὦ Κέβης, ἔφη ὁ Σιμμίας ὑπολαβόν, ποῖαι τούτων αἱ ἀποδείξεις; ὑπομνηματικὸν με- οὐ γὰρ σφόδρα ἐν τῷ παρόντι μέμνημαι. 73b6-7 αὐτὸ δὲ τούτο, ἔφη, δέομαι παθεῖν περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος, ἀναμνησθέναι. Cp. 105a5-6, where Socrates suggests it is good to be reminded of the argument about opposites; πάλιν δὲ ἀναμνησθέναι- οὐ γὰρ χεῖρος πολλάκις ἀκούειν, while at 103ab Socrates commends some person whom Phaedo cannot remember for remembering the earlier argument. At 91cd, Socrates recalls the objections raised by Simmias and Kebes, while Echecrates is reminded of his liking for the recollection argument at 88d5. Recollection can even happen for accounts other than arguments. At 70c6, Socrates recalls an ancient account of souls in Hades. At 60c9, Kebes is reminded that Evenus had inquired about Socrates writing poetry. Finally, to remember Socrates brings the greatest pleasure to Phaedo in 58d5.
all when faced with death. These reminders are not the same as the arguments themselves, the ones that Plato provides for his interlocutors about the immortality of the soul, in this dialogue and others; the word plays cannot substitute for the labors of dialectic and the processes of reasoning, but they can serve to set the chain of recollections going. The song of the nightingale is no lament, expressing grief at the presence of death, but rather a joyful paean that reminds all who hear it of the beauties of philosophy.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!...
Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
  I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
  To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
  While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy! (Keats, Ode to a Nightingale.)

Résumé :
Les mots de Platon utilise dans le chant du cygne de Socrate aide pour tisser ensemble un certain nombre d’idées importantes dans le dialogue comme il corrige les malentendus traditionnels sur la mort. Le chant (ἀιδεῖν) du rossignol (ἀηδών) relie le royaume d’Hadès (ἅιδου) avec le royaume invisible (ἀιδῆ) et éternel (ἀίδιον) des formes (εἰδή), où l’âme peut percevoir en sachant (εἰδέναι) lorsque elle se fait sans les plaisirs (ἀηδὲς) et les douleurs du corps. Plutôt que d’une plainte, la chanson du rossignol se transforme en une incantation qui permet le philosophe à affronter la mort sans crainte (ἀδεῶς). Tous ces mots, avec leur combinaison des sons de a*, i/e* et d*, se ressemblent suffisamment pour rappeler au lecteur de l’autre à chaque fois qu’ils apparaissent dans le dialogue. Platon utilise cet ensemble de jeux de mots pour rappeler à ses lecteurs des idées discutées dans le dialogue, stimulant leurs associations Recollective de formes invisibles, absence de plaisir et la douleur, et l’absence de peur, avec le nom traditionnel de l’Hadès. Le chant du cygne de la philosophie est donc pas la complainte d’un rossignol, mais plutôt une incantation contre la peur de la mort.

Bibliography


On Plato’s interpretation of his own philosophy:  
*Phaedo’s* testimony on the *diaphorá* between poetry and philosophy

Engler, Maicon Reus

I would like to show how Plato conceived of his own philosophy, in *Phaedo*, as the highest form of poetry. If we analyze this work with care, we can see Plato’s attitude towards poetry in a new light. Although many scholars have recently been led to the idea that this attitude is unsystematic and ambiguous, as far as I know none of them has based his analysis on *Phaedo*. Normally, they adopt one of the three following strategies. a) They show that *Republic*’s legislation concerning art is not as severe as it appears and admits of some exceptions. B) They argue that Plato himself needed poetry to build his ideal city and, *a fortiori*, to develop his philosophy, in the same way he needed rhetoric to criticize eloquence, as Cicero noticed. C) Or they use Plato’s theory of inspiration to counterbalance the supposedly aesthetical asceticism of *Republic* and to show that his view has undergone some changes, and that in the time of his youth he might have seen poetry as the sublime phenomenon it was in the pre-philosophical culture. No doubt, the three strategies prove to have some value. My own interpretation tends to a radicalization of the second position. Instead of using *Republic*, however, I intend to argue that *Phaedo* can also illuminate, albeit indirectly, the quarrel between poetry and philosophy, since it allows us to read the whole problem as a kind of undeniable and conscious irony.

Furthermore, the testimony of this work also provides a new route to the understanding of every dialogue that comes before it either in a dramaturgical or in a chronological order. As we know, Socrates’ death is usually taken to represent the passage from Socratism to Platonism. The beautiful story about the interest in physics, the swan song, the belief in the immortality of soul and the doctrine of ideas are compared to the philosophical sobriety of *Apology* and used to demarcate where Plato’s voice starts to sound louder than Socrates’. The ideas I will present here speak explicitly neither for nor against this view. They suggest, nonetheless, that Plato’s project in the allegedly first phase of his philosophy should not be found in the aporetic method or in the negativity of the knowledge. According to Plato’s own interpretation, it should be located in Socrates’ dedication to a sort of philosophical poetry. If this is right, then, we could go a step further and say that Plato continued after *Phaedo* to base the project he had embraced before he wrote it – namely, the composition of a philosophical kind of poetry – on a worldview whose design is unthinkable without all elements he took directly from poetry. Even if he might have discovered his own path, he continued to see philosophy’s profound kinship to poetry. In doing so, some of the ideas I will present might also contribute to a reformulation of the old demarcation between Plato and Socrates.

In order to show these points, let me then start with *Phaedo*. At the very beginning of the dialogue, Socrates claims that the relationship between pleasure and pain is so curious that a poet like Aesop could certainly compose a myth about it. He could say, e.g., that a god has joined them together, so that when one appears, the other comes right after. This little digression – undoubtedly connected with the rest of the dialogue – is the opportunity that Cebes takes to transmit to Socrates a question raised by the poet Evenos. Having heard that Socrates was dedicating himself to poetry during his time in prison, Evenos was eager to understand the
reasons for the philosopher’s behavior. Socrates confirms that he had composed a
hymn to Apollo and that he was currently engaged in the metrification of Aesop’s
fables. But, he goes on, Evenos should not worry about any emulation, because
in engaging in poetry he was simply trying to be pious and obedient to a dream
he had so many times in his life. In this meaningful dream, poetry appeared to
Socrates disguised in different forms and urged him to devote himself to it. Socrates’
interpretation of this message is quite revealing: he never tried to write any kind of
common poetry, inasmuch as he always considered philosophy to be the megíste
mousiké. I quote Jowett’s translation:

Tell him, Cebes, he replied, what is the truth – that I had no idea of rivalling him or his poems;
to do so, as I knew, would be no easy task. But I wanted to see whether I could purge away a scruple
which I felt about the meaning of certain dreams. In the course of my life I had often intimations
in dreams “that I should compose music”. The same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and
sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words: “Cultivate and make
music”, said the dream. And hitherto I had imagined this was only intended to exhort and encourage
me in the study of philosophy, which has been the pursuit of my life, and is the noblest and best
music. The dream was biding me to do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor
in a race is bidden by the spectators to run when he is already running. But I was not certain of this;
for the dream might have meant music in the popular sense of the word, and being under sentence of
death, and the festival giving me a respite, I thought that I would be safer for me to satisfy the scruple,
and, in obedience to the dream, to compose a few verses before I departed. I first I made a hymn in
honor of the god of the festival, and then considering that a poet, if he is really to be a poet, should
not only put together words, but should invent stories, and that I have no invention, I took some
fables of Aesop, which I had ready at hand and which I knew – they were the first I came upon – and
turned them into verse (Phd. 60d861b7).

I believe that we are facing here a crystal-clear pronouncement about how
Plato understood Socrates’ mission as well as his own philosophy. Against the
Aristotelian criterion – according to which poetry is different from philosophy
thanks both to the content it conveys and to its mimetic language – Plato maintains
that the quarrel took place because philosophy deals with the same themes that
poetry does and, more than that, because it also depends on mimetic features such
as myths, images, scenes and characters. That is why it never occurred to Socrates
that he was doing something other than mousiké, even if his was a particular form
of it. Since for Aristotle philosophy had a different arena of action and a different
language, he could be very liberal towards poetry. No nobleman would fight with a
peasant. Much of Plato’s acrimony, on the other hand, indicates that he saw an inter
pares fight going on, which is to say that he ultimately praises poetry more than
Aristotle, as he recognizes its connection to philosophy.

This passage also offers a new insight into the way Plato understood the
dialogues that he wrote before Phaedo. After all, if Socrates’ long-life dedication to
philosophy was nothing more than an attempt to compose poetry, so Plato’s works
must be read from a poetical perspective, i.e., without the modern (and Aristotelian)
separation between these activities. This is in accordance with recent readings of
Plato that are open to aspects like the performative arguments of the characters
or even the scenario. Ancient authors like Longinus and modern authors like
Nietzsche have already noticed that Plato emulated Homer in the style of Hesiod’s
good Eris. Plato himself, in the Symposium, says that we should imitate and emulate
good authors in order to give birth to our own spiritual children (Smp.209c7-d6).
If this is right, then we should consider again the old idea that all minor dialogues
should be interpreted on the basis of their aporetic argumentation method. Aporia
and refutation certainly cover a large part of the early dialogues. But for Plato poetry
and euporia are also present, as a dialogue like Ion—I will return to this point in a
moment—strongly suggests.
The last point of the passage has to do with Socrates’ mission. We can ask in which sense Socrates was doing poetry, since he firmly believed he was. How could he do it, if he never wrote anything? Perhaps through his speeches? Through his acts? Both cases seem to be right. On the one hand, Socrates was doing poetry through his heroic commitment to Apollo’s mission, one that forced him to go back into the cave and to remain at his post in the same way Achilles did ((Ap. 28c-d). His life as a whole is the content of an epic story told by Plato. In order to be the hero of this poem, not only a great poet like Plato was necessary, a piece of good luck that Alexander lacked, but also required were the great acts that led Socrates to confront tyranny, to be a good citizen, a good father and friend, and to face death with serenity. Socrates was doing poetry, therefore, because he was living according to the high standards of the old heroes. On the other hand, these erga were always illuminated by beautiful speeches and conversations. Is it possible to see these speeches as a kind of poetry?

In the passage under consideration, Socrates also says that he was working on the metrification of Aesop because he is not a poet, a claim that apparently undermines the identification of poetry and philosophy. Socrates justifies this view by arguing that he is only able to make speeches, whereas the poet’s task is to compose stories (Phd. 61a4-b7). But is this separation between logos and mythos real? Does Socrates really support it? We must remember that, before he tells us the story about his dream, he invents a new myth about the relationship between pleasure and pain and shows how he would develop it if he were Aesop. Some pages further, he claims to be inspired like a prophetic swan, and then composes a colorfully poetical myth about the afterlife. In other words, the digression on pleasure and pain, as well as many other passages in the dialogues, including the swan song in Phaedo, indicate that Socrates’ claim is ironical, for if the ability to compose myths is the criterion of poetry, then Socrates (and Plato, of course!) is an excellent poet.

All these points can be corroborated by other dialogues, especially the ones where Plato develops his Inspirationslehre. Phaedrus presents, e.g., a completely inspired Socrates possessed by every kind of divine madness described in the dialogue. The poetic one is found in Socrates’ ability to open himself to the divine forces of the idyllic place and to hear the voice of both his genius and the Muses. A similar phenomenon occurs in the Ion. Having established that the main feature of an inspired poet is the fluency of speech (euporia), Plato then depicts Socrates delivering a wonderful (and fluent!) speech about inspiration. Socrates’ poetry is now to be seen in Ion’s reaction to these speeches. As we know, Ion is a rhapsodist who always falls asleep when he listens to any poet other than Homer (Ion. 432b8-c4). According to the magnet analogy, Homer is the only ring that can communicate to Ion the Muses’ inspiration. Nevertheless, if that is really the case, how can we explain the fact that Ion did not fall asleep as he was hearing Socrates speech, but, on the contrary, got even more energized and enthusiastic? It seems that Plato wants to show that Socrates can be a poet as eloquent as Homer and, in addition, that he is also able to pass along his own enthusiasm to others. Alcibiades’ encomium in Symposium gives another hint about Socrates’ magnetic power. According to him, Socrates’ speeches are so powerful that they keep their effect upon our souls even when they are not delivered by Socrates, but merely repeated by other person (Smp. 251d6-e). That is to say: the rhapsodist who hangs in Socrates’ chain of rings is also able to transmit his enthusiasm in the same manner that Ion does with Homer. One would like to believe that everyone who teaches the dialogues knows this.

If we reflect on all this evidence, then it becomes easier to argue that Plato’s thought is not hostile to art. Firstly, he does not throw away a single penny of poetry’s treasure but uses all of it to express his philosophy. Poetry is accepted in
terms of philosophical expression, since it is only through images, metaphors and
myths that Plato can awake in us, e.g., the experience of the highest lesson of his
philosophy: the lesson about the Good. Secondly, Phaedo's testimony suggests that
Plato was aware of this fact and thus understood his own philosophy as a form of
poetry. It was not the popular one, for sure, but his own original and unique form:
a rich mixture of every literary genre available at his time. This is why the ancient
quarrel between philosophy and poetry existed for him. The way he responded to it
was not, then, a puritan attack on poetry, as the lack of imagination with which we
read a platonic text would suggest. On the contrary, as an Athenian nursed in the
spiritual environment of Greek culture, and as an enthusiastic ring in the chain of
the man who invented irony as a powerful method of philosophizing, he created an
incomparably beautiful cosmos, as only the most skillful poets can do.

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Resumen
En mi plática intentaré mostrar como Platón concibió su filosofía, en el Fédon,
como la más alta forma de poesía. En el inicio del diálogo Sócrates afirma que la
relación entre el placer y el dolor es tan curiosa que incluso un poeta como Esopo
podría componer un mito sobre ella. Él podría decir, por ejemplo, que un dios los
ha puesto juntos, de manera que, cuando uno de ellos aparece, el otro le sigue poco
después. Esta pequeña digresión – indudablemente conectada con el resto del diálogo
– es la oportunidad que Cebes encuentra para transmitir a Sócrates una pregunta
planteada por el poeta Eveno. Habiendo oído que Sócrates se dedicaba a la poesía
durante su tiempo en la cárcel, Eveno tenía ganas de comprender las razones del
comportamiento del filósofo. Sócrates confirma que ya había compuesto un himno
a Apolo y que recientemente se había dado a la metrificación de las fábulas de Esopo.
Sin embargo, él continua, Eveno no debe preocuparse con ninguna emulación,
porque escribiendo poesía Sócrates intentaba sencillamente ser piadoso y obediente
a un sueño que tuvo varias veces a lo largo su vida. En este sueño decisivo, la poesía
se le aparecía a Sócrates disfrazada de diferentes formas y le ordenaba dedicársele.
La resolución de Sócrates es a fin de cuentas reveladora: a pesar de este mensaje, él
jamás intentó escribir ningún tipo de poesía común, porque siempre consideró que
la filosofía era la más alta forma de poesía.

Yo pienso que tenemos aquí una declaración inequívoca acerca de cómo
Platón comprendió su propia filosofía. Aunque en los últimos años se le ha prestado
atención a las estrategias literarias que Platón emplea, nadie – que yo sepa – enfatizó
propiamente este pasaje. Si uno lo lee cuidadosamente, es posible interpretar desde
otra perspectiva la antigua querella entre la filosofía y la poesía que es mencionada
en la República. Contra el criterio aristotélico – según el cual la poesía se diferencia
de la filosofía según el contenido que expresa – Platón defiende que la querella ha pasado porque la filosofía trata de los mismos temas que la poesía. Es por eso que a Sócrates nunca se le vino a la mente que hacía algo diferente de mousiké, mismo cuando se trataba de su forma particular de mousiké. Este pasaje ofrece, así, una nueva percepción de como Platón entendió su filosofía y especialmente todos los diálogos anteriores al Fédon. A fin de cuentas, si la dedicación vitalicia de Sócrates a la filosofía no era nada más que un esfuerzo para componer poesía, entonces las obras de Platón deben ser leídas desde una perspectiva poética, es decir, sin la moderna (y aristotélica) separación de estas dos actividades. Esta interpretación va a acorde a las lecturas recientes de Platón que destacan aspectos tales como los argumentos performativos o mismo el escenario.

El último punto de este pasaje tiene que ver con la misión de Sócrates. Podemos preguntar en qué sentido Sócrates estaba componiendo poesía, ya que él creía piamente que lo hacía. ¿Cómo podría hacerlo, si nunca escribió ninguna obra? ¿Quizá en sus discursos? ¿O en sus actos? Ambas respuestas son correctas. Por una parte, Sócrates componía poesía según su compromiso con la misión de Apolo, el dios que lo forzaba a volver a la caverna y a quedarse en su puesto del mismo modo que Aquiles. Su vida como un todo es un mito épico narrado por Platón. Para Sócrates que sea el héroe de este poema, no solo un gran poeta como Platón era necesario (una suerte que Alejandro no tuvo) a su vez que son necesarios los actos que llevan a Sócrates, a ser un buen ciudadano, un bueno padre y amigo, a confrontar la tiranía, y a enfrentar la muerte con serenidad. Sócrates componía poesía, por lo tanto, porque él vivía de acuerdo a los elevados patrones morales de los antiguos héroes. Por otra parte, estos erga eran siempre iluminados por hermosos discursos y conversaciones. ¿Sería posible ver en estos discursos un tipo de poesía?

En el pasaje examinado, Sócrates dice también que él trabajaba en la metrificación de Esopo porque no es un poeta, una afirmación que aparentemente invalida la identificación de la poesía con la filosofía. Sócrates justifica su posición aduciendo ser capaz solamente de hacer discursos, siendo por el contrario la tarea de los poetas componer mitos. ¿Sin embargo, es esta separación de lógos y mythos real? ¿Acaso Sócrates realmente la endosó? La digresión sobre el placer e el dolor, así como muchos otros pasajes en los diálogos, incluso el canto del cisne en el Fédon, sugieren que la afirmación es irónica. En otras palabras, si la capacidad de componer mitos es el criterio de la poesía, entonces Sócrates (¡y Platón, sin duda!) es un excelente poeta.

Todos estos hechos pueden ser corroborados en los otros diálogos, especialmente en aquellos donde Platón desarrolla su Inspirationslehre. El Fedro nos presenta, por ejemplo, un Sócrates completamente inspirado y poseído por todas las formas de locura sagrada descritas en el diálogo. La locura poética se encuentra en su capacidad de abrirse a las fuerzas divinas del sitio idílico y oír la voz de las Musas. Un fenómeno semejante toma lugar en el Ion. Después de establecer que la principal característica de los poetas inspirados es la fluidez del discurso, Platón describe a Sócrates haciendo un discurso maravilloso (¡y fluido!) sobre la inspiración. La poesía socrática debe ser vista en la reacción de Ion a estos discursos. Como sabemos, Ion es un rapsoda que siempre se queda dormido cuando escucha un poeta que no sea Homero. De acuerdo con la imagen del imán, Homero es el único anillo que puede comunicar a Ion la inspiración de las Musas. No obstante, si todo ocurre realmente así, ¿cómo podemos nosotros explicar que Ion no se quede dormido cuando escucha el discurso de Sócrates, y que, al contrario, se muestre aún más energizado e entusiástico? A mí me parece que Platón nos revela aquí que Sócrates puede ser tan elocuente como Homero y, a fortiori, que él también es capaz de contagiar su entusiasmo a otras personas. El Simposio da otra pista sobre el poder magnético
de Sócrates. Según Alcibíades, los discursos de Sócrates son tan poderosos que mantienen su efecto mismo cuando no son pronunciados por Sócrates, sino incluso meramente relatados por otras personas. Es decir: los rapsodas que se cuelgan en la corriente de anillos de Sócrates pueden transmitir asimismo su entusiasmo, de la misma manera que Íon con Homero.

Si tomamos todo esto en cuenta, se hace más fácil decir que el pensamiento de Platón no es hostil al arte. En primer lugar, él no derrocha nada del tesoro de la poesía, sino que lo pone todo en juego para transmitir su filosofía. La poesía es aceptada en términos de expresión, ya que es solo a través de imágenes, de metáforas y de mitos que Platón puede enseñarnos, por ejemplo, la suprema lección sobre lo Bueno. Finalmente, el testimonio del Fédon indica que Platón estaba consciente de este hecho, y que concibió su filosofía como una forma de poesía. Es por eso que la antigua pelea entre la filosofía y la poesía existió para él: porque ambas disputaban en la misma arena. En esta plática yo me dispongo a interpretar brevemente el trecho del Fédon para arrojar luz sobre estos problemas.
I. Introduction

There has been growing interest among commentators on Plato's ethics and politics in the kinds of virtue accessible by non-philosophers. One description of non-philosophical virtue occurs at *Phaedo* 82a-b, where Socrates discusses “demotic and political virtue.” There, he claims that possessors of this non-philosophical virtue behave in conventionally good ways: they refrain from gluttony and violence, injustice and robbery. There is, however, little agreement about why possessors of non-philosophical virtue behave in conventionally good ways? What kinds of motivations and beliefs lead to these outcomes?

Recently, commentators have argued that possessors of non-philosophical virtue are motivated to do virtuous action for its own sake (Kraut 2010; Vasiliou 2012). This claim suggests that possessors of demotic virtue have some kind of special (perhaps, rational) motivation for virtuous action. I argue this is the wrong approach. Specifically, I argue that demotic virtue in the *Phaedo* involves the cultivation of ordinary, non-rational motivations for bodily goods.

In this respect, non-philosophical virtue in the *Phaedo* is much as it appears in the *Republic* and *Laws*. In both of the latter works, citizens receive early education in music and gymnastic not for any intellectual gain, but in order to train their non-rational motivations to love what ought to be loved and hate what ought to be hated.

Another feature of non-philosophical virtue in these (later) dialogues is that the cultivation of non-rational motivations somehow facilitates the acquisition true or philosophical virtue. Many passages in *Republic* and *Laws* suggest that possessors of true or philosophical virtue retain in their souls the cultivation of non-rational motivations that partially constituted non-philosophical virtue.

But a puzzle emerges when we consider the motivational structure of non-philosophical virtue in the *Phaedo* against the ethical psychology underwriting Socrates’s description of the philosopher at 82d-84b. In the *Phaedo*, true virtue involves a *katharsis* or purification of the soul from all non-rational motivations—including those that partially constitute non-philosophical or demotic virtue. Thus, if in other dialogues the cultivated state of non-rational motivations involved in

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1 This is a draft and will be revised again before presentation in Brasilia. Comments are welcome, but please do not circulate or cite. All translations of Plato’s text are based on those of the Loeb editions of Fowler (*Phaedo*), Shorey (*Republic*), and Bury (*Laws*). All citations refer to the line numbers of the most recent Oxford Classical Texts (Duke et al., 1995; Slings, 2013).

2 To my knowledge, the first modern effort to make sense of Plato’s various claims about non-philosophical virtue is the first appendix of Archer-Hind’s commentary of *Phaedo*, (1894) *Phaedo of Plato*. London: Macmillan, p. 149-155. A growing literature on non-philosophical virtue in Plato has emerged especially after Kamtekar’s study of the non-philosophical virtue of auxiliaries in (1998) “Imperfect Virtue,” *Ancient Philosophy* 18 (2). By non-philosophical virtue, I mean any virtue accessible by people who are neither principally motivated by wisdom nor possess ethical knowledge.

3 Of course, there are more troublesome passages. Sedley has made a case for an intellectualist “digression” in the *Republic* (2013).
non-philosophical virtue supports and is retained by true virtue, this is not the case in *Phaedo*.

The cause of the radical discontinuity between demotic and philosophical virtue in the *Phaedo* turns out to be a very puzzling claim about the effect non-rational motivations have on the rational soul. I conclude by considering challenges to this claim, and suggest one reason why Plato may have abandoned it in later dialogues.

II. A plausible account of non-philosophical virtue

Let us begin by considering two features of a familiar account of non-philosophical virtue. My aim is not to claim that this is necessarily the right account of non-philosophical virtue across the corpus, but only to show that it is supported by some central passages of *Republic* and *Laws* and is implicit in some modern scholarship on Plato’s ethics. It is, in other words, an account that deserves consideration.

To begin with, by non-philosophical virtue, I mean the best state of character or soul that is available to people who are not currently philosophers. In *Republic*, this is cultivated in Kallipolis’s auxiliaries and pre-philosophical guardians by an education of music and gymnastics. In *Laws*, all citizens receive similar early character training. These dialogues suggest the following two features of non-philosophical virtue.

First, non-philosophical virtue centrally involves a cultivated state of non-rational motivations (henceforth, NRM) and emotions. By NRM, I mean desires the ultimate objects of which are not determined by rational evaluation. By the cultivation of NRM, I mean that the balance of an agent’s NRM are shifted to or focused upon good things and the agent’s non-rational aversions are shifted to bad things. We can understand the cultivation of NRM either in terms of actually

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4 I do not have room or necessarily desire to argue that these features are broadly attested in the corpus. I argue in subsequent sections that one of the features does not appear in the *Phaedo*. The aim is only to offer a plausible account of non-philosophical virtue, supported by some central passages, that can be used as a hypothesis against the *Phaedo*. I do not claim that these features are a sufficient description of non-philosophical virtue in these dialogues. Thus, it is my aim to describe two conditions of non-philosophical that could be endorsed even by commentators with more optimistic accounts of non-philosophical virtue, e.g. Wilberding (2009) each representing a structural arrangement of the soul. The timocratic soul, characterized by its governance by spirit and its consequent desire for esteem and aversion to shame, is ranked as the second-best kind of soul, though this should strike us as surprising since the timocratic figure would seem to be duplicitous, intellectually passive, and at the mercy of the fortuitous opinions of others. This timocrat’s position thus raises problems concerning the intrinsic value of the spirited part of the soul, problems that are best solved by comparing the auxiliary to the timocrat, both of whom represent different forms of second-best morality. A lengthy discussion of the early education’s effect on the spirited part shows how the auxiliary represents the best kind of moral agent that the second-best nature (silver-souled individuals, Sheffield (2013, 194–5).

5 The courage of auxiliaries is described as “political” (πολιτικής) courage (430). Plato also makes reference to demotic moderation and demotic justice (500e). Rowe has recently argued that the virtues described at 500e just are the cardinal virtues articulated in Book IV (2013).

6 I set aside the task of explained exactly what is meant by good and bad things,
shifting the objects of individual NRMse or shifting the balance of the objects of NRMse by strengthening some relative to the strength of others. So, to give an example, the appetite of someone with ordinary virtue might be cultivated by some kind of training such that it prefers healthy foods instead of junk food. The *thumos* of someone with ordinary virtue might desire honor from lawful sources instead of the praise of just anyone.

Second, the cultivated state of NRMse involved in ordinary virtue is largely retained in a truly or philosophically virtuous soul. This is not to say that the non-rational motivations of philosophers and those with ordinary virtue are identical. For instance, a philosopher may develop during her education a NRM for savoring the smell of old books, which few if any ordinarily virtuous agents possess. It would also not be surprising if, upon the acquisition of true or philosophical virtue, the cultivated state of an agent's NRMse is somehow further improved, focused, or stabilized. The claim is only that when someone with the cultivated state of NRMse involved in ordinary virtue acquires philosophical virtue, she does not entirely loose the cultivation of her non-rational soul but gains something else in addition. And this makes sense, especially if we think that philosophical reason does not itself desire or deliberate about the sorts of objects that the appetite or *thumos* pursue, but the truly virtuous person still desires, for instance, eating healthy foods.

These features of non-philosophical virtue are supported by the following passages:

[Education in music is especially powerful...because omissions and the failure of beauty in things badly made or grown would be most quickly perceived by one who was properly educated in music, and so, feeling distaste rightly, he would praise beautiful things and take delight in them [ὁρθῶς δὴ δυσχεραίνων τὰ μὲν καλὰ ἐπαινοῖ καὶ χαίρων] and receive them into his soul to foster its growth and become himself beautiful and good. The ugly he would rightly disapprove of and hate while still young and yet unable to apprehend the reason [τὰ δὲ αἰσχρὰ ψέγοι τ᾽ ἄν ὀρθῶς καὶ μισοῖ ἑτερίως ὄν, πρὶν λόγον δυνατὸς εἶναι λαβεῖν], but when reason came to man thus nurtured would be the first to give her welcome, for by this affinity he would know her (Rep. 401d4-402a4).

I term, then, the virtue the first comes to children education. When pleasure and love, and pain and hatred, spring up rightly in the souls of those who are unable as yet to grasp a rational account [μήπω δυναμένων λόγῳ λαμβάνειν]; and when, after grasping the rational account, they consent thereunto though having been rightly trained in fitting practices;—this consent, viewed as a whole, is virtue, while the part of it that is rightly trained in respect of pleasures and pains, so as to hate what ought to be hated, right from the beginning up to the very end, and to love what ought to be loved [μισεῖν μὲν ἃ χρὴ μισεῖν εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς μέχρι τέλους, στέργειν δὲ ἃ χρὴ στέργειν],—if you were to mark this part off in your definition and call it παιδεία, you would be giving it, in my opinion, its right name (Laws 653b1-c4).

In both of these passages, education trains agents to “correctly hate” ugly things and “praise and take delight in” beautiful things (as put in the *Republic*) and to “hate what ought to be hated...and to love what ought to be loved” (*Laws*). Whether the ordinary virtue described in these passages requires cognitive improvement, for instance in the form of true or lawful beliefs, these passages describe ordinary virtue in terms of the improvement by training of non-philosophical desires, e.g. the sorts that enjoy music and ordinary pleasures.
The passages also suggest the role of ordinary virtue's cultivation of NRM
in true or philosophical virtue. If virtue as described in the Laws passage involves
a reasoned understanding of why what one has been trained to loved and hated in
fact ought to be so loved and hated, the cultivated state of NRM is a constitutive
part of true or philosophical virtue. Similarly, since the philosophical class in the
Republic has undergone the very same education in music and gymnastic alongside
the class of auxiliaries that produces the ordinary virtue of the latter, presumably the
philosophers retain the cultivation of the lower soul parts effected by musical and
gymnastic education. Not only is ordinary virtue at least partially retained in the
souls of philosophers, but it appears from the last line of Republic passage that the
cultivation of an agent's NRM somehow assists in the acquisition of philosophical
virtue.

I take it that the two features of ordinary virtue I have just described are
implicit in much scholarship on Plato's ethics.Christopher Rowe has claimed
that ordinary virtue in the Republic involves “a set of correct habits married to a
set of corresponding beliefs” and differs from true virtue chiefly by lack of ethical
knowledge. This appears to be a broadly held view, echoing Terrance Irwin's claims
that the Republic's auxiliaries “have the right sort of elementary moral education, but
lack knowledge” and that philosophical virtue requires support “by the right non-
cognitive training” (1995, 234, 236–7). The foregoing account also appears implicit
in Eric Brown's claim in discussing the Republic that “the special motivations of
philosophers, acquired during the second state of their education (Book Seven), do
not generally replace their pre-philosophical motivations, acquired during the first
stage [of their education] (Books Two and Three)” (2004, 286). Finally, the account
may be tacitly acknowledged by Aristotle who, observing that virtue is concerned
with pleasures and pains, acknowledges “the importance, as Plato points out, of
having been definitely trained from childhood to like and dislike the proper things”
(NE ii.3.2).

III. Ordinary Virtue in the Phaedo

Now, let us return to the Phaedo. Non-philosophical virtue is briefly described
as “political and demotic” virtue (henceforth, DV) as Socrates discusses the
eschatological fates of non-philosophers at Phaedo 81d9-82c1. Since some commentators (e.g. Vasiliou 2012) deny that demotic virtue is identical to or a kind of the “slavish” virtue described at 69b, and since we can learn a lot about demotic virtue from 81b-c, I have chosen to offer little discussion of slavish virtue in this paper.
And they wander about until through the desire of the corporeal accompanying them they are again imprisoned in a body. And they are likely to be imprisoned in the same sort of natures that they happened to have practiced in life […] I mean, for example, that those who have practiced in gluttony and violence and drunkenness and have taken no pains to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other beasts of that sort […] And those who have preferred (προτετιμηκότας) injustice and tyranny and robbery pass into the bodies of wolves and hawks and kites […] Then, the happiest of those, and those who go to the best place, are those who have practiced, the social and civil virtues, which they call moderation and justice, arising from habit and practice without philosophy or understanding? […] Is it not likely that they pass again into some such social and gentle species as that of bees or of wasps or ants, or even into the same human race again, and that measured men spring from them? […] And no one who has not been a philosopher and who is not wholly pure when he departs, is allowed to enter into the communion of the gods, but only the lover of knowledge (81d9-82c1).

The fact that possessors of DV are reincarnated into the bodies of bees, wasps, ants, or measured men is explained by their behavior: they refrain from engaging in gluttony, violence, drunkenness, injustice, tyranny, and robbery. But why is this the case? What motivates DV people to perform conventionally virtuous action and avoid conventionally vicious?

Broadly, there can be only two explanations. It is well appreciated that the Phaedo bifurcates an agent’s motivation into two kinds. These kinds of motivations are distinguished by their origin. In the Phaedo, NRMs are those that arise either from the body or due to the influence of the body upon the soul. These seek corporeal goods: pleasures, the avoidance of pains, honor, and what facilitates these goods. Rational desires, by contrast, arise from the soul’s reason and seek non-sensible goods, such as knowledge. If in the Phaedo agents with DV are motivated to

10 καὶ μέχρι γε τοῦτον πλανῶνται, ἕως ἂν τῇ τοῦ συνεπακολουθοῦντος, τοῦ σωματειοδούς, ἐπιθυμία πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα· ἐνδοῦνται δὲ, ὡσπερ εἰκός, εἰς τοιοῦτα ἢ ὅτι ἄττ’ ἂν καὶ μεμελετηκυῖαι τύχωσιν ἐν τῷ βίῳ […] Οἷον τοὺς μὲν γαστριμαργίας τε καὶ ὑβρεῖς καὶ φιλοσοφίας μεμελετηκότας καὶ μὴ διηυλαβημένους εἰς τὰ τῶν ὄνων γένη καὶ τῶν τοιοῦτων θηρίων εἰκός ἐνδύεσθαι […] Τοὺς δὲ γε ἀδίκιας τε καὶ τυραννίδας καὶ ἁρπαγὰς προτετιμηκότας εἰς τὰ τῶν λύκων τε καὶ ιεράκων καὶ ικτίνων γένη […] Οὕκοιν, ἤ δ’ ὅς, δήλα δὴ καὶ τάλλα ἢ ἂν ἐκεῖστα ἢι κατὰ τὰς αὐτῶν ὁμοιότητας τῆς μελέτης; […] Οὕκοιν εὐδαιμονέστατοι, ἐφ’ ὡς, καὶ τούτων εἰσὶ καὶ εἰς βέλτιστον τόπον ἰόντες οἱ τὴν δημοτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπετειθενοῦσετε, ἢν δὴ καλούσι σωφροσύνην τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην, εἴς ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονοῦν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ; […] Ὄτι τούτως εἰκός ἂς ἔστιν εἰς τοιοῦτον πάλιν ἀφικνεῖσθαι πολιτικὸν καὶ ἤμερον γένος, ἢ που μελετῶν καὶ σφηκῶν ἢ μυρμήκων, καὶ εἰς ταύτῃν γε πάλιν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος, καὶ γίγνεσθαι εἴς αὐτῶν ἀνδράς μετρίους […] Εἰς δὲ γε τ’ ἐθέους γένος μὴ φιλοσοφήσατι καὶ παντελῶς καθαρφ ἀπόντων οὐ θέμις ἀφικνεῖσθαι ἀλλ’ ἢ τῷ φιλομαθεῖ. 11 It is broadly accepted that possessors of non-philosophical virtue typically perform actions that are conventionally virtuous. See Irwin (1979, 322, n. 50; 1995, 194), Bobonich (2007, 156), whose remarks are restricted to Kallipolis’ auxiliaries, Kraut (2010, 54), Vasiliou (2012, 13), and, with some hesitation, Rowe (2013, 53). Conventionally virtuous actions are not necessarily truly virtuous actions. 12 Some commentators hold that the body itself is the ultimate subject of NRMs in the Phaedo. See, Irwin (1989, 235, n 27), Price (1995, 36 ff.), Bobonich (2002, 28), Boys-Stones (2004, 4), Lorenz (2006, 37), and Bailly (2011, 290–6). For alternative accounts, see Bobstock (1986, 26–7) and Beere (2011, 261 ff.).
perform conventionally virtuous actions, they must be motivated either by rational or non-rational motivations.

Two recent accounts of DV in *Phaedo*, Richard Kraut (2010) and Iakonos Vasiliou (2012), hold that possessors of DV are motivated to perform conventionally virtuous action for itself and not only for its consequences. It is important to consider these accounts because, although neither Kraut nor Vasiliou consider what kind of desire motivates DV people to virtuous activity, this feature of their accounts suggests that the conventionally good behavior of DV people should be explained by the strength of rational desires.

Vasiliou has argued that the soul possessing DV “may lack philosophy and understanding of what he does, [but],...is, nevertheless, aiming at virtue” (2012, 13). By “aiming at virtue,” Vasiliou appears to mean that, although a possessor of DV may or may not possess true beliefs about what is actually the virtuous thing to do (*ibid.*), the agent:

Vasiliou's DV lacks wisdom, but (i) intends to do virtuous actions she conceives of as virtuous (ii) because she conceives of these actions as virtuous.13

Unlike Vasiliou, Kraut thinks that “most people” have DV (2010, 56). On Kraut's account, even though non-philosophical people value virtue only for its material consequences, as Socrates appears to claim within 68b8-69c3, the difference between most ordinary people and “the very bad” is that ordinary people have contradictory beliefs about the value of virtue (*id.*, 54). While most people “think” and would “say, with complete sincerity,” that virtue is valuable only for its consequences, they also “at the same time” have beliefs and emotions that are inconsistent with this belief to the effect that virtue and virtuous action are valuable in itself and not only for its consequences.14 Kraut takes the fact that ordinary people possess some true beliefs about the value of virtue, even though they consciously deny them, to explain why “their behavior conforms to minimal moral standards [...] they refrain from murder, rape, incest, theft, and so on” (2010, 54). In sum, on Kraut's account, a possessor of DV:

Kraut's DV lacks wisdom, but (i) possesses some true beliefs about the value

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13 “While the person with popular and political virtue may lack philosophy and understanding of what he does, he is, nevertheless, aiming at virtue. He intends to do the virtuous thing and conceives of his actions as virtuous” (2012, 13). “As a working hypothesis, then, the person of habituated virtue aims at doing the virtuous action and conceives of himself as doing what is virtuous because it is virtuous” (*ibid.*). “[T] he person with habituated virtue aims at doing the right thing and conceives of what she does as virtuous, but she lacks the knowledge and understanding that would ensure that what she actually does is the virtuous action. Ordinary people with slavish virtue exchange pleasures and pains without wisdom, but in addition they are aiming at avoiding the most pain, not at identifying the independent, objectively right or virtuous action” (*id.*, 19).

14 “Someone may consciously think of the virtues as valuable because of their instrumental benefits. If asked, he may say, with complete sincerity, that they are valuable only for this reason. But it is possible, even likely, that at the same time there are beliefs and emotions within him that cannot be reconciled with that conviction. My proposal, then, is that this is how Plato thinks of ordinary people” (*id.*, 55). “They have some true opinions about what is valuable, and these are not just lucky guesses, because they inhere in their souls through its earlier contact with the forms” (*id.*, 56).
of virtue, (ii) even though she (contradictorily) believes virtue is only valuable for its consequences, and (iii) because of her true beliefs about the value of virtue her behavior conforms to minimal moral standards.

Notice that both the accounts of DV by Vasiliou and Kraut require that

Joint Commitment: agents with DV perform conventionally virtuous action for its own sake and not only for its consequences.

This is quite clear from Vasiliou's account, since he claims a DV agent intends to perform actions she conceives of as virtuous simply because she conceives them to be virtuous. On Kraut's account, DV agents perform virtuous actions because the agent believes the performance of virtuous action is a good independent of its consequences.

Let us consider Kraut and Vasiliou's joint commitment in light of the passages preceding 81d9-82c1, which explain why a non-philosophical soul fails to separate cleanly from the body upon death. Since this is an explanation of why all non-philosophical souls are reincarnated after death, claims made in this passage must be true of possessors of DV.

But, I think, if when [the non-philosophical soul] departs from the body it is defiled and impure, because it was always with the body and cared for it and loved it and was fascinated by it and its desires and pleasures, so that it thought nothing was true [or, real] except the corporeal, which one can touch and see and drink and eat and use for sexual pleasures, and if it is accustomed to hate and fear and avoid that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes but is intelligible and tangible to philosophy—do you think a soul in this condition will depart pure and uncontaminated? [...] But it will be interpenetrated, I suppose, with the corporeal which intercourse and communion with the body have made a part of its nature because the body has been its constant companion and the object of much care? (81b1-c6).

The passage above distinguishes two different kinds of objects. One class, corporeal goods, is described as the things “which one can touch and see and drink and eat and use for sexual pleasures” (81b5-6). The other, intelligible goods, is described as “that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes but is intelligible and tangible to philosophy” (81b6-8). Socrates gives no indication in this passage that this division of goods is not exhaustive. This passage supports two claims about possessors of DV. Socrates claims that due to non-philosophers' exclusive interest in corporeal goods they “thought nothing was true [or, real] except the corporeal.” This means, at least, that

Belief condition: non-philosophers do not believe non-corporeal entities to be

15Ἐὰν δὲ γε οἶμαι μεμιασμένη καὶ ἀκάθαρτος τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλάττηται, ὅτε τῷ σώματι αἱ συνουσία καὶ τοῦτο θεραπεύουσα καὶ ἔρωσα καὶ γοητευμένη ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ ἤδονῶν, ὥστε μηδὲν ἄλλο δοκεῖν εἶναι ἄληθες ἀλλ’ ἢ τὸ σωματοειδὲς, οὗ τὶς ἄν ἀγαίναι καὶ ἱδοι καὶ ποιησαν καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἀφροδισία χρήσατο, τὸ δὲ τοῖς δημασικῶν καὶ ἄωδες, νοθέντο καὶ φιλοσοφία αἴρετρον, τοῦτο δὲ εἰθησάμενη μισεῖν τε καὶ τρέμειν καὶ φεύγειν, οὕτω δὲ ἔχουσαν οἶει ψυχὴν αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν εἰλικρινὴν ἀπαλλάξεσθαι; [...] Αλλὰ [καὶ] διειλημμένην γε οἶμαι ὑπὸ τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς, ὅ ἀυτὴ ἡ ὀμιλία τε καὶ συνουσία τοῦ σώματος διὰ τό ἄει συνεῖναι καὶ διὰ τήν πολλήν μελέτην ἑνεποίησε σύμφυτον;
good.\textsuperscript{16}

Second, non-philosophers are “fascinated by [the body] and its desires and pleasures” but “hate and fear and avoid that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes”. In other words,

Desire condition: non-philosophers are exclusively motivated by desires for corporeal goods, i.e. bodily pleasures and the things that produce them.\textsuperscript{17}

These conditions make Kraut and Vasiliou’s joint commitment difficult to maintain. To begin with, joint commitment appears to require a belief in the value of performing virtuous action (aside from its consequences). We have seen this is explicit in Kraut’s account. But, given belief condition, how should we understand this? Clearly DV agents cannot believe that virtue or the property that makes an action virtuous is an intelligible good. What if virtue or the virtuous-making property were a sensible thing? If this were the case, virtue would be valued either because it facilitated the acquisition of corporeal goods or if it were itself a corporeal good. The former option is probably tempting to someone like Cephalus, who thinks virtue is paying back one’s debts and that it is valuable because it ensures safety in one’s afterlife. But joint commitment requires doing conventionally virtuous action for its own sake, and not for its consequence. So, there is pressure on proponents of joint commitment to take virtue and the property that makes actions virtuous itself as a corporeal good, i.e. as something that is itself a pleasure of the body. But it is hard to make any sense of this idea.

The same problems emerge when we try to conjoin joint commitment with the desire condition. If Kraut and Vasiliou require that DV agents perform virtuous action for its own sake, and not for its consequences, what kind of desire motivates DV agents to virtuous action? It cannot be a rational desire, if desire condition is true. So DV agents are motivated by NRMs. Such an agent might adopt a policy of doing virtuous actions because they tend to promote corporeal goods. But recall the desire cannot be for the effects of virtuous action, but for virtuous action itself—at least if, as Vasiliou requires, DV agents are to “non-accidentally do the virtuous action” (2012, 19).\textsuperscript{18} Since NRMs are for corporeal goods (or what facilitates them), joint commitment is pushed also by desire condition to spell out virtuous action as itself a bodily good. But, we have seen, it is hard to make sense of this idea.

For these reasons, the accounts of DV by Vasiliou and Kraut do not fit the

\textsuperscript{16} Socrates might be read to claim that non-philosophers do not believe in the existence of intelligibles and yet also that non-philosophers are “accustomed (εἰθισμένη) to hate and fear and avoid” intelligibles. It is not clear exactly whether these are consistent claims. Socrates’ remarks are consistent, however, if we take him to say that non-philosophers (a) do not believe that intelligible goods exist (i.e. that no intelligibles exist that are good) and (b) that they fear and avoid intelligibles (which makes sense in light of their belief that they cannot be good).

\textsuperscript{17} Additional support for this claim can be found in 68b-69e. For additional discussion, see Bobonich (2002, 17), who argues that all possessors of demotic virtue pursue as their ultimate end some balance of corporeal goods, and Sedley (2013, 82–84).

\textsuperscript{18} An agent who was motivated only by bodily pleasures and the things that produce them might do virtuous action out of some kind of habit. But this is not the same as performing virtuous actions “intentionally” and “[conceiving] of himself as doing what is virtuous because it is virtuous” (on Vasiliou’s account) or acting on the basis of a belief that virtuous action is good in itself (on Kraut’s account).
text. But we have also shown that for DV agents conventionally virtuous action cannot be motivated by a desire for virtue itself (apart from its consequences). And this kind of account is the best candidate for an analysis of DV in terms of rational desire. It appears, instead, that we should understand DV as motivating agents to conventionally virtuous activities through NRMs. Of course, although all non-philosophers have NRMs, some non-philosophers do not perform conventionally virtuous activities. This makes sense, because we have seen that DV arises “from habit and practice” (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονυῖαν 82b2). Hence, the DV agent in the *Phaedo* has NRMs cultivated in a certain arrangement that explains why DV agents perform conventionally virtuous actions and other people do not.\footnote{There are additional problems with each account. To begin with Kraut’s account, (i) there is no evidence that most people (the majority of non-philosophers) possess the belief that virtue is valuable for itself; however, there is considerable textual evidence that all non-philosophers believe virtue is valuable (if at all) only for its consequences. Further, (ii) without more to the story, it is hard to see how the possession of contradictory beliefs about the value of virtue and virtuous action can reliably explain why DV agents “refrain from murder, rape, incest, theft, and so on” (2010, 54). Finally, (iii) Kraut’s claim that DV agents believe that virtue is good itself, independently of its consequences, stands in tension with Socrates’s claim that non-philosophers “accustomed to hate and fear and avoid that which is shadowy and invisible to the eyes but is intelligible and tangible to philosophy” (81b6-c1). Perhaps these claims could be reconciled if virtue and virtuous action just were corporeal goods, but it is hard to make much sense of this. Vasiliiou claims that DV agents intend to perform virtuous actions because they conceive of these actions as virtuous. (i) There is no evidence for this claim in the *Phaedo*. Moreover, (ii) the claim that DV agents perform virtuous actions intentionally and for reasons stands in some tension with Vasiliiou’s observation that DV agents are “habituated to act in certain ways called “virtuous”” (2012, 13), which is supported by Socrates’ description of demotic virtue as arising from habit and practice without philosophy and understanding (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονυῖαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ 82b2).}

IV. Philosophical Virtue and the Non-Rational in *Phaedo*

We have seen that DV in the *Phaedo* requires one of the two features we would expect ordinary virtue to have: it involves the cultivation of NRMs. I argue in this section that, surprisingly, the *Phaedo* lacks the other expected feature of ordinary

\footnote{See Bobonich (2002, 23–31) for a discussion different ways the NRMs of DV agents may be cultivated to produce (conventionally) virtuous action. Rowe also appears committed to the claim that DV involves NRMs that motivate conventionally virtuous action (2013, 53). Even if part of the explanation of the good behavior of DV agents involved the possession of certain beliefs, DV still must involve a cultivated state of NRMs, since the beliefs must direct NRMs towards objects appropriate for DV in order to explain action and this direction of NRMs just is their cultivation. We have some reason to doubt that special beliefs play a large role in DV in the *Phaedo*. The only text that explicitly describes demotic virtue claims that it “arises from habit and practice without philosophy and understanding” (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονυῖαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ 82b2), which does not at any rate obviously require cognitive improvement. Moreover, the same text seems to require that ants, wasps, and bees (not know for their cognitive prowess) practice or possess the same kind of ὑθος as possessors of demotic virtue practice or possess.}
Let us begin by considering a passage in which Socrates explains how philosophers ought to care for their souls, 82d-84b. The main argument of this lengthy passage is that philosophers ought as much as possible resist the body's influence on their own soul and their philosophizing, because it leads to ignorance. Socrates begins by claiming that when a soul first becomes possessed of philosophy, it is imprisoned by the body such that it “wallow in ignorance” (82e4-5). He claims that “the most dreadful thing about the imprisonment is the fact that it is caused by the desires [δι᾽ ἐπιθυμίας], so that the prisoner is the chief assistant in his own imprisonment” (82e5-7). That emphasis on desires is initially surprising, since the first half of the argument focuses primarily on the impact that mere sense perception has on philosophy. But then Socrates explains the influence desire has upon the philosophical soul.

Now the soul of the true philosopher […] abstains from pleasures and lusts and griefs and fears, so far as it can, considering that when anyone was pleased greatly or feared or grieved or desired he suffered from them not merely what one might think—for example, illness or loss of money spent for his lists—but he suffers the greatest and most extreme evil and does not take it into account […] The evil is that the soul of every man, when it is greatly pleased or pained by anything, is compelled to believe that the object which caused the emotion is most distinct and most true; but it is not. These objects are mostly the visible ones, are they not? […] And when this occurs, is not the soul most completely put in bondage by the body? […] Because each pleasure or pain nails it as with a nail to the body and rivets it on makes it corporeal, so that it fancies the things are true which the body says are true. For because it has the same beliefs and pleasures as the body it is compelled to adopt also the same habits and mode of life, and can never depart in purity to the other world, but must always go way contaminated with the body; and so it sinks quickly into another body and grows into it, like seed that is sown […] This, Cebes, is the reason why the true lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave; not that for the sake of which the many are […] No, for the soul of the philosopher would not reason as others do, and would not think it right that philosophy should set it free, and that then when set free it should give itself again into bondage to pleasure and pain and engage in futile toil, like Penelope unweaving the web she wove. No, his soul believes that it must gain peace from these emotions, must follow reason and abide always in it, beholding that which is true and divine and not a matter of opinion, and making that its only food […] (82e1-84a7).

In this passage, Socrates claims that bodily pleasures, desires, and emotions ought to be resisted, because these produce “the greatest evil” for the soul: the belief that corporeal things are true at the expense of intellectual things. It is important to notice that the cause of the “greatest evil” is not just described as feeling great pleasure or pain, but also in terms of greatly fearing, grieving, and desiring (83b6-7).

21 In this paper, I set aside the issue (explored e.g. by Vasiliou (2012, 21)) of whether the philosophical virtue described in the Phaedo is the same as or precedes true or complete virtue. Even if philosophical virtue were a preliminary stage of virtue, for philosophers without the full possession of knowledge, the worries I describe in the final section of this paper will apply, since it would be very strange if DV were abandoned by the philosophically virtuous and then cultivated anew upon the acquisition of knowledge. In any case, DV would not then be continuous with true virtue, as I claim it appears to be in Republic.

22 Although the manuscripts disagree on whether to include καὶ φόβων at b7 (which
We can make sense of Socrates’s initial claim that a soul’s imprisonment is caused by desires [δι᾽ ἐπιθυμίας] (82e6) by considering that each of the pathê he mentions in this passage involves desire in some way: pleasure and pain are the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of desire, fear and grief also involve an unsatisfied desire conjoined with certain beliefs about the possibility of satisfaction. Finally, it is important to note that the kinds of desires said to cause the “greatest evil” are those that arise on account of the body: NRM.

Given the harm NRM cause to the philosophical soul, Socrates claims that true philosophers abstain from and resist all NRM.23 Earlier in the dialogue, Socrates claimed that each of the true virtues are a kind of katharsis or purification of the soul:

[C]ourage and moderation and justice and, in short, true virtue exist only with wisdom, whether pleasures and fears and other things of that sort are added or taken away. And virtue which consists in the exchange of such things for each other without wisdom, is but a painted imitation of virtue and is really slavish and has nothing healthy or true in it; but truth is in fact a purification from all these things, and moderation and justice and courage and wisdom itself are a kind of purification (69b2-c3).

Specifically, each of the true virtues is described as a “purification from all of these things” (69c1), i.e. of “pleasures and fears and other things of that sort” (69b5). The same claim is expanded in the later passage. True moderation and bravery, Socrates explains, are ways of “set[ting] the soul free from pleasures and pains” in order to “gain peace from all of these things” (84a2-8). When a soul no longer has desires for bodily goods (i.e. pleasure and pain), it gains peace from all NRM and emotions. It appears from these passages that a philosopher ought to resist as much as possible all NRM by denying them satisfaction. Purification occurs when at last the philosopher is free from pleasure and pain because he or she no longer has desires for them at all: all NRM are destroyed or maximally weakened them.

The surprising upshot of this passage is that in the best possible human psychological state non-rational affections are neither cultivated nor trained: they are destroyed or at least maximally incapacitated. Thus, the cultivated state of NRM achieved by someone with DV does not survive in a soul that has become truly philosophical. In fact, true virtue involves the purification of the soul from the very kinds of motivations that partially constitute DV. It appears that in the best kinds of souls in Phaedo there simply does not exist a valuable cultivated state of NRM.

V. The Discontinuity between Ordinary and True Virtue

What explains this radical discontinuity between philosophical and non-
philosophical virtue in the *Phaedo*? Notice, to begin with, that it is not enough to say that the *Phaedo* has a different conception of philosophical virtue (say, a "Socratic account") than certain other dialogues, because we can still ask what is it about the possessor of philosophical virtue in the *Phaedo* that rules out a cultivated state of NRMs? The answer appears to be Socrates's commitment to the idea that,

Greatest evil: the experience of all NRMs and their pleasures leads the soul to believe falsely that sensible things, being objects of NRMs, are “most distinct and most true” (83c7-8).

I shall conclude by considering several problems with greatest evil and considering one reason Plato might have some reason to reject the thesis.

Greatest evil is in many ways a puzzling claim. To begin with, it is not exactly clear on what grounds it would be true. It is one thing to claim that pleasure and desire can influence our beliefs about what is choice-worthy or desirable. But, how does the presence or experience of bodily desire or pleasure distort beliefs about the relative reality of the object? A second worry concerns exactly why the greatest evil is so evil. Since the greatest evil involves the belief that sensible things (the objects of NRMs) are “most distinct and most true,” clearly it is at odds with the belief that intelligibles are more real than sensibles and, presumably for this reason, it is also at odds with the belief that intelligibles are somehow the cause of sensibles. But how do beliefs about reality and distinctness interact with other beliefs and motivations to produce vicious action?

Setting aside these worries, accepting greatest evil and concluding, with Socrates, that philosophers ought to resist all NRMs and their pleasures as much as possible, also pushes us to accept an awkward account of virtuous agency. One of the strengths of including the cultivation of NRMs in one’s account of virtue is that virtuous agents need not rely on rational motivation to explain right action in all cases. When faced with, e.g., the choice between peas and carrots of dinner, determining the right decision can be safely left to the (appropriately cultivated) appetite. Yet greatest evil suggests that all right action must be motivated by rational motivations, tracking objects determined by rational evaluation, instead of NRMs. There are a number of problems with this idea. First, it suggests that a virtuous agent must engage in rational deliberation to perform the right action in each new case. Second, there are well known problems about how Platonic reason (especially, as it grasps Forms) can inform particular judgments about sensibles. Finally, the need for reason to have so much concern with the material world threatens to distract it from its proper work philosophizing.

Does Plato have any extrinsic reasons for rejecting greatest evil? What follows is, clearly, only a suggestion, but it offers some insight into how the celebrated introduction of the psychology of *Republic* IV may have contributed to a later continuity between non-philosophical and true virtue.

We have seen that the *Phaedo* recognizes two different kinds of motivation: the

24 This question becomes more problematic when we consider what appears to be Socrates’s explanation for the badness of the greatest bad: that “from agreement with the body, [the soul] is forced to be pleased by the same things and to become of the same manner and nurture [as the body]” [ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ ὁμοδοξεῖν τῷ σώματι καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς χαίρειν ἀναγκάζεται οἴμαι ὁμότροπος τε καὶ ὁμότροφος γίγνεσθαι] (83d7-9). We need an account that explains why this explanation is not circular in claiming, apparently, that having similar desires leads to similar beliefs which in turn causes similar desires.
rational motivation of the soul alone, and the non-rational motivation of either the body alone or of the soul as influenced by the body. Although most commentators agree that the body is the subject of desires in the *Phaedo*, there is far less support for the claim that the body is also the subject of beliefs. In order to explain how NRMs can produce action and certain non-rational emotions, Plato needs these desires to interact with appropriate beliefs. But perhaps he thinks that NRMs draw their cognitive content from a unitary soul that, occasionally beguiled by the needs of the body, turns the body’s desires into action. If the (rational) soul must supply cognitive content for NRMs when it is confused to adopt and execute them, one can begin to see how the experience of NRMs can lead the rational soul to adopt false beliefs, as greatest evil requires.

One of the apparent developments of *Republic IV* is the analysis of the soul into three parts (one rational, and two non-rational). No longer are NRMs explained primarily with reference to the body. NRMs are instead affections of a part of the soul that is capable of possessing its own motivations and beliefs. Each of the three soul parts are still capable of changing one another’s beliefs by what seems like persuasion, but the lower-soul parts needs not borrow cognitive content from the rational part in order to specify each and every NRM. Eliminating the need for NRMs to borrow cognitive content from reason denies NRMs an opportunity to corrupt the beliefs of the rational part. If this suggestion is correct, we can begin to see how developments in Plato’s psychology can explain why a truly virtuous soul can retain pre-philosophical cultivation of NRMs.

Resumen

Ha ido creciendo el interés acerca de los comentarios sobre la ética y la política de Platón en las formas de virtud accesibles por no filósofos. Este tipo de...

25 See n. 12, above. Price does claim that “the living body (that is, body possessing a soul) is subject both of sensations and of desires and beliefs” (1995, 35–36). Bailly, discussing what appears to be the best evidence for ascribing beliefs to the body (83c-d), claims “that the body says things that are true or real…seems to imply that it has beliefs” and concludes that “[w]hile a metaphorical reading is possible, more is needed to think it is plausible or necessary” (2011, 293). Bobonich reasons that “[i]f the body is the proper subject and origin of…desires and passions, it must have the cognitive resources for…forming beliefs and desires and these resources include sense-perception”, but denies that the body’s resources “include any state or capacity that involves a grasp of non-sensible items” (2002, 28). Thus even if the body is capable of possessing beliefs about “sensible things and properties,” Bobonich need not claim the body is capable of possessing (even false) beliefs that ascribe value or reality to sensible things. Irwin only claims Plato attributes “irrational desires and sense-impressions” to the body (1989, 235, n. 27). Lorenz (2006, 37) and Boys-Stones (2004, 4) only ascribe certain desires to the body.

26 As Boys-Stones puts it, “[t]he idea seems to be that, once animated by the directive presence of reason, the needs and the satisfactions of the body assert themselves as appropriate objects of reason’s care. In many cases, reason (brought to forgetfulness of its proper, divine sphere at the moment of incarnation) actually goes so far as to identify its own interest with those of the body” (2004, 4).

27 En mi conocimiento, el primer esfuerzo moderno para dar sentido a varios reclamos de Platón acerca de la virtud no filosófica es el primer apéndice del comentario de Archer-Hind sobre *Fedón* (1894), *Fedón de Platón*. Londres: Macmillan, p. 149-155. Una literatura creciente sobre la virtud no filosófica en Platón ha emergido

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virtud es descrita en Fedón 82a-b como virtud “demótica y política”. Mientras está suficientemente claro de este pasaje que las virtudes no filosóficas no son el ejercicio de ninguna capacidad intelectual,28 no está tan claro lo que son precisamente. En este trabajo, argumento que la subscripción peculiar ética filosófica de la descripción del filósofo en Fedón 82d-84b se encuentra en tensión con una explicación plausible de la virtud no filosófica desarrollada desde los pasajes centrales de la República y las Leyes. 

En el curso de la discusión, también doy razones para rechazar dos explicaciones recientes de virtud no filosófica en Fedón.

Inicio identificando dos características de explicación Platónica plausibles de virtud no filosófica desarrolladas desde los pasajes centrales de la República y las Leyes. La primera virtud no filosófica centralmente involucra un estado cultivado con motivaciones no racionales (de ahora en adelante, NRMs) y emociones. Las NRMs se convierten en “cultivadas” cuando la fuerza motivacional de un agente NRMs se enfoca sobre buenos objetos. Segundo, el estado cultivado de NRMs involucrado en una virtud ordinaria es retenida se conserva en gran medida en un alma verdadera o filosóficamente virtuosa. Argumento que estas características de virtudes no filosóficas son implícitas en algunas becas modernas sobre la ética media y final de Platón.

Luego considera cómo la explicación familiar de la virtud no filosófica aparece en Fedón. Como la explicación desarrollada en la sección anterior, la virtud no filosófica en el Fedón centralmente involucra el cultivo de NRMs. Como argumento por este reclamo, encuentro razones para rechazar las explicaciones más recientes de la virtud no filosófica en el Fedón, Kraut (2010) y Vasiliev (2012), ya que estos requieren que los poseedores de virtud no filosófica están motivados a realizar acciones virtuosas convencionalmente para ellos mismos y no sólo por sus consecuencias. Un rompecabezas emerge, sin embargo, cuando consideramos si la segunda característica que esperamos desde una explicación de virtud no filosófica es verdadera en el Fedón: En la descripción del filósofo en el Fedón 82d-84b, Sócrates reclama los filósofos verdaderos buscan destruir o incapacitar al máximo todas las motivaciones y emociones no racionales. Esto significa que los estados cultivos de NRMs involucrados en la virtud no filosófica no apoyan el desarrollo de la virtud verdadera en el Fedón y no sobrevive en un alma que se ha convertido en verdaderamente virtuosa. ¿Por qué, entonces, es la virtud no filosófica tan radicalmente discontinua desde la virtud verdadera en el Fedón, en dónde aparecen que apoyan y retenida por la verdadera virtud en diálogos posteriores?

Argumento que la explicación puede ser encontrada en el compromiso de Sócrates que reclama que todos los NRMs confunden el alma, haciéndola pensar que las cosas corporales son más reales que las cosas inteligibles. En la última sección, considero algunos cambios en este reclamo. Concluyo sugiriendo que los cambios subsecuentes en la sicología de Platón pueden explicar por qué la virtud no filosófica es radicalmente discontinua con la virtud verdadera en el Fedón, pero apoyada de la virtud filosófica en diálogos posteriores.

especialmente luego del estudio de Kamtekar sobre la virtud no filosófica de auxiliares en (1998) “Imperfect Virtue” Ancient Philosophy 18 (2). Por virtud no filosófica, quiero decir cualquier virtud accesible por las personas que no se encuentran motivadas principalmente por la sabiduría ni poseen conocimientos éticos.

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Deuteros Plous

Ferber, Rafael

As we all know, Plato’s Socrates uses the term “deuteros plous” (Phd.99c9-d1) in connection with his intellectual autobiography. His intellectual life did lead him away from the “study of nature” (physeôs historia) (Phd. 96ba) to look at “the truth of things” (alêteia tôn onton) in the logos (Phd.99e4). The study of nature in an immediate way, that is, by our sense organs, may be called the “first” (prôtos) or “earlier voyage” (proteros plous), whereas the “flight into the logos” may be called the “second voyage” (deuteros plous) (Phd. 99d1). The decisive passage runs as follows:

“So I thought I must take refuge in the logos and investigate the truth of things in them.

However, perhaps this analogy is inadequate;

for I certainly do not admit that one who investigates things by means of logos is dealing with images any more than one who looks at facts” (Phd.99e4-100a3. Transl. Grube with small modification by R.F.).

First, (I) I will give an interpretation of this passage, and then (II) I will proceed to the philosophical problem that this passage implies. (III) I will apply the philosophical problem to the final proof of immortality and draw an analogy to the ontological argument for the existence of God, as proposed by Descartes in his 5. Meditation.

The expression “deuteros plous” is a metaphor whose correct meaning had already been indicated by Eustathios from Thessaloniki (about 1110 to about 1195) by referring to Pausanias (2nd century): “deuteros plous” indicates “the next best way”, that is, the way of those who try another method if the first fails, that is, those who “try oars when the wind fails after Pausanias”. There has been some dispute

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about whether this is the correct meaning or whether the metaphor is not used in
an ironic way;2 but after the exhaustive study of Stefano M. Tempesta, there can be
little doubt that its meaning is that of second best voyage. The best, or at least better,
voyage would be the method of direct vision, as travelling with sails is better than
moving forward with oars. The main advantage of the direct method is that one
reaches the destination faster:

[S₂] says that this second best voyage is a flight from direct perception or
vision to the indirect method of the use of logoi. On the sense of the expression
“logoi”, there has been also some dispute.3 I hope to resume the discussion fairly
if I maintain that the expression “logos” has to be understood in a broad way that
implies not only “hypothesis”, but also “argument”. Ch. Rowe translates this meaning
as “reasoned account”. Refuge in the logoi means refuge into “reasoned accounts” or
perhaps simply theories. Therefore, we can translate the intended meaning of S₂; “So
thought I must take refuge into theories and investigate the truth of things in them”.

[S₃] makes an interesting addition and qualification: It declares the flight into
theories to be an image and qualifies the image as being in some sense not as exact.
What is not exact about this image? To see reality through an image suggests an
indirect access to reality, which shows the reality not as it is itself, but only as it is
for us.

But [S₃] makes the astonishing claim that the indirect way of arguments is
nevertheless not inferior to the direct way, that is: the way through a medium, like
an image, gets us to reality itself, as does the direct way by vision.

Now the question arises: How is it possible that the indirect way of arguments
is on equal footing with the direct way of seeing, that is: to \( \text{skopein en logos ta onta} \) is
on equal footing with \( \text{to skopein ta onta} \)?

This problem is analogous to the problem that was called by Gregory Vlastos
“The problem of the elenchos”;4 for all the “reasoned accounts” or theories can do is
to arrive at consistency. Nevertheless, we can ask the question which remains open:
Logoi may be consistent, but are they also true in the sense of corresponding to
reality? In fact, we find in Plato not only consistency as the criterion of truth, but also
correspondence (Cf. Crat. 385b5-8, Sph. 263B3-7). Therefore, [S₃] seems to indicate
that coherence is no lesser a way to truth than correspondence is. Metaphorically

the expression “deuteros plous” is used in a proverbial way.

2 Cf. Burnet, J. Plato's Phaedo, 1911, 99, ad locum: “In any case, Socrates does not
believe for a moment that the method he is about to describe is a \( \text{pis aller} \) or ‘ma-
keshift’ “.

3 Cf. esp. the papers of Gaye, R.K., Note on Plato, Phaedo, 99d, CR 15, 1901, 249;
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Monist, 50, 1966, 464473; Blank, D., Socrates' instruction to Cebes: Plato, “Phaedo“

1999, 36-63 [= Vlastos, 1999].
speaking, the second sailing is no lesser a method to arrive at the aim, that is, “the truth of things”, than is the first; or the rowing boat is no lesser a vehicle to get to the truth than the sailing boat. This is quite a an astonishing claim. The question was aptly formulated by Donald Davidson:

“But there is not much comfort in mere consistency. Given that it is almost certainly the case that some of our beliefs are false (though we know not which), making our beliefs consistent with one another may as easily reduce as increase our store of knowledge.”

In fact: the flight into the logoi takes the risk that some of the logoi are false. Now the logos or hypothesis that the Platonic Socrates puts forward is the hypothesis of ideas:

“My aim is to try to show you the kind of reasons that engage me, and for that purpose I’m going to go back to those much-talked-about entities (polythrylêta) of ours – starting from them, and hypothesizing that there’s something that’s beautiful and nothing but beautiful, in and by itself, and similarly with good, big, and all the rest. If you grant me these, and agree that they exist, my hope is, starting from them, to show you the reason for things and establish that the soul is something immortal” (Phd.100b1-9. Transl. Rowe).

But how does Socrates know that this hypothesis, or logos, is not false? In fact, Plato’s first interpreter, Aristotle, would say that the polythrylêta – the Platonic ideas – are teterismata (An. post. A 22.83a33), that is twitter, and to speak of ideas as paradigms and participating is kenologein, idle talk (cf. Metaph. A.9.991.a21-22).

The answer of Plato in the “Meno” was: We have like the slave Meno hidden in us true opinions, because we are “fallen souls”, for ‘the truth of things’ is always in our soul” (Men.86b1). D. Davidson thus writes correctly in the article “Plato’s Philosopher”:

“[T]he assumption is that, in moral matters, everyone has true beliefs which he cannot abandon and which entail the negations of his false beliefs. It follows from this assumption that all the beliefs in a consistent set of beliefs are true, so a method like the elenchus which weeds out inconsistencies will in the end leave nothing standing but truths.”

In the same vein, Socrates could say: Everyone has hidden true beliefs about universals. The hypothesis of ideas will remain in the end of the day true, because an examination of this hypothesis by cross-examination would leave it in the end as the only viable option in the problem of universals. We arrive by the deuteros plous at the same result as through the prôtos plous, because in us are true opinions about the universals that cannot be shaken but must be made explicit by cross-examination. Metaphorically, we can give the answer in the following way: The rowing boat has in itself a sail, which can be hoisted, or by skopein en logos, we arrive at the skopein of tên alêtheian tôn ontôn. Or, to use another metaphor: Our soul is already a mirror of the truth but has to be purified by an examination of the logoi until it can see the truth. But there is of course a caveat: As long as our soul is in a body, we may come in the best case as near as possible or “very near “(engutata) (Phd.65e4.67a3) to the


6 Davidson, ibid.
truth but it remains at a “distance” caused by our corporality: “if it’s impossible to get pure knowledge of anything in the company of the body, then one or the other of two things must hold: either knowledge can’t be acquired, anywhere, or it can be, but only when we’re dead; because that’s when the soul will be alone by itself, apart from the body, and not until then” (Phd.66e). As I have shown elsewhere, this remains true for Plato until the digression in the 7th letter “because of the weakness of arguments” (dia to tòn logon asthenes)(Ep. VII.343a).7

III.

I arrive now at the question of how we can apply this to the proofs for the immortality of the soul. Since David Sedley has given already this morning an excellent reconstruction with translation of the final proof of immortality, I will rely on his reconstruction. I use his translation:

“'Well now, what do we call that which does not admit death?' 'Deathless/immortal [athanaton].'
‘Does soul not admit death?’
‘No.’
‘Then soul is something deathless/immortal?’ 'It is something deathless/immortal.’
‘Well now,’ said Socrates, 'are we to say that this has been proved? What do you think?’
‘Yes, and most sufficiently, Socrates’” (Transl. Sedley).

This argument has a certain affinity with the ontological argument used by Descartes in his 5. Meditation:

“[...] because I cannot conceive God unless as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from him, and therefore that he really exists: not that this is brought about by my thought, or that it imposes any necessity on things, but, on the contrary, the necessity which lies in the thing itself, that is, the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to think in this way: for it is not in my power to conceive a God without existence, that is, a being supremely perfect, and yet devoid of an absolute perfection, as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings” (5. Meditation, section 10. Transl. J. Veitch).

The analogy consists in the following: As the final argument for the existence of an immortal soul concludes from the meaning of the expression “soul” or “psychê” that a soul does not admit death, so too does the ontological argument conclude from the meaning of the word “God” as implying “existence” in the sense of a perfection that God also exists. Both try to prove the existence of something – in one case the existence of God and in the other case the existence of an immortal soul – by the method of a skopein en logos. By a skopein en logos, we are supposed to arrive at the alêtheia ton onton. Both propositions – “God exists” and “The soul is immortal” – are on the one hand analytic, and on the other hand, they give substantive information about the reality.

Of course, there remain doubts: doubts on the validity of the proof for the immortality of the soul and for the existence of God. I cannot open the whole battery of arguments for and against the ontological argument, or for and against the immortality of the soul. One question is: What do these arguments prove, the really

real or only semantically real existence of God or an immortal soul? But if God and the immortal soul are only semantically real, would they not presuppose something really real in an analogous vein, as if the Platonic ideas were only thoughts, these thoughts were thoughts of something, namely Platonic ideas (cf. Prm.132c)? The fact remains that these proofs did not convince everybody and surely the proof for the immortality of the soul did not convince Aristotle. Moreover, the Platonic Socrates seems not finally convinced when he says to Simmias: “[...] our initial hypotheses [the hypothesis of ideas] really must be examined more clearly, even if the two of you do find them trustworthy” (107b.Transl. Rowe). The initial hypotheses are the Platonic ideas. But when the theory of ideas is presupposed for the existence of an immortal soul, this theory needs first to be established. But for the theory of ideas, we find a direct argument only in the “Timaeus” (Tim.51d-51e).8

Nevertheless, with the metaphor of a “raft” with which one can sail through life (85d), Socrates indicates the instrumental character of the flight into the Logoi and also their weakness. A raft is neither a sailing nor a rowing boat, but for all its weakness it is still a better instrument than swimming through the troubled water of our lives if probably most of us can no longer rely on a presumed divine – that is, a superhuman – utterance.

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Rivals and winners in the “evil contest” (πονηρίας ἀγών)\(^1\)
Reflections on the spirals and on the many facets of evil in Plato’s *Phaedo*

Fermani, Arianna

“Evil has got an unlimited fantasy”\(^2\)

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the multiple meanings that the idea of evil has got in the *Phaedo*, on its repercussions on the psychosomatic field and on the consequences that evil itself, in its various forms and “gradations”, determines both with regard to earthly life and in the perspective of afterlife.

The topic of evil in the *Phaedo* has never been the object of specific studies\(^3\), although it passes through the whole dialogue from the beginning to the end, giving remarkable insights as for its centrality\(^4\) and for its ability to interlace levels and scenarios of different nature (the ethical, anthropological, epistemological and eschatological level).

This path along the “spirals” of evil develops in three fundamental steps, that I will call respectively, *The grammar of evil*, *The “nuances” of evil* and *The consequences of evil*. I will now proceed to set them out shortly in the following section.

The grammar of evil

“Excess has many names (πολυώνυμος), for it has many members and many form”\(^5\)

In the first part of this paper I will reflect on “the names of evil”, that is, as evil is “referred to” in the *Phaedo*, and I will start from a first distinction between two “macro-scenarios” of evil, that to simplify I will call: *suffered evil and acted evil*.

Then, my aim is to carry on a lexicographical survey of the words of evil in the *Phaedo*, examining both general lemmas (such as αἰσχρός, κακία, κακός, λύπη, νόσος, πονηρία e φαῦλος) and specific lemmas (such as ἄδικος, ἀκολασία, ἀμαθία, ἀσθένεια, ἀφροσύνη).

As it is from this first approach to the text, there is an extremely wide and diversified semantic-conceptual framework.

The numerous names of evil, that are the expression of the constitutive polyvocity of this notion, mark the border of a stratified territory, that finds precise confirmations in other works of the Philosopher\(^6\), and where Aristotelian reflections are deeply rooted.

In fact, evil is called in different ways, since it is and it shows itself in many

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1 *Phaedo* 90 B 1.
4 S. Brogi, *I filosofi e il male. Storia della teodicea da Platone ad Auschwitz*, FrancoAngeli 2006, p. 43, calls to mind that the theme of evil, within the Platonic reflection, has an absolutely decisive role.
5 *Phaedrus* 238 A 3–4.
6 It is a fundamental bifurcation, at the origin of human culture and experience: «the first is that we find ourselves in a position of moral patients; the second is that we find ourselves exactly in the condition of moral agents » (S. Veca, *La priorità del male e l’offerta filosofica*, Feltrinelli 2005).
8 See, for example, *Philebus* 27 E-28 A.
ways, that is in different manners, gradations and articulations.

The “nuances” of evil

Beside the assumption of such irreducible being and calling the evil with a plural form, I am planning to examine purposely some passages of the Phaedo.

A useful starting point of the survey (that implies continuous movements of the observation corner – from the concrete to the abstract, from the individual to the community, from the soul to the body or to the soma-psyche compound) could be the sentence in the Phaedo 89 E 5 - 90 A 2:

«The good and the bad (πονηροὺς σφόδρα) are both very few and those between the two are very many (τοὺς δὲ μεταξύ πλείστους)».

It is true that,

«If there were to be a competition in rascality (πονηρίας ἀγὼν), those who excelled would be very few in that also».

Thus, if on one side, we could say that human beings are in most cases neither good nor irretrievable bad, on the other side it is also true that the shades of wickedness are numerous, and sometimes really intense, as many passages of the dialogue show.

However the fact is that the majority of men, according to Plato, is in the middle (μεταξὺ, 90 A 2).

So, we observe, as it were, a ‘partially optimistic’ concept of the human nature, that is perfectly confirmed by Aristotle. In a passage of the Nicomachean Ethics, in fact, a scenario is described that is really similar to the one in the Phaedo. Then the Stagirite affirms that:

«Both continence and uncontinence are a matter of extremes as compared with the character of the mass of mankind; the restrained man shows more and the unrestrained man less steadfastness than most men are capable of (τῆς τῶν πολλῶν ἕξεως)» (Nicomachean Ethics VII, 10, 1152 a 25-27).

That is, compared to the ability to sustain the impetus or the desire that characterizes most people, that is, compared to the “average” capacity of self-control, Aristotle observes with great realism that, uncontinence and continence are extremes. What do they consists of, in fact, continence (enkrateia) and uncontinence (akrasia)? Summarizing we could say that, those who are self-restrained have the ability to refrain from committing wrong actions dictated by the impetus or the desire, although they are always pestered by passion, while the unrestrained man is the one who fails, being dragged by the desire or by the force, the one who cannot control himself but who knows to be wrong.

Now, saying that continence and uncontinence are the extremes means:

that the majority of human beings has not the gift of the spiritual insight and of the moral fiber that are necessary, hence they don’t live the inner conflict of the enkrates, that is, being always prodded with the desire to follow different ways from those indicated by the reason, being always about to let things go, that have been gained with so much effort;

on the other side, it also means that most of them are not bad or perverse, but that, on the contrary, there is an average capacity of self-control, a kind of an innate moral restraint typical of most people, that is the right middle path compared to which continence and uncontinence are the extreme.

9 In Plato the term enkrateia occurs twice, while the adjective enkrates is registered 22 times.
10 In Platonicum corpus the term akrasia does not appear, but we find lemmas akrateia (7 occurrences); akratia (1 occurrence), akrates (4) and akratos (18).
So we are in front of a frame that seems to confirm an optimistic assessment of the *polloi* and thus the existence of a first common platform between Plato and Aristotle and the sharing of an evaluation of the most that is far from negative.

Of course, this reflection does not want to conceal the negative judgment on the *polloi* - which the Platonic and Aristotelian texts are rich in - on the most interpreted as a mass, as individuals unable to manage wisely their live and like an inadequate criterion of judgment.

With regard to this aspect, we could quote many texts of the two philosophers. Just to give some examples it may be recalled that, in *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 4, 1113 at 32-24, Aristotle states that

«What chiefly distinguishes the good man is that he sees the truth in each kind, being himself a sit were the standard and measure of the noble and pleasant. It appears to be pleasure that misleads the mass of mankind (πολλοίς); for it seems to them to be good, though it is not, so that choose what is pleasant as good as shun pain is evil».

In fact, while those with the virtue of wisdom (it is no coincidence that Plato in the *Phaedo* defined it as «the only right coinage»11) can right understand and, as such, can be a criterion of evaluation and measurement, most people, the most, are deceived and take a dim view of things since pleasure, more than any other reality, is blinding. Similarly, Plato, where the condemnation of the most is aristocratically much stronger than in Aristotle, states that *the polloi*, being slaves, “reduce to slavery” even the science. In *Protagoras* 352 B 3-C 3, in fact, he says that:

«People (to j polloj ἐνεργοὶ) think that, while a man often has knowledge in him, he is not governed by it, but by something else now by passion, now by pleasure, now by pain, at times by love, and often by fear; their feeling about knowledge is just what they have about a slave, that it may be dragged about by any other force».

In Plato’s discourse (and in Aristotle’s one) there is this negative side in the evaluation of the most, and it is very clear. My intention, I repeat, is not to deny or conceal it but to avoid a 'unilateral' perspective, showing that beyond and alongside this negative meaning, on which chiefly the criticism has focused its attention, in Plato’s texts there are definitely more positive opinions on the *polloi*, determining overall scenarios and evaluations that are more complex and less uniform12.

The consequences of evil

Furthermore, the different and sometimes worrying facets of evil adorn the *Phaedo* with scenes and characters from Dante’s *Inferno*: it is told about the souls of the wicked men that lie «in the mud» (69 C), that «hang around tombs and graves» and that embody different forms of animals according to the seriousness of their fault13.

Consequently, we observe a gradation of the punishment according to the

11 «My dear Simmias, I suspect that this is not the right way to purchase virtue, by exchanging pleasures for pleasures, and pains for pains, and fear for fear, and greater for less, as if they were coins, but the only right coinage, for which all those things; must be exchanged and by means of and with which all these things are to be bought and sold, is in fact wisdom; and courage and self-restraint and justice and, in short, true virtue exist only with wisdom, whether pleasures and fears and other things of that sort are added or taken away» (*Phaedo* 69 A 6-B 5).

12 For such a discussion, I may suggest my contribution entitled *Os “muitos” se dizem de muitos modos. Reflexões platônicas e aristotélicas sobre a natureza, as escolhas e o destino dos polloi*, «HYPNOS» (SÃO PAULO), número 31, 2º semestre 2013, p. 155-171.

13 See *Phaedo* 81 E-82 A.
faults and the mood of the people, which, moreover, corresponds perfectly to Gorgias' model based on the idea that the soul preserves the proof of the 'wounds' from earthly life. Thus, while someone has lived «a neither good nor bad life (μέσως)» and he has the possibility to «purify and wipe away his faults» other people are «irremediable because of the seriousness of their guilt» and there are even others, that, although they are guilty of serious crimes, then they «regretted their whole life (μεταμέλειαν αὐτοῖς)». So there is an interesting record of different levels of responsibilities in acting.

The element of contrition causes a rift – as interesting as evident – in the acting man, indicating a change (as indicated by the "meta") that represents, at the same time, but in different ways, the awareness of evil and the possibility of a recovery, and, literally, of a "turnaround".

Those who make mistakes for weakness, according to Plato, as well after him to Aristotle, is the one who knows to be wrong, and that, therefore, like in the Republic by Leander, is devoured by repentance, not only after having committed evil acts but even while he is committing it, feeling at the same time pleasure and repulsion, railing against his own eyes (which led him to enjoy a wrong pleasure): "wretches, be filled with this beautiful vision."

Still within the Phaedo, with this 'scenario of evil'- occupied by evil individuals but, somehow, still recoverable, thanks to the possibility, represented by repentance, to re-acquire the appropriate "inner attitude"- are combined two other figures of evil individuals:

1) on the one hand the absolutely evil individuals, "incurable", that is, those who no longer have the possibility to heal and to be directed to the right pathway of good;

2) on the other hand those who are neither good nor bad and who represent that element of mediocrity, the "middle way" (metaxa) from which we started and on which is based the "partially optimistic" conception, that was the starting point of our reflection.

A "partially optimistic" conception that is, in reality, in my opinion, confirmed on the opposite side to evil. Speaking about human good, that is the good life that human beings are requested to realize, Plato elaborates a variety of eudaimonistic

14 See Gorgias 523 A ss.
15 Phaedo 113 D 4.
16 Phaedo 113 D 7.
17 Phaedo 113 E 2-3.
18 «Those, however, who are curable, br are found to have committed great sins-who have, for example, in a moment of passion done some act of violence against father or mother and have lived in repentance the rest of their lives... these must needs be thrown into Tartarus, and when they have been there a year the wave casts them out» (Phaedo 113 E 9-114 A).
19 Meta with accusative indicates a succession in space and time, "after", "below", "behind", as it is evident in terms such as, for example, metabole and metanoia, «the term metanoia ... expresses a profound transformation of our way to see reality. You must go through the narrow gate of anguish and gratitude so that the world, that is held together by the ego and death, go to pieces» (A. A. Bello, Introduzione, in M. Scheler, Vom Ewigen im Menschen, vol. 1 Religiöse erneuerung, Verlag der Neue Geist, Lipsia 1921, trad. it. N. Zippel: Il pentimento, Castelvecchi, Roma 2014, p. 11).
21 «I once heard a story which I believe, that Leontius the son of Aglaion, on his way up from the Piraeus under the outer side of the northern wall, becoming aware of dead bodies that lay at the place of public execution at the same time felt a desire to see them and a repugnance and aversion, and that for a time he resisted and veiled his head, but overpowered in despite of all by his desire, with wide staring eyes he rushed up to the corpses and cried, 'Here you are, you wretches (κακοδαίμονες), fill yourselves with this fine spectacle!' (Republic IV, 439 E-440 A).
models. In the *Phaedo*, in fact, the philosophical souls, recipients and holders of perfect happiness, are combined with many other ‘not philosophical’ souls. Among these souls, some of them are bound to unhappiness (as those souls who will become donkeys or wolves (82B), but many others, friendly and meek, destined to incarnate animals with their own characteristics, such as bees, wasps or ants, cannot aspire to the greatest happiness, but anyway they will be unquestionably happy.

It is a picture that is precisely reflected in the *Phaedo*, where, after having outlined an excellent lifestyle, the “philosophical model”, it is indicated the possibility of other life paths, that are less exalted but equally happy.

Similarly in the *Republic*, the model of the perfect happiness can be matched to the one of a “relative eudaimonia”\(^2\). In addition to the perfect happiness of the philosophers, in fact, also “decent men” (*epieikeis andres*) are said to be happy, that is those individuals marked with traditional - ordinary virtues - based on the opinion, “close to the body”, based also on the practice and then produced when passions submit to *logos*, to reason. Definitely, these individuals do not come to some perfect happiness, but anyway they reach the happiness, depending on the degree of their approach to the perfect model (*Republic 472 D*)\(^23\).

Next to the excellent model of life, in fact, there are other life paths, other lifestyles, certainly less perfect and less noble, but equally to be respected and taken into account, precisely because they are, realistically, a more common condition among human beings. Not everyone in fact can live according to the highest levels and actually you have to be aware that even at lower conditions you can achieve some important results.

Like the individuals desirous of honor, that will not win, «one of the three races that are truly Olympics\(^24\), but that will also receive equally a “no small prize,” living here, on this earth, a bright and happy life, within the limits of their conditions.

The multiplicity of life paths, as well as the variability of the elements that come in the history of the mankind (before, after and during human earthly life) does not allow us to appreciate the variability of the human conditions with a unilateral approach, simply by choosing a direction and rejecting all others (*aut-aut*), but according to an open model, which includes within it the presence of different elements. In this sense, even at this level, we could say that alongside the sublime and elitist happiness of the few, there is a more common happiness, accessible to the majority of human beings who, with diligence and wisdom, strive to built it up. An happiness that is hidden behind less ostentatious lives, that lies in secluded lives, in ordinary common men. This last concept was also expressed wonderfully by Plato in the *Republic*, at the end of the famous myth of Er, when he tells that

«And it fell out that the soul of Odysseus drew the last lot of all and came to make its choice, and, from memory of its former toils having flung away ambition, went about for a long time in quest of the life of an ordinary man (ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου) who minded his own business, and with difficulty fount it lying in some corner disregarded by the others and upon seeing it said that it would have done the same had it drawn the first lot, and chose it gladly» (*Republic X, 620 C 4-D 2*).

Happiness, however you can understand it, according to a model shared

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23 On the other hand, as Aristotle will confirm very clearly (see *Nicomachean Ethics X, 6-8*) not all individuals have the ability to move at the highest levels, and happiness is not the exclusive preserve of *sophoi*. Very few people manage to be happy to the highest degree, but this does not mean that also the other men, “the most”, can be happy, and indeed very happy.

24 *Phaedo* 256 B 4-5.

25 *Phaedo* 256 D 5.
both by Plato and Aristotle, is a matter of effort, exercise and commitment, and this applies to every human being, who for this reason has to be loved, as Plato remembers in *Euthydemus*:

We should be glad of anyone (πάντα γὰρ ἄνδρα), whoever he may be, who says anything (Οὐσία καὶ ὅποιὰν λέγει) that verges on good sense, and labours steadily and manfully in its pursuit (*Euthydemus* 306 C 7-D 2).

Some final reflections

Therefore, from the pages of *Phaedo*, the concept of evil arises in all its «plastic roundness»26. We are dealing with an intrinsically polyvocal evil, since evil can be both suffered and acted in many ways.

For certain forms of evil (like for «diseases and other ills») man cannot be responsible; while man is the architect and the source of other evils, and thus responsible or, to a certain extent, at least jointly responsible.

Anyway Plato's dialogue clearly shows that:

1. *man can be wrong in many ways*
   a) meaning both that there are many shades of evil;
   b) and that it may exist in different levels of seriousness27;

2. to a certain extent, evil is an unremovable dimension of the human being, that is of the life of a man who is conscious of his own limits and of his constitutive weakness (ἱνα ἄνθρωπων ἀνθέθειαν 107 B 1) and as well constitutively (according to the choices that life continually asks him to do) exposed to the risk of being wrong.

«There would be no need of guides, since no one could miss the way to any place if there were only one road. But really there seem to be many forks of the road and many windings»28.

All man can do, then, is rely on philosophy the only true relief for the ills of the soul and the body, on that unique “right coinage” (*Phaedo* 69 A), and on that unique reliable compass for human life that is wisdom. That is why, and thus, I am going to conclude, the loss of the desire of philosophy and the loss of “the push to reasoning” is, in Plato's opinion, really the worst evil of human existence:

«no worse evil can happen to a man than to hate argument» (*Phaedo* 89 D 1-3).

«Il male ha una fantasia illimitata»29

Con questo paper si intendere riflettere sulle molteplici articolazioni che la nozione di male riceve all'interno del *Fedone*, sulle sue ricadute rispetto al complesso psico-somatico e sulle conseguenze che il male stesso, nelle sue diverse forme e “gradazioni”, determina, sia rispetto alla vita terrena sia rispetto alla prospettiva ultraterrena.

Il tema del male nel *Fedone*, sebbene attraversi il dialogo dall'inizio alla fine

26 Idea by W. Jaeger, *Aristoteles. Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Weidmann 1923, which describes in these words the Platonic philosophy contrasting Aristotle's analytical approach
27 This obviously applies both to acted evil and suffered evil: see *Phaedo* 89 D 1-3.
28 *Phaedo* 108 A 3-5.
offrendo interessanti spunti di riflessione per la sua centralità e per la sua capacità di intrecciare piani e “scenari” di varia natura (etico, antropologico, gnoseologico ed escatologico), non è mai stato fatto oggetto di studi specifici.

Tale percorso lungo le “spirali” del male si snoda in tre tappe fondamentali, che chiamerò, rispettivamente, La grammatica del male, Le “sfumature” del male e Le conseguenze del male, e che saranno molto brevemente illustrate nella parte che segue.

I. La grammatica del male

«La dissolutezza… ha molti nomi (πολυώνυμος), perché ha molte membra e molte forme»

Nella prima parte di questo contributo si intende riflettere su “i nomi del male”, ovvero sui modi in cui il male viene “detto” all’interno del Fedone, a partire da una prima distinzione tra due “macro-scenari” del male che chiameremo, per semplificare: male patito e male agito. Si intende, cioè, procedere a una ricognizione lessicografica dei termini del male nel Fedone, prendendo in esame lemmi sia di carattere generale (come αἰσχρός, κακία, κακός, λύπη, νόσος, πονηρία e φαῦλος), sia di carattere più specifico (tra cui ἄδικος, ἀκολασία, ἀμαθία, ἀσθένεια, ἀφροσύνη).

Già da questo primo approccio al testo emerge un quadro semantico-concettuale estremamente ampio e diversificato. I molteplici nomi del male, infatti, espressione della costitutiva polivocità di questa nozione, disegnano il perimetro di un territorio stratificato, che non solo trova precise conferme in altre opere del Filosofo, ma in cui affonderanno le loro radici anche le riflessioni aristoteliche.

Il male, infatti, si dice in molti modi, proprio perché è e si dà in molti modi, ovvero secondo modalità, gradualità e “declinazioni” diverse.

II. Le “sfumature” del male

All’assunzione di tale irriducibile essere e dirsi al plurale del male, si intende affiancare l’esame specifico di alcuni passaggi del Fedone.

Un utile punto d’avvio dell’indagine (che implica continui spostamenti dell’angolo di osservazione - dal concreto all’astratto, dal piano del singolo individuo a quello della collettività, da quello dell’anima a quello del corpo o del composto soma-psyche), potrebbe essere costituito dall’affermazione contenuta in Fedone 89 E 5 - 90 A 2:

«di uomini estremamente buoni ed estremamente cattivi (πονηροὺς σφόδρα) ce ne sono pochi, sia gli uni come gli altri, e… la maggior parte sta in mezzo (τοὺς δὲ...»


32 Fedro 238 A 3-4.

33 Si tratta di una biforcazione fondamentale, all’origine della cultura e delle esperienze umane: «la prima è quella per cui noi ci troviamo nella condizione di pazienti morali; la seconda è quella per cui noi ci troviamo propriamente nella condizione degli agenti morali» (S. Veca, La priorità del male e l’offerta filosofica, Feltrinelli 2005).


35 Cfr., ad esempio, Filebo 27 E-28 A.
μεταξὺ πλείστους)»\(^{36}\).

Tanto è vero che,

«se si facesse una gara di malvagità (πονηρίας ἀγὼν)… ben pochi… arriverebbero
primi».

Se da un lato, pertanto, si deve dire che gli esseri umani, nella maggior parte
dei casi, non sono buoni ma neppure irrimediabilmente cattivi, d'altro canto è pur
vero che le tonalità della malvagità sono molteplici, e talvolta molto accese, come
emerge da molti passaggi del dialogo.

Resta però il fatto che la maggior parte degli uomini, secondo Platone, sta nel
mezzo (μεταξύ, 90 A 2). Si assiste, cioè, ad una concezione per così dire “parzialmente
ottimistica” della natura umana, che viene perfettamente confermata da Aristotele.
In un passo dell’Etica Nicomachea, infatti, viene delineato uno scenario molto simile
ta quella del Fedone. Lo Stagirità, infatti, afferma che

«l’incontinenza e la continenza…, rappresentano un eccesso rispetto allo
stato abituale della maggior parte delle persone: infatti uno si mantiene stabilmente
ancorato di più e l’altro di meno rispetto a quanto è in grado di farlo la maggior
parte delle persone (tAj tin ple…stwn dunEmewj)» (Etica Nicomachea VII, 10, 1152
a 25-27).

Rispetto, cioè, alla capacità di reggere all’impeto o al desiderio che caratterizza
la maggior parte delle persone, cioè rispetto alla capacità “media” di autocontrollo,
osserva lo Stagirità con un grande realismo, incontinenza e continenza costituiscono
degli estremi. In che cosa consistono, infatti, continenza (enkrateia)\(^{37}\) e incontinenza
(akrasia)\(^{38}\)? Sintetizzando si può dire che chi è continente ha la capacità di trattenersi
dal compiere azioni sbagliate dettate dall’impeto o dal desiderio, pur essendo sempre
assillato dalla passione, mentre l’incontinente è colui che sbaglia lasciandosi trascinare
dal desiderio o dall’impeto, colui che non riesce a controllarsi ma sa di sbagliare.

Ora, affermare che continenza e incontinenza rappresentano degli estremi,
significa a) che la maggioranza degli esseri umani, in quanto non è dotata della
profondità interiore e dello spessore morale necessari, non vive il conflitto interiore
dellenkrates, sempre punzolato dal desiderio di percorrere vie diverse da quelle
indicate dalla ragione, sempre sul punto di mollare la presa guadagnata con tanta
fatica, ma dall’altro b) significa anche che i più non sono cattivi o perversi ma che,
al contrario, c’è una capacità media di autocontrollo, una sorta di ritegno morale
innato proprio della maggior parte delle persone che rappresenta il giusto mezzo
rispetto al quale continenza e incontinenza costituiscono l’estremo.

Insomma ci troviamo di fronte a un quadro che sembra confermare una
valutazione ottimistica dei polloi e dunque l’esistenza di una prima piattaforma
comune tra Platone e Aristotele, e la condivisione di una valutazione tutt’altro che
negativa dei più.

Naturalmente questa riflessione non vuole sottacere i giudizi negativi sui
polloi - di cui i testi platonici e aristotelici abbondano - sui “più” intesi come massa,
come individui incapaci di amministrare saggiamente la propria vita e come criterio
inadeguato di giudizio. A questo proposito si potrebbero citare numerosissimi
testi dei due filosofi. Solo per fare alcuni esempi si può ricordare come, in Etica
Nicomachea III, 4, 1113 a 32-24, Aristotele affermi che

«certamente l’individuo moralmente retto si distingue per il fatto di riuscire a
vedere il vero in ogni singolo caso, e a configurarsi come un criterio e una unità di

37 In Platone il termine enkrateia ricorre due volte, mentre dell’aggettivo enkrates si registrano 22
occorrenze.
38 Nel corpus platonicum non compare il termine akrasia, ma i lemmi akrateia (7 occorrenze);
akratia (1 occorrenza), akrates (4) e akratos (18).
misura. La maggior parte delle persone (toj polloj), invece, sembra che si ingannì a causa del piacere; infatti questo si mostra come un bene, pur non essendolo».

Infatti, mentre chi è dotato della virtù della saggezza (non a caso definita da Platone proprio nel Fedone come “l’unica moneta autentica di scambio”39) vede bene e quindi, in quanto tale, può rappresentare un criterio di valutazione e di misura, la maggior parte delle persone, i più, si ingannano e vedono male, perché il piacere, più di ogni altre realtà, è accecente.

Analogamente, Platone, in cui, in genere, la condanna dei più è aristocraticamente molto più forte che in Aristotele, ricorda come i polloi, essendo schiavi, “riducono a schiavitù” perfino la scienza. In Protagora 352 B 3–C 3, infatti, si afferma che:

«La maggior parte degli esseri umani (toj polloj ἄνθρωποι) ritiene che, pur essendo la scienza spesso presente nell’uomo, non sia essa che lo comanda ma qualcos’altro: talora l’ira, tal altra il piacere, tal altra ancora il dolore, qualche volta l’amore, spesso la paura: insomma, concepiscono la scienza come una sorta di schiava trascinata da tutte le parti da quelle passioni».

Questo versante negativo nella valutazione dei più, nel discorso di Platone (e anche di Aristotele) c’è, ed è molto chiaro. Il mio intento, ripeto, non è quello di negarlo o di sottacere, ma quello di evitare di “unilateralizzarlo”, mostrando come oltre e accanto a questa curvatura negativa, sui cui la critica ha maggiormente concentrato l’attenzione, nei testi di Platone siano presenti giudizi sui polloi decisamente più positivi, determinando scenari e valutazioni complessive molto più articolati e meno monolitici40.

III. Le conseguenze del male

Gli svariati e, talvolta, inquietanti volti del male, inoltre, impreziosiscono il Fedone di scene e personaggi da Inferno dantesco: si racconta di anime di malvagi che giacciono «in mezzo al fango» (69 C), che «si aggirano intorno ai sepolcri e alle tombe» (81 D), e che si incarnano in diverse forme di animali a seconda della gravità della colpa commessa41.

Si assiste, pertanto, tra l’altro in perfetta coerenza col modello del Gorgia42, in base a cui l’anima conserva il segno delle “ferite” dell’aldiquà, ad una gradazione delle pene in base alle colpe e alla disposizione interiore dei soggetti: perché se ci sono alcuni che sono vissuti «né bene né male (μέσω)»43 e a cui viene offerta la possibilità

39 Ciòè come quella con la quale si possono scambiare tutti gli altri beni senza il rischio di essere truffati: mentre ci si può ingannare con le altre monete (cioè con piaceri, dolori o paure, ognuno dei quali può essere più grande o più piccolo di ciò che sembra), solo lo scambio effettuato al prezzo della saggezza è veramente sicuro e garantito. «O caro Simmia, guarda che non sia questo il giusto scambio nei riguardi della virtù, cioè lo scambiare piaceri con piaceri, dolori con dolori e paure con paure, cose più grandi con cose più piccole, così come se fossero monete. Ma sta’ attento che l’unica moneta autentica, quella con la quale bisogna scambiare tutte queste cose, non sia piuttosto la saggezza, e che solo ciò che si compra e si vende a questo prezzo sia veramente fortezza, temperanza, giustizia e che, insomma, la virtù sia solo quella accompagnata da saggezza, sia che vi si aggiungano sia che non vi si aggiungano piaceri, timori e tutte le altre cose simili a queste!» (Platone, Fedone, 69 A 6-B 5).
40 Per un approfondimento di tale questione mi permetto di rimandare al mio contributo dal titolo Os “muitos” se dizem de muitos modos. Reflexões platônicas e aristotélicas sobre a natureza, as escolhas e o destino dos polloi, «HYPNOS» (SÃO PAULO), número 31, 2º semestre 2013, p. 155-171.
41 Cfr. Fedone 81 E-82 A
42 Cfr. Gorgia 523 A ss.
43 Fedone 113 D 4.
di «purificarsi ed espiare le proprie colpe»\(^44\), ci però anche individui «insanabili per la gravità delle loro colpe»\(^45\), e altri ancora che, pur essendosi macchiati di gravi delitti, poi «si sono pentiti (\textit{μεταμέλεσθαι}) per tutta la vita»\(^46\), proponendo una interessante casistica di livelli di responsabilità dell’agire.

L’elemento del pentimento determina una frattura—tanto evidente quanto interessante—all’interno del soggetto agente, indicando un mutamento (come indica il “\textit{meta}”\(^47\)) che rappresenta, contemporaneamente, ma in sensi diversi, la consapevolezza del male e la possibilità di una guarigione e, letteralmente, di un “cambiamento di rotta”\(^48\). Chi sbaglia per debolezza, per Platone come pure, dopo di lui, per Aristotele, è colui che sa di sbagliare e che, dunque, alla maniera del Leonzio della \textit{Repubblica}, è divorato dal pentimento non solo dopo che ha compiuto l’azione malvagia ma perfino mentre la sta compiendo, provando contemporaneamente piacere e repulsione, e inveendo contro i propri stessi occhi (che lo spingono a godere di un piacere sbagliato): «sciagurati, riempitevi di questa bella visione!»\(^49\).

A questo “scenario del male”, occupato da individui malvagi ma, in qualche modo, ancora recuperabili, proprio in virtù della possibilità, rappresentata dal pentimento, di ri-acquistare una adeguata “postura interiore”, si affiancano, sempre all’interno del \textit{Fedone}, altre due figure di malvagi:

1) da un lato gli individui assolutamente cattivi, gli “insanabili”, ovvero coloro che non hanno più la possibilità di guarire e di essere indirizzati sulla via del bene;  
2) dall’altro coloro che non sono né buoni né cattivi e che ripropongono quell’elemento di medietà, quell’intermediario o quella “via di mezzo” (\textit{metaxu}) da cui siamo partiti e su cui si fonda la concezione “parzialmente ottimistica” da cui ha preso avvio la nostra riflessione.

Una concezione “parzialmente ottimistica” che, in realtà, trova, a mio avviso, altre conferme sul versante opposto rispetto a quello del male. Parlando del bene umano, ovvero della vita buona che gli esseri umani sono chiamati a realizzare, Platone elabora una molteplicità di modelli eudaimonistici. Nel \textit{Fedone}, infatti, alle anime filosofiche, destinatarie e detentrici di una felicità perfetta, vengono affiancate numerose altre anime “non filosofiche”. Di queste, alcune sono destinate all’infelicità (come quelle anime che si trasformeranno in asini o in lupi (82 B), ma molte altre, socievoli e mansuete, destinate ad incarnarsi in animali con le loro stesse caratteristiche, come api, vespe o formiche, non potranno aspirare alla felicità.

\(^{44}\) \textit{Fedone} 113 D 7.
\(^{45}\) \textit{Fedone} 113 E 2-3.
\(^{46}\) “Invece, coloro che risultano aver commesso colpe sanabili, anche se grandi, come per esempio coloro che sotto la spinta dell’ira hanno commesso azioni violente contro il padre o contro la madre e poi si sono pentiti per tutta la vita… debbono cadere nel Tartaro, ma, dopo che sono caduti e sono rimasti un anno colà, fonda li rigetta fuori” (\textit{Fedone} 113 E 9-114 A).
\(^{49}\) “Mi è capitato di sentire questo racconto, a cui quasi quasi ho finito per credere. Leonzio, figlio di Aglione, salendo dal Pireo lungo la parte esterna del muro settentrionale, accortosi che presso il boia giacevano dei cadaveri, da un lato desiderava vederli, dall’altro preso da un senso di repulsione desiderava volgere altrove lo sguardo. Per un po’ combatté contro se stesso e li coprì gli occhi, ma poi, vinto dal desiderio, li riaprì, e correndo verso i cadaveri se ne uscì con questa esclamazione: “Ecco, disgraziati, riempitevi di questa bella visione!”” (\textit{Repubblica} IV, 439 E-440 A).
massima, ma saranno comunque indiscutibilmente felici.

Si tratta di un quadro che trova un preciso riscontro anche nel _Fedro_, in cui, dopo aver delineato un modello di vita eccellente, quella “filosofica”, si indica chiaramente la possibilità di altri percorsi, di stili di vita meno eccelsi ma ugualmente felici.

Analogamente, nella _Repubblica_, al modello della felicità perfetta può essere affiancato a quello di una «eudaimonia relativa»\(^50\). Oltre alla felicità perfetta dei filosofi, infatti, vanno detti felici anche gli “uomini perfetti” (epieikeis andres), cioè quegli individui contrassegnati da virtù tradizionali - ordinarie - basate sull’opinione, “vicine al corpo”, fondate anche sulla pratica e quindi prodotte nel momento in cui le passioni si sottomettono al logos, alla ragione. Questi individui non arrivano certo alla felicità perfetta, ma comunque pervengono alla felicità, a seconda del grado di avvicinamento al modello perfetto (Republica 472 D)\(^51\).

Accanto al modello di vita ottimo, infatti, ci sono altri percorsi esistenziali, altri stili di vita, certamente meno perfetti e meno nobili, ma ugualmente da rispettare e da tenere in considerazione, proprio perché costituiscono, realisticamente, una condizione più comune tra gli esseri umani. Non tutti possono vivere attenendosi ai massimi livelli, infatti, e si deve concretamente prendere atto che anche a condizioni inferiori si possono raggiungere dei risultati importanti. Come gli individui desiderosi d’onore, che non vinceranno «una delle tre gare che sono veramente olimpiche»\(^52\) ma riporteranno ugualmente «un premio non piccolo»\(^53\), vivendo qui, su questa terra, una vita luminosa e, nei limiti delle loro condizioni, felice.

La molteplicità di percorsi esistenziali, nonché la variabilità dei fattori che entrano in gioco nella storia dell’uomo (prima, dopo e durante la propria esistenza terrena), non permettono di cogliere la variabilità delle condizioni umane con un approccio unilaterale, semplicemente scegliendo una strada e bocciando tutte le altre (o-o) ma secondo un modello aperto, che accoglie al suo interno la compresenza di elementi diversi. In questo senso, anche a questo livello, si può dire che, accanto alle felicità eccelsa ed elitaria dei pochi, c’è una felicità più comune, raggiungibile alla maggior parte degli esseri umani che, con impegno e saggezza, si adoperino alla sua edificazione. Una felicità che si nasconde dietro esistenze meno appariscenti, che risiede in vite appartate, in uomini comuni, normali. Un concetto, quest’ultimo, che Platone espresse magnificamente anche nella _Repubblica_, alla fine del celebre mito di Er, quando racconta che

«L’anima di Odisseo, a cui la sorte aveva riservato proprio l’ultimo posto di tutti, si avviò alla scelta lasciando da parte ogni desiderio di gloria, memore delle sofferenze della vita precedente; si aggirò pertanto a lungo, alla ricerca della vita di un uomo comune (¢ndrØj „diêtou) senza preoccupazioni, e la trovò a fatica, relegata in un angolo, trascurata dagli altri. Non appena la scorse, la prese di buon grado, dicendo che non avrebbe fatto altra scelta neppure se fosse stata sorteggiata prima» (Republica X, 620 C 4-D 2).

La felicità, comunque la si intenda, secondo un modello condiviso da Platone e da Aristotele, è questione di sforzo, di esercizio e di impegno, e questo vale per ogni

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51 D’altro canto, come confermerà con estrema chiarezza Aristotele (cfr. _Etica Nicomachea_ X, 6-8) non tutti gli individui hanno la capacità di muoversi ai livelli massimi e la felicità non è appannaggio esclusivo dei _sophoi_. Sono pochi, anzi pochissimi quelli che riescono ad essere felici al massimo grado, ma questo non toglie che anche gli altri uomini, _bì più_, possano essere felici, e molto.

52 _Fedro_ 256 B 4-5.

53 _Fedro_ 256 D 5.
essere umano, che per questo va amato, ricorda Platone nell’Eutidemo:

«Bisogna, infatti, amare ogni uomo (pênta... Ýndra), chiunque egli sia e qualsiasi cosa dica (Óstij ka’ Dtíñoân Ísgêi), che sia intelligente e si impegni coraggiosamente nell’attuarla» (Eutidemo 306 C 7-D 2).

IV. Alcune riflessioni conclusive

Dalle pagine del Fedone, pertanto, la nozione di male emerge in tutta la sua «rotondità plastica»54. Ci troviamo di fronte a un male intrinsecamente polivoco, a partire dal fatto che il male può essere patito e agito in molti modi.

Di alcune forme del male (come di fronte a «malattie o altri mali»55) non si può rispondere; mentre di altri mali l’essere umano è artefice e origine e, dunque, responsabile o, almeno in una certa misura, corresponsabile.

In ogni caso, come dal dialogo platonico emerge in modo molto chiaro:

1) si può sbagliare in tanti modi, sia
a) nel senso del male ci sono tante curvature;
b) sia nel senso che esso può darsi in livelli di gravità diversi56;

2) il male, in una certa misura, costituisce una dimensione ineliminabile dall’esistenza dell’essere umano, ovvero dalla vita di un individuo consapevole dei propri limiti e della propria costitutiva debolezza (τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀσθένειαν 107 B 1), e, altrettanto costitutivamente (in virtù delle scelte che la vita gli pone continuamente di fronte) esposto al rischio di sbagliare:

«Uno infatti non potrebbe sbagliare in alcun modo se vi fosse soltanto una via. Pare invece che vi siano parecchi bivi e incroci»57.

Non rimane, allora, che affidarsi alla filosofia, unico vero rimedio ai mali dell’anima e del corpo, e a quell’unica “moneta autentica” (69 A) e a quell’unica bussola affidabile per l’esistenza umana che è la saggezza. Ecco perché, e con questo conclude, la perdita del desiderio della filosofia e il venir meno della “spinta al ragionamento” rappresenta, ad avviso di Platone, davvero il male peggiore dell’esistenza umana:

«non esiste male peggiore che un uomo possa patire, cioè prendere in odio i ragionamenti» (Fedone 89 D 1-3).

55 Fedone 86 C 4
56 Questo, ovviamente, vale sia a livello del male agito sia di quello patito: cfr. Fedone 89 D 1-3).
57 Fedone 108 A 3-5.
EL “BIEN MORIR” Y EL FEDÓN Y EN LA ESPAÑA QUINIENTISTA

Fernandes, Edrisi

“Tota enim philosophorum vita commentario mortis est” (Cicerón, Tusc. disput., I.30.74)
“Tota vita discendum est mori” (Séneca, De Brevitate vitae, 7.3)

INTRODUCCIÓN

El “bien morir” consiste en dejar la existencia corporal sin turbación o temor, con la certeza de inmortalidad del alma y de los galardones futuros para los virtuosos y buenos. Para Platón, “Los que filosofan, en el recto sentido de la palabra, se ejercitan en morir y son los hombres a los que resulta menos temeroso el estar muertos” (Fedón, 67d-e, tr. Luis Gil1; Platón, 1982, p. 90); “a los philósophos non les desplaze de morir, nin lo han por difícil e grave cosa” (Fedón, 62c; Round, 1993, p. 2372). Sin embargo, para los no-filosofos la muerte se mantuvo una seria preocupación, y

El tono dominante del arte y literatura elegiaca y funeraria del siglo XV, esbozado en unas páginas brillantes de Johan Huizinga, se caracterizaba por la nota sorda y adusta de las Danzas macabras y por las imágenes plásticas de cadáveres y gusanos prodigadas por la estatuario de las tumbas y por la pintura en iglesias y capillas. Al hojear las representaciones literarias de la Muerte de aquel periodo, topamos a cada paso con una morbida lacrimosidad, un tono apocalíptico y un humor esesperpéntico que hace de los tormentos del infierno, de la rueda voluble de Fortuna y de la calavera y guadaña del esquelético Nivelador los tópicos favoritos de su perversa ingenuisidad. Estos elementos se combinan con otros no menos típicos del gótico florido, el erotismo sádico del tema del cuerpo desnudo acostado en cópula eterna con inmundos sapos, o la morbosa metáfora (...) de la aniquilación de toda belleza mundana (Lawrance, 1998, p. 3).

Consolación Baranda dice que

La preocupación por el alma aflora en un amplio conjunto de obras del siglo XV destinadas a servir de consolation mortis. En semejante trance es curioso que siempre se encuentren comentarios acerca de la inmortalidad. La certeza de una vida tras la muerte parece elemento crucial para confortar a un moribundo, pero si fuera tan general y obvia sería innecesaria tanta insistencia; cuando los comentarios acerca del estatuto del alma forman parte de los tópicos capaces de aliviar al doliente, parece señal de que la inmortalidad no era ajena a las preocupaciones que le embargaban (Baranda, 2004, pp. 85-86).

La enseñanza platónica sobre la muerte ganó relieve para el “bien morir” de los hablantes del castellano después de las traducciones de Pero Díaz de Toledo, de las cuales trataremos aquí.

PERO DÍAZ DE TOLEDO Y SU OBRA

1 “Desatar el ánima del cuerpo en todo tiempo solo aquéllos se esfuerzan a fazerlo, los que verdaderamente filosofan” (tr. Pero Díaz de Toledo; Round, 1993, pp. 244-45).
2 Traducción para “τὸ τοὺς φιλοσόφους ῥᾳδίως ἂν ἐθέλειν ἀποθνῄσκειν”; en Luis Gil (Platón, 1982, p. 83), “que los filósofos estarian dispuestos con gusto a morir”.

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Conforme Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín: “La primera versión castellana que conocemos de algunos diálogos de Platón, se debe al Doctor Pedro [Pero] Díaz de Toledo, del Consejo del Rey Don Juan II” (Bonilla y San Martín, 1901, p. IX). Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo habló el siguiente sobre Díaz de Toledo (c. 1410-1466):

El primer escritor español de quien positivamente consta haber traducido, aunque no directamente, alguno de los diálogos platónicos, es el castellano Pedro Díaz de Toledo (…), colaborador que fue [del Marqués de Santillana] en sus nobles empresas de erudición y de cultura. Son curiosos estos primeros ensayos del humanismo español, todavía no seguro de sus fuerzas. Antes de 1445 tenía romanizado el Dr. Pedro Díaz de Toledo, valiéndose de la versión latina, entonces recientísimas, de Leonardo Bruni de Arezzo, el libro de Platón, llamado Fedrón (sic) (…). Y no contento con haberle traducido, le imitó años después en su Diálogo o Razonamiento sobre la muerte del Marqués de Santillana, obra de carácter más acentuadamente platónico que el celebrado Sompni, de Bernat Metge, al cual se asemeja mucho por su forma y tendencia (Menéndez y Pelayo, 1892, p. 90-91; 1940, p. 56-57).

El Ms. 13.086 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid advierte tres aspectos importantes de la personalidad de Díaz de Toledo (c. 1410-1466): primero, que era un converso de origen judío (“descendentes ex plebe israelítica”), segundo, que era doctor en derecho civil y eclesiástico (“in utroque iure divino et humano”), y tercero que era muy dicho en artes liberales (“et liberalibus artibus satis eruditus”) (Herrero Prado, 1998, pp. 107-8).

Pero (Pedro) Díaz de Toledo fue doctor en leyes, oidor y referendario. Su abuela, doña Maria de Toledo, era madre de Fernando Díaz de Toledo, relator del rey Juan II de Castilla3. Su primo hermano Pero Díaz de Toledo y Ovalle (1429-1499), con quien es amíudo confundido, fué capellán del Marqués de Santillana, canónigo de Sevilla (1477), provisor de Toledo (1483), administrador de la diócesis de Salamanca (a partir de 15 de mayo de 1487) y finalmente Obispo de Málaga (1487), luego después de su conquista (en el 18 de agosto), por designación de los Reyes Católicos.

En 1430 Pero Díaz de Toledo figura como estudiante universitario de derecho en Valladolid, y en 1433 se denomina a sí mismo estudiante de leyes4. Unos o diez años más tarde es contratado como escritor para la corona. Bachiller en 1435, marcha a la Universidad de Lérida hacia 1437, y el 12 de septiembre de 1438 allí finaliza sus estudios5. Vuelve a Castilla, y el 15 de octubre de 1440 es nombrado “Alcalde Mayor de las Alzadas de la Casa y Corte” (juez de apelaciones); a partir de entonces preside el “Consejo Real” en la dirección del Príncipe heredero. En 1441 es nombrado “Oidor de Audiencia”, miembro del cuerpo de jueces de recursos importantes. Por las mismas fechas, o algo más tarde, es nombrado también “Referendario”. En 1445 es doctor de derecho civil y eclesiástico, y en un documento de 1459 su nombre aparece seguido del título de “senor de Olmedilla”. Entre 1442 y 1446 traduce y glosa los Proverbios del Pseudo-Séneca (1ª ed. 1482; alcanzó más de 40

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3 Anales Complutenses [Ms. 7.899 (olim V-220) de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid; copiado en 1652], p. 428: “Era el relator Femando Díaz muy bien visto del rey, secretario de su Cámara y Consejo, referendario y relator, de quien fiaba los consejos de más consideración”.


ediciones)⁶ por encargo del rey Juan II y encomienda del Marqués de Santillana, que le solicitó la redacción o traducción de textos para la educación del príncipe Enrique⁷ (futuro Enrique IV, “el Impotente”), que no sabía latín. Entre sus traducciones de manuscritos venidos de Italia situase aquella del pseudo-platónico Axíoco (1444)⁸, dedicada al Marqués y “quizá el primer diálogo filosófico en romance” (Villacañas Berlanga, 2010, p. 1).

El más importante hecho literario de Díaz de Toledo es sin duda su traducción (1446-47) del diálogo Fedón de Platón [El libro de Platón, llamado Fedrón (sic)], a partir de la traducción latina de Leonardo Bruni el Aretino (hacia 1405), del que hay edición y estudio modernos (= Round, 1993). “Por algún extraño motivo (...) que puede en verdad deberse al hecho de que en latín foedus se traduce por ‘repulsivo’, cuando se copió el texto de la traducción de Bruni en 1416 en Inglaterra, se le dio el título de Phedron, que ya era el nombre que llevaba la vieja versión [latina] de Aristipo⁹ [Palermo, hacia 1150]. (...) Es normal pensar que pronto llegara a Inglaterra” (Villacañas Berlanga, 2010, p. 3).

Laurette Godinas dice sobre la tradución del Fedón por Díaz de Toledo:

Lejos de ser un manuscrito glosado, se debe hablar aquí más bien de un manuscrito con glosas, en que el número de comentarios es bastante reducido y se presentan como notas marginales esporádicas atadas a palabras específicas del texto (...). Además de comentarios que sitúan en su contexto original narraciones que pueden servir para la buena comprensión de la obra por el lector del siglo XV, encontramos en esta traducción otros en los que se establece una relación directa entre el texto antiguo y la cultura religiosa del hombre medieval. (...) Cuando Sócrates dice (Fedro, 81c): “Conviene que lo pesado, e grave e visible, que la tal ánima trae consigo, que la apesque, e la lieve al logar visible, por miedo del logar invisible. E tales animas como aquestas, según que comúnmente se dize, son las que andan cerca de los monimientos e de los sepulcros (...)” (Round, 1993, pp. 270-71), Pero Díaz glosa (p. 271): “Nota que los onbres que andan en pena e por qué razón10. Sant Agostín e Santo Tomás en el primero de las Sentencias, en la quistión primera¹¹, dize en la sacra escritura non se falla espresamente lugar disputado del purgatório,

⁹ T. González Rolán y P. Saquero Suárez-Somonte proponen (p. 168) que la imprecisión en el título del diálogo platónico se debe quizás a una “contaminación” por el nombre Phedrum en los códices latinos utilizados. En un manuscrito (Catedral de Burgo de Osma, Ms. 124) que contiene traducciones del Fedón (“Phaedonem, sive librum de immortalitate animorum”), del Fedro (“Phedrum, in quo poetices vis et natura describitur”) y del Axíoco (“sermo[ nem] de contemnenda morte”), el nombre Phедrum se pródria malentender por una subtitulación: “librum de immortalitate animorum, Phedrum”. En el Tratado de la consolación (1424), de Enrique de Villena, ya se lee: “Con quanta seguridat la recibió Sócrates [= la muerte], aunque por veneno murió, paresçe en el Fedrón de Platón scripto” (E. De Villena, Tratado de la Consolación, ed. Derek C. Carr. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1976, p. 47).
¹⁰ “Pero Díaz’s interest in this topic is expanded into a whole chapter of the Diálogo e razonamiento (ed. Paz y Meliá, pp. 270-2), where Plato’s account of ghosts is supplemented by and assimilated to the teaching of Aquinas on Purgatory (Commentum in quatuor libros sententiarum [Magistri Petri Lombardi], IV, 21)” (Round, 1993, p. 337 n. 23).

Díaz de Toledo se empeñó en traducir al castellano la enseñanza de los diálogos platonicos no solamente por su contenido, pero también por su forma de exposición, que permite al autor, en sus propias palabras, “explicar mejor é más complida mente su entención” (Paz y Meliá, 1892, p. 248).

**PLATÓN EN LA CASTILLA PREMODERNA**

En el Prólogo de su traducción para el castellano12 (hacia 1450) de la epístola *A los jóvenes*13, de Basilio de Cesarea (c. 329-379), Díaz de Toledo conclama a que “oyamos a Basilio, el qual entre los griegos (...) es uisto [como] muy exçellente”14 (folio 65r; Herrera Guillén, s/d, p. 4; Lawrance, 1991, p. 101). Sin embargo, el tratado basiliano *A los jóvenes* fue “la base de toda la educacion Cristiana superior durante siglos” (Jaeger, 1965, p. 114)15, y es el documento que “representa el primer esfuerzo para conciliar, a fines del siglo IV d.C., el Cristianismo y la cultura clásica, en sus aspectos formales” (Aguadé Nieto, 1992, p. 198).

Basilio dice en su opusculo *A los jóvenes*: “(...) solamente la uirtud es firme possession y estable al uio y aun al muerto” (fols. 66v-67r; Herrera Guillén, s/d, p. 11; Lawrance, 1991, p. 106). Esclarece despues:

(...) por que en suma lo diga, todo el cuerpo se deue menospreçiar, si non nos queremos afogar en el cieno de las delectaçiones, o por cierto tanto consentirle que, como dize Platon, pueda fazer el misterio dela philosophia. Estas mismas cosas de Platon monesta [el apostolo] Paulo quando dize que non auemos menester alguna prouidençia para las delectaçiones del cuerpo. Ca los que muy bien curan del cuerpo, la ánima, enpero que se deue servuir de aquél, menospreçian; non tienen ninguna differençia con aquellos que con gran estudio buscan por auer organos muy buenos y menospreçian la arte por razòn dela qual los tales organos son fechos (fol. 68v; Herrera Guillén, s/d, p. 19; Lawrance, 1991, p. 112).

Platón fue conocido en la Castilla premoderna sobre todo a través de los escritos neoplatonistas, como el *Liber de Pomo*, diálogo entre Aristóteles, poco antes de morir, y algunos de sus discípulos, que le piden consejo sobre como evitar el temor y la perturbación ante la muerte16. Obra inspirada en el *Fedón* y atribuida a Aristóteles, fue traducida al latín hacia 1250. Para Jaume Riera i Sans, “podem assegurar, (...) sense gaire risc d’equivocar-nos, que tots els mestres en arts i en teologia dels segles XIV i XV havien llegit el *Liber de Pomo*” (Riera i Sans, 1981, p. 9). El *Liber de Pomo* pone en la boca del estagirita algunas de las ideas cristianizadas de su maestro; de esta forma, constituía uno de los principales vehículos de difusión

de las enseñanzas de Platón sobre la “buena muerte”. Entre ellas están las nociones, ya introducidas en el corpus cristiano por los Padres de la Iglesia, del cuerpo como una cárcel que impide alcanzar los grados superiores del conocimiento (“Mill impedimentos nos da el cuerpo (...) en alcanzar la verdad”, y “mediante el cuerpo ninguna cosa podemos conocer puramente”; Fédon, 66b y 66e; Round, 1993, p. 243), y de la liberación del alma a través de la muerte, a la cual no hay que temer, sino que recibirla con serenidad y alegría.

Para Díaz de Toledo, Platón podría ser presentado como el filósofo “el cual, más que otro philósopho alguno, afirmó el ánima ser inmortal, e las ánimas de los buenos e virtuosos aver galardón en el otro mundo, e las ánimas de los malos aver pena (...); [un] hombre philósopho sin fe, solamente atraído por la razón e lumbre natural” (Introducción al Libro Llamado Fedrón; Round, 1993, p. 222). Platón hubiera sido, entonces, “el filósofo pagano que más se había acercado a las verdades de la Sagrada Escritura y del cristianismo, en particular en su representación de la vida contemplativa del más allá” (Villacañas Berlanga, 2010, p. 9) - un mundo mejor “donde hay plazer sin medida, folgança sin anxia e sin trabajo” - como dice Díaz de Toledo en sus glosas a los Proverbios de Séneca (Round, 1993, p. 113). Pero el intelecto y la iluminación natural no son, para Díaz de Toledo, superiores a la revelación y la fe: en su traducción del Áxioco, mientras utilice el epíteto de “divino ombre” para Platón (folio 70v; Gonzáles Rolán y Saquero Suárez-Somonte, 2000, p. 185; Pseudo-Platón, s/d, p. 4), Díaz de Toledo “parece relacionar esto más directamente a su anticipación [= de Platón] de la enseñanza cristiana que a cualesquiera cualidades intrínsecas” (Round, 1993, p. 115). De hecho, el traductor castellano del Fedón escribe que “los que allende de la razón e lumbre natural son informados de la ley que Dios dio e publicó” son obligados a crer, más que Platón y sus seguidores, en la inmortalidad del alma y las recompensas post mortem para los buenos (Introducción al Libro llamado Fedrón; Round, 1993, p. 223, grifo nuestro).

LA INTRODUCCIÓN DE DÍAZ DE TOLEDO AL FEDÓN

Díaz de Toledo explica las razones de su traducción del Fédon en la Introducción, donde aparecen alusiones directas (y ausentes de la traducción de Bruni) a aquellos que niegan la inmortalidad del alma, comenzando por los epicúreos17 y los saduceos18. Nuestro autor toma por evidente el “verdadero principio” de que “del mundo hovo comienço, e haverá fin” (Round, 1993, p. 249 glosa al Fédon 70c), y cree “que Dios há de traer a todo honbre a juizio por las cosas que fará. Lo qual non podría ser si el ánima non fuesse inmortal” (Introducción; Round, 1993, p. 222). Niega, de esta manera, los argumentos de las “dos sectas” contra las cuales “Aristóteles” advierte en el Liber de Pomo19:

(...) Et eorum due secte sunt, quorum primi dicunt primum non habere principium nec finem nec aliquid esse sub sole novum, et generacio preterit et generacio advenit, terra autem in eternum stat et non habet sustentatorem nec gubernatorem; e hii sunt qui negant radicem. Et alii sunt naturaliter scientes, qui dicunt quod anima simul sit creata cum corpore vel de corpore, donec corpus existit et anima existit in esse suo (...)

17 “Algunos de los philósophos que se llamaron epicuros negaron el ánima ser inmortal, e dixeran que, muerto el hombre, el alma perecía e della non quedava sustancia alguna” (Introducción; Round, 1993, p. 221). Para Epicuro, sin embargo, un mismo saber o práctica, el filosofar, nos enseña el proceso doble de bien vivir y de un buen morir (τοῦ καλῶς ζῆν καὶ τοῦ καλῶς ἀποθνῄσκειν) (Diógenes Laercio, X, 127, 8-9).

18 “Los saduceos (...), porque creían que las ánimas non eran inmortales, negavan la resurrección” (Introducción; Round, 1993, p. 222). La asociación entre epicúreos y saduceos fue insinuada por Flavio Josefo (Guerra Jud., 2: 8.14) y por los talmudistas (Talmud Babli, Kiddushin, 66a).

19 Según Consolación Baranda, este pasaje “hace referencia a corrientes filosóficas relacionadas con el aristotelismo radial, con el averroísmo iniciado en el siglo XIII” (Baranda, 2004, p. 87).
La opinión de la “primera secta” incluye, aquí, la doctrina de la eternidad del mundo y la creencia en que el mundo no tiene “sustentatorem nec gubernatorem”. Esta creencia fue particularmente identificada en el pasado con los epicúreos,21, aunque la expresión “... qui negant radicem” parece una traducción del hebreo kophrim ba-ikkar, plural de kopher ba-ikkar (var.: kofer be’ikar), que se refiere a un kopher (“apóstata” o “infiel”) que niega un ikkar (“principio”; “dogma”; literalmente, “raíz”). En la literatura rabinica, la expresión kopher ba-ikkar (p. ej.: Pes., xxiv. 168b; Maimónides22 en Hilchoth Teshuhav – p. ej.: Mishne Torah, Teshuhav, 3:8) se refiere a la persona que niega uno ikkar (“dogma”; lit. “raíz”) básico y esencial. Kopher puede ser traducido como “no creyente”, “ateo”, “infiel” o “apóstata”. Los talmudistas, siguiendo un método común de interpretar todas las palabras a su alcance a partir de raíces semíticas, hicieron derivar apikoros de una forma aramea de la raíz pkr, “estar libre de restricción o disciplina; libertinaje” (Talmud de Babilonia, Sanhedrin, 38b), y conectaron la palabra en cuestión con el arameo hephker, “abandonado”23.

Con la “segunda secta”, aquella de los cientistas “qui dicunt quod anima simul sit creatas cum corpore vel de corpore (con el cuerpo o desde el cuerpo)”, Díaz de Toledo concorda en parte, comentando el Fedón, 72 d-e: “(...) según desuso [= de suso] es dicho, (...) nuestra ánima es creada al tiempo que el cuerpo es organizado, e nunca fue primero. (...) E esta es la opinión de Aristó[t]iles, e lo que nuestra fe cree” (Round, 1993, p. 254 glosa). Sin embargo, Pero Díaz no puede aceptar que el alma muere con el cuerpo, y concorda con Platón “que las almas de los muertos son y están” (Fedón, 72d-e). Pero no concorda con la tesis platonica de la rememoración (72e-73a), y se el alma es creada al tiempo que el cuerpo es organizado, “nuestro aprender más se dirá nuevo saber que rememorar” (Round, 1993, p. 254 glosa).

Díaz de Toledo divide las escuelas filosóficas de la siguiente forma en su Introducción (Round, 1993, pp. 221-22): epicúreos, peripatéticos y estoicos/seguidores de Platón. Ya en una glosa al Fedón 70c y ss. dice:

Plato, en el discurso que faze, quiere concluir que nuestras almas fueron de comienço perpetuamente, e que ante que nuestros cuerpos fuessen formados, ya eran nuestras almas, e después de nos muertos que andan de cuerpo en cuerpo, en especial las almas de los malos e de los que no bivieron virtuosamente. Para introducción de ló cual es de presuponer lo que Santo Thomás pone sobrel segundo de las Sentencias,

20 En el manuscrito catalán: “(...) sens daquestes són dues deles quals los primers dien que lo món non haurá començament ne haurá fi ni ha dejàs lo sol negua cosa, nova mes que una generació passà e altra ve, e la terra sta in un esser per tots temps e no ha sostenidor ne governador, e aquests són que negen la rayl. E los altres son scients in natura, que diuen que la ànima és ensemps creada ab lo cos [...] son esser (...)” (Riera i Sans, 1981, p. 31).
21 “The Epicureans exclude Providence (prónoia) from human life, and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs or that the universe is directed by a blessed and immortal (makárion kai áphthárton) Being to the end that the whole of it may endure, but say that the world runs by its own movement (automátos) without knowing a guide (hênióchou [auriga]) or another’s care (aphróntiston [sin un guardar])” (Josefo, Ant. Jud., 10: 278 Loeb Classical Library). Véase también los “ímpíos y ateistas” con posición semejante en Filón de Alejandría, De confusione linguarum, 23.114.


23 Véase el Talmud de Jerusalem, Sanhedrin, 10: 1, 28b, y la introducción de Maimónides a la Mishnah para este pasaje, donde dice explícitamente que se trata de una palabra derivada del arameo.
en la distinción xix, questión primera24, donde dize que acerca de acuesto fueran quatro opiniones. La primera fue de unos antiguos philosophos naturales, que (...) dixeron que, perecido el cuerpo, el ánima perecia (...). La segund opinion fué de aquellos que dixeron quel anima razonable según parte es corruptible, e según parte es incorruptible. E la opinion de aquestos fue que de todos los hombres era (...)[una sola] sustancia incorporeal (...). La tercera opinion fue de Pithágoras e de Plato, los quales, veyendo la incorporeidad del ánima, erraron en aquesto que pusieron del ánima: que dexado un cuerpo, se envestía de otro, e que así andava de cuerpo en cuerpo (...). La quarta opinión es la que tiene nuestra fe, que el ánima nuestra sea sustancia, e que non dependa del cuerpo, e así como son muchos cuerpos, assí son muchas ánimas, e que después de nos muertos, nuestros cuerpos perecen, e las ánimas quedan apartadas de los cuerpos, e non entran en otros cuerpos, e estarán assí fasta el día del juizio, que cada una ánima se envestirá de su mismo cuerpo en la resurrección, unas a gloria, otras a pena, según que cada uno oviere obrado (Round, 1993, p. 248-49 glosa)25.

VIDA Y MUERTE EN LA OBRA DE DÍAZ DE TOLEDO
Según Ferrer García, la visión castellana de la muerte desde el siglo XIV

pasa de la simplicidad de la poesía épica, concentrada en lamentos más o menos artificiosos sobre la muerte ajena, a una sensibilidad hacia la vida terrena y social, una representación del juicio propio y del Juicio Final y un leve surgimiento de la temática macabra desarrollada alrededor de la descomposición física, una personalización de la propia muerte que culminará con la exagerada consideración de la fama/honra como estructura mental nobiliaria desde finales del siglo XIII, como un valor inicialmente aristocrático que se extiende en Castilla al resto de la sociedad de forma descendente” (Ferrer García, 2007, p. 128).

Las reflexiones en torno a la vida y la muerte fueran matéria de mucha reflexión por Díaz de Toledo. Ya en su versión del Axíoco, recorda que

Segúnd dice Aristótiles en el terçero libro de sus Éthicas, lo postrimero de las cosas temerosas y espantables es la muerte y esto con gran razón. Ca por aquella fallesçemos y dexamos de seer. E commo el principal desseo de los animales sea conservar su seer, dubdan y reçelan la muerte assí commo cosa contraria y destruydora de su seer. (...) E ya sea que por nesçessidad de natura la muerte non se puede escusar e el temor suyo congoxe e trabaje las voluntades de los onbres, empero el grand filósopho Platón, prínçipe e caudillo de la conpaña achadémica, por que con reposado e folgado corazón pudísemos beuir, fabló en esto assí commo en todas las otras cosas divinalmente, introduciendo a Sócrates que disputa e faze persuasiones e razones, por donde entiende provar [que] la muerte, non solamente non se deve temer, mas antes deve dessear, por que quosi por divinal sentido arraygue de nosotros el miedo de la muerte e el temor de aquella aparte de nuestras voluntades26 (folio 70v; Gonzáles Rolán y Saquero Suárez-Somonte, 2000, p. 183;
Para Gonzáles Rolán y Saquero Suárez-Somonte (2000, p. 174), la idea central aquí planteada es “que la muerte es la cosa que más asusta, espanta y hace dudar al hombre, porque su mayor deseo es conservar su ser”, y por eso es natural preguntar “qué razón abastava a traher a los omnes a se disponer a morir, seyendo aquella [= la muerte] lo postrimero de las cosas temerosas e espartables” (folio 70v; Gonzáles Rolán y Saquero Suárez-Somonte, 2000, p. 183; Pseudo-Platón, s/d, p. 3).

Las voluntades de los hombres que necesitan ser trabajadas frente a la inescapabilidad de la muerte son decierto aquellas descritas por Gutierre Díaz de Games en El Victorial o Crónica de don Pero Niño (hacia 1436):

Díze Platón que non andemos siempre con nuestra voluntad, mas contra nuestra voluntad, ca el que anda contra su voluntad éste es el segundo andar, que es bueno, e éste es de natura del alma, que manda el cuerpo con los otros sentidos. Estonçe el cuerpo es tenido, e regido, e endereçado por el alma, e fermeséalo con ayunos, e oraciones, e castidad, e con buenas costumbres. E que si el cuerpo es dexado e dado a su voluntad, dase a corrucciones, e luxurias, e avarías, e sobervias, e a otros pecados que son de natura de la tierra, que govierna el cuerpo con los otros elementos. Donde díze el mismo Platón: “Mientra heres joven, por seso múdate, alinpiate e dispón toda verdad; dexa toda falsa cosa, que es de natura de la tierra”. Abstente, e dispón, e usa toda verdad; dexa toda falsa cosa, sc. todo pecado27 (Díaz de Games, 2001, p. 240)

En su Diálogo y Razonamiento en la muerte del marqués de Santillana (c. 1460)29, obra realizada “como una consciente emulación de los dos diálogos que había traducido, el Axiocho primero y más tarde el Fedón”30 (Gonzáles Rolán y Saquero Suárez-Somonte, 2000, p. 178), Díaz de Toledo (el “Doctor”) asiste al Marqués en el simulado escenario del lecho de muerte de este (en 24 o 25 de marzo de 1458), junto con su nuevo patrono, el Conde de Alba y Señor de Valdecomeja (Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, primo del Marqués). Eso se pasa en España pocos años antes que Juan [Ramírez] de Lucena [1430-1506 o 07] meditaba no sobre el morir sino sobre el vivir31 (Cherchi, 1992, p. 112).

liæ princeps Plato, ut quieto et tranquillo animo uiuere ualeamus, quemadmodum cetera diuinitus, ita in hoc sermo Socratem disputantem facit eumque persuadentem mortem non solum non timendam sed exoptandam esse. Sapientissimi quippe medici munus, ut ab his qui rationem potius quam sibi ipsis consentiunt, quasi diuino quodam pharmaco, mortis metum abstergat et huiusmodi languorem mentibus ingentium funditus amoueat” (Gonzáles Rolán y Saquero Suárez-Somonte, 2000, p. 182).


29Diálogo y razonamiento entre el noble y generoso señor D. Fernando Alvarez de Toledo conde de Alva et Señor de Valdecorneja, et el doctor Pero Díaz, oydor et refrendario del rey nuestro señor et del su Consejo, et su alcalde mayor de las alcaldas. Ms. Santander, Biblioteca Menéndez Pelayo, n. 13; Diálogo è razonamiento en la muerte del Marqués de Santillana, Ms. 10.226 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, editado por Paz y Meliá, 1892, pp. 247-360.

30 “Its first ten chapters are a dialogue of contemptu mortis like the Axiophus; the remainder, like the Phaedo, are concerned with immortalty” (Round, 1993, p. 175).

31 Lucena tradujo libremente al castellano en 1463 el Dialogus de Felicitate Vitae, escrito en 1445 por Bartolomeo Facio para Alfonso V de Aragón, dándole el título de De Vita Beata (1483). En esta obra, dialogan sobre la felicidad de la vida el propio Lucena y los ya fallecidos poetas Íñigo López de Mendoza (el Marqués de Santillana) y Juan de Mena (autor del Laberinto de Fortuna), así como Al-
Para Jeremy Lawrance,

Aun si era analfabeto, el español del siglo XV se encontraba rodeado por la propaganda de la Muerte y del contemptus mundi\(^32\): la contemplación de pinturas, estatuas o grabados xilográficos de calvarios, Crucifijos, Piedades o del Ecce Homo lo invitaba a meditar constantemente sobre su propia temporalidad, meditación que se le recomendaba como ejercicio espiritual especialmente meritórico (Lawrance, 1998, p. 8).

De todos los productos (...) de ideas tardomedievales sobre la muerte, sin embargo, el más típico era el ars bene moriendi, género que se difundió por toda Europa desde fines del siglo XIV y alcanzó su máxima popularidad con la llegada de las imprentas incunables a fines del XV. (...) Las mentalidades del Arte de bien morir formaban el elemento de base en la compleja estratigrafía de los textos funerarios del siglo XV; ninguno se escapaba de su influencia. En su Diálogo e razonamiento en la muerte del marqués de Santillana sobre la muerte de Íñigo López de Mendoza em 1458, Pedro Díaz de Toledo remedaba los diálogos platónicos Axíoco (sobre la muerte del padre de Axíoco) y Fedón (sobre la muerte de Sócrates) que antes tradujera para el propio Santillana en 1444 y 1446-47. Marcaba así un hito importante en la transición a formas renacentistas (Lawrance, 1998, p. 11 y 13).

En el primer capítulo del Diálogo y Razonamiento en la muerte del marqués de Santillana, Díaz de Toledo plantea el problema esencial de la obra, la relación entre el alma y el cuerpo. El Marqués dice:

(...) se me representa delante el terror de la muerte que turba mi entendimiento. Represéntaseme que, muriendo, seré privado desta luz de los bienes deste mundo; de la vista é participación de tan gloriosa prosapia é [ = &] compañía de fíjos é nietos, é yaceré en el sepulcro, deforme é sin sentido, convertido con diversos animales, que así lo dixo el profeta Isayas: — “Tu cuerpo se desfará, é pulilla\(^33\) io comerá, é tu vestidura será gusano\(^34\). (...) Non creo que juzgares sin razón que aquestas é semejantes razones me deban mover é conturbar, aunque quiero que creades que quanto posibilidat basta, yo me esfuerço á pagar esta debda de natura, mas yo ruego que por aliviaçion de aquesta agonía é trabajo en que esto (...), me digades las razones que vos ocurrirán para satisfazer á las cosas dichas que me conturban, é á otras semejantes (Paz y Meliá, 1892, pp. 252-253).

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32 “(...) la vanidad de la vida: Vanitas vanitatum, dixit Eclesiastes; vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas (Eccl. 1, 2), (...) con el bíblico [sic] Ubi sunt qui ante nos in hoc mundo fuere? [‘Dónde están quienes antes que nosotros vivieron?’] y toda la tradición medieval sobre la muerte, darán como resultado una meditación sobre la fugacidad de cosas y seres, con una contemplación positiva o negativa según los casos. A menudo, el problema se resolvió en el contemptu mundi, en la actitud de desprecio ante el mundo y la vida que provocarán un tétrico memento mori. El mundo es considerado en el tratado de Inocencio III De contemptu mundi enemigo del alma, siendo la muerte la liberadora por significar el acceso a una nueva vida. La actitud meramente contemplativa de los santos de Gonzalo de Berceo [autor de Vida de San Millán, Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos, Poema de Santa Oria y Martirio de San Lorenzo] adquiere un tono bien distinto a partir del siglo XIV, cuando nace tímida mente el sentido trágico de la muerte, si bien no hay que relacionar tanto esta modificación con un accidente coyuntural (la Peste Negra, por ejemplo) como en un conjunto de circunstancias que afecta a los hombres, a su miedo, estado de nerviosismo, anhelos religiosos y supervivencia material” (Ferrer García, 2007, p. 123).

33 Castellano moderno polilla; insecto saprófago. Del mozárabe paulilla, probablemente relacionado con el latín pabulare, “comer”.

34 Traducción libre de Isayas, 14: 11.
El Doctor contesta diciendo:

Por satisfazer á vuestro mandado, introduzire algunas persuasiones é razones filosóficas que non discrepen de la verdad de nuestra santa fe católica. (...

Paso desta presente vida, perderéis todo sentido corporal, é non seres vos mismo aquel cerca del cual acaecerán las cosas dichas. (...

El filósofo que dijo que el hombre es alma imortal detenida en cárcel mortal es sabidamente Platón, así traducido por Díaz de Toledo: “las ánimas (...) están ligadas e atadas en tanto que están con los cuerpos, como mediante cárcel (...)” (Fedón, 82e; Round, 1993, p. 274). La turbación no debe afligir a aquel que conozca las rectas “persuasiones y razones filosóficas”, pues nuestra alma, que “de todo en todo es imortal”, no perece cuando se desata del cuerpo (Fedón, 88b; Round, 1993, p. 284). Y se el cuerpo no siente ni se puede ni se debe llamar hombre sin el alma, así ocurre porque las almas corporificadas “están en gran ignorancia” (Fedón, 82e; Round, 1993, p. 274). Cuando Díaz de Toledo tiene por cierto que el alma, según obró en vida, con la muerte va a recibir de Aquél quien la creó “galardón ó pena”, también sigue Platón (Round, 1993, pp. 222, líneas 21-22, y 223, líneas 31-32).

En el capítulo segundo del Diálogo y Razonamiento el Marqués dice: “Sy asy como de suso dezís, que ser libre de aquesta vida es una mudanza de mal en bien, bevir en esta vida, mala cosa es. E con razón los santos é los sabios é prudentes varones debían procurar é trabajar de salir desta vida, como quien procura de se librar de mal é trabajo” (Paz y Meliá, 1892, p. 255). El Doctor interpreta las implicaciones de lo que ha dicho el Marqués: él quiere “que diga é prueue cómo ésta nuestra vida tiene más parte de trabajo é mal que non de bien é reposo”, y también “por quál razón los santos é sabios non procuran de se delibrar desta vida, matándose, ó en otra manera, por salir della como de cosa mala” (Paz y Meliá, 1892, p. 255). En los capítulos 2 a 4, el Doctor expone que el bien y el mal de la vida son cosas relativas según quien los viva, pues “el bueno é virtuoso non se ensoberbece con los bienes temporales, nin se abate nin quebranta con los males; é el malo, por tanto es penado con infelicidad é miseria, porque se corrompió con la felicidad é bien aventuranza” (id., ibid., p. 260) - “Uno é ese mismo trabajo é anxia é persecución é mal temporal prueua á los buenos é los limpia é purifica, é los malos condena é destruye é perde” (p. 261). El pecador toma el mal que le llega como una maldición de Dios, mientras el sabio lo acepta como una prueba enviada por Dios. No todo en la vida es malo, y no todo lo que el cuerpo padece es negativo. Ser libre de esta vida es un cambio de mal en bien solamente para los buenos, pues cuando “los muertos rebiven, e de los muertos son fechos bivos, (...) e a las buenas ánimas les va bien, e a las malas mal” (Fedón 72d; Round, 1993, p. 274). Las palabras que concluyen la sentencia, si bien aparezan como siendo de Sócrates,
son enteramente de Díaz de Toledo.

Pero Díaz entiende que la temperanza es una virtud capital\textsuperscript{35}, así como la prudencia\textsuperscript{36}. No cambian de mal a bien con la muerte los de “loca tenprançia” (“los que son tenprados por una manera de [des]tempranza”), aquellos que no conocen verdadeiramente los bienes ni las virtudes \textit{(Fedón 68e; Round, 1993, pp. 246-47). Los hombres temperantes y prudentes no procuran se librar de esta vida matándose; la muerte no purifica a los suicidas, y “el que fuere a los infiernos ni limpio ni purificado (...) yazerá en el lodo, e (...) los que fueren limpios y purificados morarán com los dioses” (parafraesis de Díaz de Toledo al \textit{Fedón} 69d; Round, 1993, p. 247).

En el capítulo quinto del \textit{Diálogo y Razonamiento} (que trata entero del suicidio), el Marqués quiere saber si, ocurre que por la muerte el hombre pasa de mal a bien, por quál razón los virtuosos no se matan para se libertar de las penas de esta vida:

Si es así verdad que pasar desta vida mortal á la vida inmortal es pasar de mal á bien, de miseria é trabajo á folganza y reposo, por quál causa los virtuosos é discretos non se trabajan é procuran de salir desta vida mezquina, é ser trasladados en vida inmortal. E sy bien se me acuerda, parésco me que ley de uno que se llamó Theobroto\textsuperscript{37}, que después de aver leído el libro de Platón, \textit{de la Inmortalidad del ánima}, con gran corazon se dexó despeñar del muro, por salir de las miserias desta vida, é ser trasladado en vida mejor\textsuperscript{38}. Así mismo sabéys que Séneca en una de sus epístolas á Lucilio [Lucilio] escrie que el grand Catón, la noche antes que muriése, después de haber leydo el dicho libro, é conocida la disputación que Platón faze en el \textit{de la inmortalidad del ánima}, se metió un cuchillo por el cuerpo, é asy morió\textsuperscript{39} (Paz y Meliá, 1892, p. 263; grifo nuestro).

En una glosa a su Introducción al \textit{Fedón}, las informaciones de Díaz de Toledo sobre Catón son más completas:

Segund dize Séneca en la xxixija epístola a Lucillo, Catón la noche ante que muriése, puso su espada a la cabecera, [e] se puso a leer aqueste libro de Platon llamado Fedró. Las quales dos cosas quiso fazer en los postrimeros días suyos: la una, que es el leer del libro, porque se supiesse que quería morir; la otra, que es el poner del cuchillo a la cabecera, porque se supiesse que podía morir. E otro día


\textsuperscript{36} Cf. por ejemplo, las parafrases de Díaz de Toledo, el \textit{Fedón}, 69a-b [Round, 1993, p. 247; “El verdadero dinero, por que todas las cosas se han de trocar, es la prudencia, por la qual todas las cosas han de ser vendidas (...). Quitada la prudencia e trocadas unas cosas por otras, la virtud se faze servil, e ninguna cosa tiene de sano nin de verdadero”], y 79d [Round, 1993, p. 267; “(...) E aquesta virtude com que el ánima entende aquesto se llama prudencia”].

\textsuperscript{37} En verdad, Cleombroto de Ambracia (\textit{Fedón}, 59c3).


siguiente, dize que se metió el cuchillo por el cuerpo, diiziendo: “O fortuna, non
has hecho cosa en engargar a mi propósito, que si yo he peleado fasta aquí, non he
peleado por mi libertad sinon por la libertad de la patria, nin me [he] avido en esta
guerra ansí porfioso tanto por ser libre como por bevir entre libres” (Round, 1993,
p. 255).

“O quan bien murio Caton”40, dice el Marqués (López de Mendoza, 2000, p.
353) en su obra Proverbios o Centíloquio (LVI). Díaz de Toledo no concorda con
esta lecturas; al Prólogo de su traducción de la epistola A los jóvenes, leemos: “[qué
segurança puede tener] el que cree ser bien auenturado, si es uera o falsa opur ficta41
la gloria que possee y cómo y en quánto grado la deue rescebir y tratar. E aun
entre las desperadas aduersidades collocan qual gloria ninguna prosperidad non
podrja dar. ¿Ca qué mejor cosa pudo alcançar Caton que el cuchillo con que se mató
(...)?” (folio 65r; Herrera Guíllén, s/d, p. 3; Lawrance, 1991, p. 101). En el Diálogo y
Razonamiento, Díaz de Toledo dice que Catón se mató “con poco corazón” y no con
virtud (Paz y Meliá, 1892, p. 268). Querer morir no es problemático (véase el Fedón,
63e-64a); Platón cree que el problema está en matarse cuando no hay compulsión
por causas inevitables (61e-62a): él sugiere que el suicidio es justificable cuando Dios
“ponga alguna necesidad para ello” (Fedón, 62c; Round, 1993, p. 237). Entre esas
necesidades Pero Díaz no pone la defensa del honor, aunque en España, al menos
desde la época de Alfonso X “el Sabio” (rey de Castilla, León y Galicia entre 1252 y
1284), con su “exagerada consideración de la fama/honra como estructura mental
nobiliária”,

La accidentalidad del cuerpo y su asociación forzosa con un alma inmortal incidia
en la aparición de la muerte moral durante la vida (...). Los ideales de la nobleza se hacían
presentes en la sociedad medieval, marcándose la nítida diferencia entre la verecundia
y la inverecundia, la honra que era “como adelantamiento señalado con loor que goza ome
por razón del logar que tiene”42 (Segunda Partida, XIII, [Ley] XVIIª) y la deshonra, pues
“después que es enfamado, maguer non aya culpa, muerto es quanto al bien e a la honra

En la discusión sobre el suicidio en el Diálogo y Razonamiento, Díaz de Toledo
contesta, utilizando argumentos cristianos (trás Basilio y Augustín, por ejemplo), la
interpretación estoica o senequiana de este tema del Fédon, obra en la cual Platón
condena el suicidio (61c-62c)44. Díaz de Toledo también contesta, en la misma
ocasión, la defensa estoica45 de la muerte voluntaria hecha por “Bías” en el Bías
contra Fortuna (1448; publ. 1502)46, del Marqués de Santillana (CXXI-CXXII): “(...)”

40 Los versos dicen así: “O quan bien murio Caton/ sy permitiese/ nuestra ley & consyntiese/ tal
41 La expresión “opur ficta” no aparece en la transcripción de Herrera Guíllén.
42 “Honrra tanto quiere dezir, como adelantamiento señalado con loor, que gana ome por razon
del logar que tiene, o por fazer fecho conoscido que faze, o por bondad que en el ha. E aquellos que
Dios quiere que la han complida, llegan al estado mejor, a que llegar pueden en este mundo que es
dura todavia, tambien en muerte como en vida (...)(Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el IX [sic];
en verdad, el X], con las variantes de más interés, y con la glosa del lic. Gregorio Lopez (...), vertida al
castellano (...) por D. Ignacio Sanponts y Barba, D. Ramón Marti de Eixala, y D. José Ferrer y Subirana
43 “(...) dos yerros son como iguales, matar al ome, o enfamarlo de mal; porque el ome, despues que
es enfamado, maguer non aya culpa, muerto es quanto al bien, e a la honra deste mundo; e demas,
tal podria ser el enfamamiento, que mejor le seria la muerte, que la vida. Onde los que esto fiziesen,
deuen auer pena, como si le matassen, quanto en sus cuerpos, e en otros sus bienes. (...)(Las Siete
Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el IX, Tomo 1. Barcelona: Antonio Bergens 7 Ca., 1843, p. 832).
44 Salvo el suicidio que resulta de una necesidad creada por Dios (Fédon, 62c).
45 Cf. Alvaro Alonso, “El estoicismo y el debate de Bías contra Fortuna”. Dicenda. Cuadernos de
46 Poema consolatorio dedicado al Conde de Alba, su primo, encarcelado en 1448 por el Condesta-
recibirla/ con paciencia,/ sin punto de resistencia,/ e aun oso dezir, pedirla./ Asy lo fizo Catón (...)” (López de Mendoza, 2000, p. 420). Según Cerchi, “para el Doctor, el suicidio de Catón es, como todos los demás, un acto de pusilanimidad y no de fortaleza” (Cherchi, 1992, p. 116):

Nuestro doctor se enfrentaba a dos actitudes opuestas entre sí, y las dos bastante bien arraigadas en la mentalidad del tiempo. [1] Valorizan el cuerpo los que ven la muerte como enemiga de la vida. (...) [2] Al lado de esta nostalgia por el cuerpo sano, fuente de goce, vive la tendencia opuesta, que considera al cuerpo como un impedimento y a la muerte como una liberación. Es la actitud estoica. Las dos corrientes son inmanentistas y en cuanto tales son incompatibles con el credo Cristiano. Pero Díaz opone a las dos una valoración metafísica del cuerpo (Cherchi, 1992, p. 120).

En el Diálogo y Razonamiento, Díaz de Toledo reescribe las opiniones del Marqués (y indirectamente también de Platón) para presentarlas como más compatibles con las creencias cristianas, y neutralizar

la obra de Santillana, con su justificación del suicidio, con su indiferencia hacia el Infierno, con su predicar una separación entre alma y cuerpo, es decir, con una serie de principios y preceptos estoicos que no figuraban en las versiones corrientes [cristianas] del estoicismo. (...) La ficción poética distinguió entre el autor y Bías, así que Pero Díaz podia atacar la tesis del filósofo antiguo sin ofender la memoria y el renombre del Marqués (Cherchi, 1992, p. 120).

Sin embargo, la ficción poética es una cosa y la realidad practica es otra, y un autor anónimo escribió en una carta enviada al Arzobispo de Toledo, Alfonso Carrillo de Acuña, en 1462: “¡O, míseros tristes que estávades en Platón! Vosotros metistes entre las gentes grande turbación, grande movimiento y fabulaciones (...)(Parrilla García, 1997, pp. 98-99). El editor de la carta anónima escribe: “Aventuro la hipótesis de un juicio despreciativo hacia el filósofo como dardo que apunta a las actividades de algunos hombres incorporados al grupo de Carrillo, verbigracia Díaz de Toledo” (id., p. 98 n. 65). Cualas serían, entonces, las razones de un juicio despreciativo hacia Platón? Conforme Villacañas Berlanga, “Platón incluía indeseables aspectos construidos alrededor de la transmigración de las almas47, así como la más que dudosa tesis de la existencia del alma con anterioridad al nacimiento del ser humano” (Villacãnas Berlanga, 2010, p. 2). No obstante, la opinión general de Díaz de Toledo en relación a Platón es favorable, y para eso cuentan seguramente las opiniones (pero no las motivaciones) de Platón a favor de la imortalidad del alma y contra el suicidio; además, el pagano Platón no estaba totalmente engañado en sus creencias sobre la relación del alma con el cuerpo, la imortalidad y la providencia divina.

CONCLUSIÓN

Admirador y traductor de Platón, Díaz de Toledo es un valoroso heredero de

47 En sus perífrases y glosas al Fédon, Díaz de Toledo advierte contra la transmigración - la idea que “nos somos fechos de los muertos” (Fédon 70c; Round, 1993, p. 249). En su glosa al Fédon, 70c y ss., dice: “(...) las razones que aqui faze Plato para provar la inmortalidad del anima ante que nos ayamos seido [ante que nuestros cuerpos fuesen formados’ (Round, 1993, p. 248 glosa)] non concluyen, e proceden de principios errados en philosophia” (Round, 1993, p. 249 glosa).
la tradición clasicista de Basilio de Cesarea y de los humanistas italianos cuando piensa que puede superarse el temor de la muerte con la ayuda de las enseñanzas de los hombres de la antigüedad y en concreto de aquellas de Platón, pero cree que esas instrucciones son propedéuticas a la enseñanza y la práctica cristiana de la buena muerte como amiga de la vida digna y virtuosa. Una locución del Sócrates platónico hacia el término del Fedón es pragmática acerca de la existencia de la inmortalidad del alma: “es cosa conveniente e digna afirmar e creer que tales e semejantes cosas avengan a las animas nuestras e a las moradas delas, caso que dezirlo paresca cosa peligrosa. Mas el peligro es honesto” (114d; Round, 1993, p. 325)48. Esos es así porque, para las virtudes y sabiduría en vida, “su gualardón es muy claro, e devemos tener grande esperança de usar tal gualardón (114c; Round, p. 325)49. Para Díaz de Toledo, esta esperanza es confianza en Dios, señor e guía supremo - mientras el filósofo dice, “fablando a manera de trágico”; “a mi llama agora la suerte” (115a; Round, 1993, p. 325-26)50, el creyente comenta: “Aquesto dize porque los que compusieron las tragédias tovieran aquesta manera de fablar: conviene a saber que el fado e la suerte guían todas las cosas (ent[end]iendo por fado e suerte otra cosa que non es Dios)” (Round, 1993, p. 326 glosa). La forma por la cual el hombre se deja guiar por Dios no es difícil de vislumbrar; Villacañas Berlanga (2010, p. 10) piensa que el Fedón de Díaz de Toledo ha venido “a favorecer la superioridad de la vida contemplativa sobre la vida activa y a romper el equilibrio doctrinal de la época anterior”: en la filosofía de Platón se podría situar la aspiración humanista de la deficatio (Villacañas Berlanga, 2010, p. 9), como dijo Díaz de Toledo en una glosa al Fédon (82b): “Los buenos se dizen trasladarse en dioses porque son fechos santos, e asi son dioses por participación e non por exencia” (Round, 1993, p. 273 glosa)51.

ABSTRACT: The “art of dying well” consists in leaving the bodily existence without disturbance or fear, with the certainty of immortality of the soul and of future awards for the virtuous and good ones. According to Plato's Socrates, “the true philosophers and they alone are always most eager to release the soul, and just this - the release and separation of the soul from the body - is their study” (Phaedo, 67d, tr. H. N. Fowler). Jeremy Lawrance is of the opinion that “of all products (...) of late medieval ideas about death, the most typical was indeed the ars bene moriendi, a genre that spread throughout Europe since the late fourteenth century and that reached its peak of popularity with the arrival of the late fifteenth incunabula printers”, and according to Consolation Baranda “the concern for the soul emerges in a wide range of works of the fifteenth century intended to serve as consolatio mortis. In such a situation it is curious that commentaries about immortality are always found. The certainty of life after death seems a crucial element to comfort a dying person, but if it were so general and obvious such insistency would be unnecessary”. In this context, we analyze the theme of “dying well”, the condemnation of suicide, and the teachings about the immortality of the soul in fifteenth century Spain, studying the translation of the Phaedo, by Pero Díaz de Toledo, into the Castilian language (1446-1447, from the Latin version of Leonardo Bruni [Leonardo Arezzo/Arecio, Leonardo Aretino]), his translation of the pseudo-Platonic Axiocus (c. 1444-1445; from the Latin version of Cencio Rustici, around 1437), his translation of the homily

48 τοῦτο καὶ πρέπει μοι δοκεῖ καὶ άξθον καινονέσσαι σιμάνεργος οὔτως έχειν - καλός γάρ ὁ κίνδυνος” . Trad. Luis Gil: “eso sí estimo que conviene creerlo, y que vale la pena correr el riesgo de creer que es así. Pues el riesgo es hermoso”.
49 καλόν γάρ το άθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς μεγάλη”. Trad. Luis Gil: “es hermoso el galardón y la esperanza grande”.
50 ἡμὲν δὲ νῦν ἡδὴ καλῆς, φαίνει ἄν ἀνήρ τραγικός, ἢ εἰμιμαρμένη”. Trad. Luis Gil: “A mí me llama ya ahora el destino, diría un héroe de tragedia”.
To the young ones of Basil of Caesarea (1450), and his *Dialogue and reasoning in the death of the Marquis of Santillana* (before 1460). Díaz de Toledo was chosen by King John II, with the support of Don Íñigo López de Mendoza, Lord of La Vega and (after 1445) Count of Real de Manzanares and Marquis of Santillana, to translate and write some texts for the education of prince Henry (later Henry IV), and in this context are situated the works we have studied (and also a translation and glosses of the *Proverbs of [Pseudo] Seneca*; between 1442 and 1446). Díaz de Toledo understood the pseudo Platonic *Axiocus* primarily as an effort to demonstrate the “*inmortalidat de la ánima*”; he used his translation of the *Phaedo* to refute the belief that the soul dies with the body, and in the first part of his *Dialogue and reasoning* (Chapters 1 to 11, of 21), in a conversation with the dying Marquis, he used part of his translations of the *Axiocus* and then of the *Phaedo*. About his translation of the *Phaedo* Laurette Godinas says that, “in addition to comments that place in its original context narratives that can serve the good understanding of the work by the fifteenth century reader, we find in this translation other [comments] that establish a direct relationship between the ancient text and the religious culture of medieval man. Díaz de Toledo endeavored to translate into Castilian the teaching of Plato’s dialogues, not only for its content but also because of its form of exposition, which allows the author, in his own words (in the *Dialogue and reasoning*), to “*explicar mejor é más complida mente su entención*” (explaining his intention better and in a fullest sense). Díaz de Toledo explains the reasons for his translation of the *Phaedo* in the Introduction, where direct allusions (absent from Bruni’s translation) are made to those who deny the immortality of the soul, beginning with the Epicureans and Sadducees. Our author takes for granted the “true principle” that “the world had a beginning, and will have an end” (gloss to the *Phaedo*, 70c), and he believes “that God must bring all men to judgement for the things they will do. This would not occur if the soul would not be immortal” (Introduction). In this way, he reviews the arguments of the “two sects” of which the pseudo-Aristotle speaks in the *Liber de Pomo* - the first, that of those who do not believe in the doctrine of the eternity of the world, who think that the world has no “*sustentatorem nec gubernatorem*” (a belief particularly identified in the past with the Epicureans), and “*qui negant radicem*” (an old accusation against the Sadducees), and the second sect, that of the scientists “*qui dicunt quod anima simul sit creata cum corpore vel de corpore*”. Díaz de Toledo agrees in part with the “second sect”, commenting on the *Phaedo*, 72 d-e: “according to what is often said, (...) our soul is created at the time when the body is organized, and never existed before. (...) And this is the opinion of Aristotle, and [also] what our faith believes”. Plato’s teaching on death gained prominence for the “well dying” of Castilian speakers after the translations of Pero Díaz de Toledo; his educational effort contributed to the image of Plato as the pagan thinker, “faithless philosopher, only attracted by reason and natural lumen” (Introduction to the *Phaedo*), who came closer to the truths of the Bible and of Christianity, especially regarding his representation of life beyond the grave, when men “who uprightly philosophized, and died completely pure and clean”, are “*trasladados en linaje de dioses*” (allowed to join the lineage of gods; translation of the *Phaedo*, 82b), “they are made saints, and so they are gods by participation and not by essence” (gloss by Díaz de Toledo).

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Manuel/Maximus Planudes (c. 1255-c. 1305) was, arguably, the greatest of Byzantium philologists. He was a monk, a theologian, a poet (of sacred and profane verses); he was an avid reader of Greek texts, many of which he edited, commented, provided with scholia, even copied on his own; he was able to read Latin texts and translate them into his mother tongue, at a time when he was almost the only one among Greek scholars to do so; he was also a passionate teacher, and, as such, he was always interested in making some of the texts he had read or was reading accessible to his students. The textual tradition of a number of Greek authors has therefore been marked by his work, and the manuscripts prepared in his scriptorium are often unavoidable sources for the constitution of the text.

This is the case, for instance, of Plutarch, possibly Planudes' favourite pagan writer.1 This is the case of the Greek epigrams collected in the famous Anthologia Planudea, 388 of which are unknown to the so-called Anthologia Palatina (assembled in Byzantium at the beginning of 10th century by Constantinos Cephalas).2 And this is also the case of the poetic texts (among which at least Nonnus, Theocritus, Nicander, Tryphiodorus can be listed) contained in the crucial Laur. Plut. 32.16, one of Planudes' partial autographs, to be considered codex unicus for many of the texts it attests.3

One could at first be surprised in remarking the fact that only twice, in the course of his relatively short, yet so intense scholarly life, Planudes devoted himself to the study of Plato. There are, however, several reasons that could have lead a

1 See Planudes' Ep. 106 (p. 169, l. 18f. Leone), addressed to Alexios Philantropenos, at the time (c. 1295) a young prefect in Asia Minore: ἐμοὶ δ' ἔδοξε τὰ τοῦ Πλούταρχου γράψαι βιβλία· πάνυ γάρ, ὡς οἶσθα, τὸν ἄνδρα φιλῶ. Planudes' Plutarch is to be identified with ms. Ambr. C 126 inf. (= Gr. 859, 1294/1295 AD; it was copied by, among others, Planudes himself and Ioannes Zarides, one of Planudes' students; it contains Moralia 1-69 along with the Vitae of Galba and Otho, inserted between treatises 24 and 27; on the ms. see Turyn 1972, I 81-87 and tables 59-68) and with ms. Par. Gr. 1671 (1296 AD; it contains Moralia 1-69, copied from the Ambrosianus, and the Vitae; the Quaestiones convivales e treatises 70-77 are likely to have been added after Planudes' death).

2 Cephalas' anthology was undoubtedly the basis of Planudes' work. However, the Byzantine scholar reorganized the material available to him in an absolutely original, systematic way. In fact, Planudes' epigrams collection is divided in 7 books, each one of which contains compositions of the same genre: I, Εὐπανωτικά and Προτερπτικά; II, Σκωτικά και Συμποτικά; III, Ἑπτάμβα; IV, Ἐκφραστικά; V, epigrams by Christodorus of Coptos on Zeuxippos' statues; VI, Ἀναθηματικά; VII, Ἑρωτικά. Books I-IV and VI are moreover divided by alphabetic κεφάλαια. The Anthology is attested by Planudes' autograph, ms. Ven. Marc. Gr. 481, copied at latest in 1301 (the dating is however uncertain, and much discussed: actually, in the subscriptio of the ms., data indictionis and annum mundi do not coincide, since the former indicates 1299 AD, while the latter, correction of a previous cancelled dating, points to 1301).

3 The Laur. Plut. 32.16 is one of the most studied Planudean manuscripts. It was copied, in two or more distinct phases, during the last 20 years of the 13th century. Following the original order of the quaternions (reconstructed by Gallavotti 1959), Nonnus' Διονυσιακά with scholia, Theocritus' Idyllia, Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica, Hesiod (Opera et dies, Theogonia, Scutum), the Cynegetica attributed to Oppian of Apamea, Oppians of Anazarbus' Halieutica, Moschus, Nicander's Θηριακά and Αλέξιαρμαχα, Tryphiodorus' Πλούτον Ἀλέωτως, Ps.-Phocylides' Sententiae, the so-called Laurentiana epigrammatic collection (divided into two different sections separated by some Gregory of Nazianzus poems).
Byzantine scholar to neglect, at least at a certain extent, the Greek philosopher. It is for instance well known that Plato's dialogues support doctrines placing themselves far from the Christian dogma (such is the case, among others, of the reincarnation); several dialogues contain explicit attacks against the art of rhetoric (the Gorgias being only the most striking of the many possible examples), which could not be accepted by a scholar like Planudes, author, among other school texts, of a widespread out-and-out 'textbook' devoted to the teaching of rhetoric.4 Last but not least, Plato's dialogues famously make frequent, explicit references to homosexual activities (the Banquet being the most obvious case), a behaviour that Planudes (who had famously eliminated all references of the same kind in his epigrammatic anthology) could not but firmly condemn.5

Despite (and possibly because of) these concerns, Planudes decided to insert a substantial Plato section in the anthology of various Christian as well as pagan prose texts he prepared for his students at the end of the 13th century. The work, usually referred to as Collectanea Planudea or Συναγωγή (henceforth Syn.), presents the chosen textual portions in the form of compendia (and, significantly, not in the form of excerpta). It includes passages from different authors, dealing with several different matters, among which one could list: geography (Strabo), anecdotic and antiquarian interests (Pausanias, Ioannes Lydus), zoology (Aelianus, Aristotle's Historia animalium), history of the Roman republic (Ioannes of Antioch, Paeanius), history of the Roman Empire (Cassius Dio, in the epitome prepared by Ioannes Xiphilinus), rhetoric (Synesius), philosophy (Plato, Pseudo-Aristotle's de mundo), Christian faith (many still unidentified unpublished texts and authors).6 In this heterogeneous collection, nothing less than 226 compendia are devoted to Plato Tetralogies I-VII and Spuria.7 All dialogues are represented at least by one compendium, even though very short (it is the case, e.g., of the Hipparchus [comp. 141]); the only significant exception, the Ἐρασταί is probably due to Planudes’ mentioned idiosyncrasy against references to homosexual practices,8 an impression confirmed by the treatment of the Banquet, possibly the only dialogue the content

4 It is the so-called Planudean corpus rhetoricum (see Patillon 2008, p. LXXIII-LXXVI), devoted by Planudes to the introduction and commentary of the five canonical treatises for the teaching of rhetoric in Byzantium, that is: the Προγυμνάσματα by Aphthonius of Antioch (published by Rabe 1926 and, more recently, by Patillon 2008) and the Περὶ στάσεων, the Περὶ ἑρωτών, the Περὶ ἱδέων, and the Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος attributed to Hermogenes (the four treatises have been published by Rabe 1913; the five writings constitute what Rabe called 'P-Corpus', from its two main witnesses, Par. Gr. 1983 and Par. Gr. 2977). In addition to this, one should not forget that Planudes himself copied, with the collaboration of the mentioned Ioannes Zarides, the ms. Vat. Gr. 1340 of Aristotle's Rhetoric. The characteristic Byzantine interest in rhetoric is also attested, in Plato's textual tradition, by the Laur. Plut. 85.9, the famous and beautiful Platonis opera omnia which was the Greek model of Ficinus' Latin rendition; in fact, the ms. significantly contains, after some introductory texts (among which Alcinoous' Διδασκαλικός and Diogenes Laertius' Vita Platonis), and after Plato's nine complete Tetralogies, the speeches composed by Aelius Aristides against the philosopher in defence of the rhetorical art.

5 He was not however the only one. One could think, for instance, of Georgius Gemistus Plethon, who erased for ideological reasons several parts of Plato's text in his ms. (Ven. Marc. Gr. 189; see, about this, Pagani 2009, passim).

6 One could wonder why Plutarch is absent in this list. One of the possible reasons one could think of is the following: Plutarch was certainly less 'dangerous' than Plato, from Planudes' point of view, for students, who were likely to be allowed to read the Moralia and the Vita in their entirety (maybe using the 'editions' prepared by Planudes himself), given the fact that such texts did not require any revision (or censorship) on the part of the teacher.

7 The text of all Planudes' Plato compendia is now published in Ferroni 2015.

8 This may appear surprising, at first, given the content of the dialogue (essentially, a protreptic inviting to the practice of philosophy). We know, however, that Marsilio Ficino also was used to quote the work by means of the subtitle (Περὶ φιλοσοφίας), for similar concerns about references to homoerotic practices.
of which is intentionally hidden by Planudes' teaching concerns and summarizing efforts.

Around the same time (end of the 13th century/very first years of the 14th century) one can find the Byzantine scholar at the head of a team of nine scribes (among which one could also list Nikephorus Moschopoulos) who copied one of the most interesting preserved Plato manuscripts, the Vind. Phil. Gr. 21 (siglum Y).\(^9\) Planudes himself is at work at f. 30v-39v (*Phaed.* 97a-*Crat.* 394a7). The series of dialogues attested by Y (the so-called ‘Y-series’: Tetr. I-II, *Parm.*, *Gorg.*, *Men.*, *Hipp. I, Symp.*, *Ti.*, *Alc. I, Alc. II, Spuria*) does not respect the traditional tetralogical order, and was reproduced by later copies of the ms. (see, for instance, the Ven. gr. 189, owned by Plethon and Bessarion).

There are several features shared by both *Syn* and Y. First of all, Planudes is *personally* involved in both projects. That means that both works (a prose texts anthology conceived for students and a scholarly ‘edition’ of a choice of dialogues belonging to the first half of Plato's corpus) are supposed to reflect, at least partially, his views (for instance on culture, or on the preservation of the Greek pagan heritage), his purposes, his interests, and, also, his *modus operandi*. Now, one cannot but notice that this is exactly the case; and one of the most striking features to be remarked is that the Byzantine scholar is far from being a passive reader of Plato's Tetralogies I-VII.

Secondly, the scribe usually referred to by the siglum Xb is closely connected to both Planudes' Plato enterprises. Inmaculada Pérez Martín has suggested that he should be identified with Leon Bardales, Planudes' companion during his 1296-1297 diplomatic mission to Venice and brother of the better known Ioannes.\(^10\) He is the scribe of the oldest part of the Laur. Gr. 59.30, the oldest extant source for the text of *Syn.*, to be dated to the latest 13th century (it should therefore be almost contemporary to the preparation of the collection); and he is also one of the most active scribes operating in Y, being at work in two different extensive sections: f. 128r-182v (*Gorgias* [starting from 467a4], *Meno, Hippias, Banquet, Timaeus* [up to 19d2]) and f. 213r-233v (*Alcibiades I and II, Spuria* [it is the final part of the ms.]).

Thirdly, there is a strong connection between Planudes and the *Phaedo*, which is clearly underlined by both Y and *Syn*. We have already seen that it is at *Phaedo* 97a that Planudes’ intervention as a copyist in the Vienna ms. starts (it lasts until *Cratylus* 394a7); in addition to that, it is to be remarked the special consideration reserved to our dialogue in *Syn*. The sylloge contains 226 Plato compendia; 16 are taken from the *Phaedo*; one of them (comp. 32: we shall return to it soon) is the longest one (and one of the most complex) of the entire Plato section (110 lines). The critical edition of the *Phaedo* compendia takes more or less eleven and a half pages (see in comparison the compendia from the *Theaetetus*, ten pages, or from the *Gorgias*, eight pages), which makes our dialogue the most represented in Planudes’ prose texts collection. It is not hard to see the reason of this. The main theme of the dialogue is the demonstration of the immortality of the soul, something which could be certainly welcomed by a Byzantine Christian scholar; furthermore, it does not take a stand against the importance of rhetoric, and it does not make undesirable references to homosexual love either. From an ideological point of view, Planudes is very careful in dealing with the text: he devotes, for instance, an entire medium-length compendium to summarize the passage on the demonstration of the surviving of the soul (in Plato's Hades) after the death of the body (comp. 25, corresponding to *Phaed.* 70c4-72c1); the argument is however presented in a way

10 Leon Bardales is also the recipient of two letters (5 and 32) by Planudes; on the man, see Pérez Martín 1997 p. 77-80. On Ioannes Bardales, one of the copyists active in Aristotle’s Vat. Gr. 258, see RGK III 296.
that does not oblige the reader to admit the unavoidable (and equally unacceptable) consequence implied by Plato's text (i.e. the reincarnation of souls). In fact, Planudes mainly focuses on the existence of souls before our birth and after our death, which is perfectly consistent with the Christian dogma; he never mentions, on the other hand, the possibility that the same soul could belong to different (human or even not-human) beings before and/or after our life. In this way, the Phaedo that Planudes allows his students to read becomes something which could never lead them astray.

There is, however, more. Fourthly, in fact, both works are yielded by what appears to be a careful ‘recensio’ of the available sources. It is well known that Y is a ‘Mischcodex,’ that is a manuscript the content of which is copied from several different sources. In particular, in the first Tetralogy, up to Phaed. 85a, Y derives, through the Escorialensis 1.1.13 (Esc), from the Par. Gr. 1808 (Par), one of the most important manuscripts belonging to the second of the three families in which the textual tradition of Tetr. I-VI is divided.11 In the remaining part of the Phaedo, as well as at the beginning of the Cratylus, Y derives from some lost copy of the Bodleianus Clarkianus 39 (a.D. 895; B), the main representative of the so-called first family; moreover, starting from Cratylus 424a6 up to the end of the Parmenides, the source of Y is apparently to be identified with a copy of Esc. As a consequence, Y must be considered as a source in which the textual transmission is primarily active in a horizontal direction; consequently, the good readings that the Vindobonensis introduces in the T family are not yielded by a healthy textual tradition, but are to be considered the outcome of contamination, or of a learned conjectural activity (something one would easily expect in the late 13th century Byzantium).

As far as Syn is concerned, it is in 1937 that Aubrey Diller12 identified its main Plato sources with the mentioned Par. Gr. 1808 (Par). This is certainly true; things are however not that simple. It is immediately to be remarked that Syn is not easy to collate, because the dialogical structure of Plato's original text is systematically deeply modified in Planudes' rehashes, simplifications, and abridgements. Direct speech form is always eliminated, to make room for a third-person 'external' exposition of the content of passages Planudes is interested in.

Let us have a quick look at the way Planudes behaves in dealing with the Phaedo. Among the many possible significant examples, I would like to read, at first, the famous 'swans passage' (Phaed. 84e4-85b4):

καί, ὡς ἔοικε, τῶν κύκνων δοκῶ φαυλότερος ὑμῖν εἶναι τὴν μαντικήν, οἱ ἐπειδὰν ἀνήσθωσιν ὅτι δεὶ αὐτοὺς ἀποθανεῖν, ἄφοβοιες καὶ ἐν τῷ πρὸςθεῖν χρόνῳ,

11 Here follow the results of the collation provided by D'Acunto 1996 (p. 268 n. 17): "Y presenta tutte le omissioni comuni a Par e Esc, ma condivide con il solo Escorialense un certo numero di ulteriori errori o varianti dai quali è immune Par (59c4 paragènontο paragènëce Y Esc; 61b6 τούτου] τούτων Y Esc; 62a2 ἀκόνοιας Y Esc; 62b 1 γ’ ἔχει] γ’ ἔχειν Y Esc; 62d6 ἐπιμελήσεσθαι] ἐπιμελεῖσθαι Y Esc; 67d4 ἀπό] ἀπό τοῦ Y Esc; 70c2 χρή] και χρή Y Esc; 71d3 ἔφη] ἔφην Y Esc; 75d3 ἀναγκαίον] ἀναγκαίον ημῖν εἶναι Par : ἀναγκαίον εἶναι ημῖν Y Esc; 79b8 ὁράτοι] ὁράτον οὖν Y Esc; 80c6 μάλα] μάλιστα Y Esc; 83b10 ὁ] ὁδόν Y Esc); presenta inoltre, com’è da aspettarsi, errori propri; il codice escorialense risulta copiato da Par non ancora corretto: diverse omissioni di Par, colmate successivamente da Par2, si ritrovano ancora nell’Escorialense e, di conseguenza, in Y (63b2 πρὸς ταῦτα om. Par. Y Esc : add. Par2; 67b9 ημῖν om. Par Y Esc : add. Par2; 70b2 ἡ om. Par Y Esc : add. Par2; 77b15 ημῖς om. Par Y Esc : add. Par2; 82a9 εἰς om. Par Y Esc : add. Par2); in alcuni casi Par cade in errore ma Esc e Y presentano entrambi la lezione corretta (60b5 τὸ et Y Esc : τῷ Par; 60d5 ἄρωται et Y Esc : ἔρθηται Par; 61e3 χρόνῳ om. Par : add. Y Esc; 77d3 ἀποθάναι et Y Esc : ἀποθάναι Par; 84e5 λέγεσθαι et Y Esc : λέξει θαται Par); altrove Y riporta a testo una lezione aggiunta supra lineam da Esc, così ad es. 60bl εἰς] ἐπὶ Esc6 : ἐπὶ Y."

12 See Diller 1937, passim.
Socrates is talking to Simmias, trying to reassure him about his own being calm and serene even in facing death … you must, it seems, think I have a poorer power of prophecy than the swans, who when they realize they must die, then sing more fully and sweetly than they’ve ever sung before, for joy that they are departing into the presence of the god whose servants they are. Though indeed mankind, because of their own fear of death, malign the swans, and say that they sing their farewell song in distress, lamenting their death; they don’t reflect that no bird sings when it is hungry or cold or suffers any other distress, not even the nightingale herself, nor the swallow, nor the hoopoe, birds that are reputed to sing their lamentations for distress. But, as I see it, neither they nor the swans sing in distress, but rather, I believe, because, belonging as they do to Apollo, they are prophetic birds, with foreknowledge of the blessings of Hades, and therefore sing and rejoice more greatly on that day than ever before. [Transl. Gallop.]
called φυσικοί, he refutes Cebetes’ more ‘dangerous’ objection (99d 4-107c 1). Here, Planudes does not just eliminate the dialogic for; he takes the liberty of changing the order of the main textual blocks. In his reworking of the passage (which corresponds to compendia 31-32 of the Plato section of Syn), Simmons’ argument about the ‘harmony-soul’ is immediately followed by Socrates’ refutation (comp. 31), a structure the compiler chooses to keep in the following compendium too, even though with a somewhat more complex argumentative structure. In fact, in comp. 32, Cebetes’ objection is followed by Socrates’ refutation (introduced by the Planudean formula ἡ γοῦν λόγος ὃτι ἀνώλεθρος ἡ ψυχή, τόνδε περαινεῖται τον τρόπον, “the solution [proving] that the soul is immortal is accomplished in the following way [l. 22f.]”), but the original presentation of the argument is modified by the insertion of preceding Phaedo section. Socrates’ counterargument to Cebetes is based on conceiving Forms as causal principles; what is big is big because of its participation to the Form of ‘Bigness’; similarly, the one becomes two not because division or addition, but because of the coming of the Dyad into it. At this point, Planudes comes back to a section of the dialogue he had previously left aside (Phaed. 98c6-100a2). It is the Dyad that makes the one two, just as it is Socrates’ opinion about what is just, and not the fact that his body is composed of bones and sinews, that keeps him seated in his cell, unwilling to escape (l. 37-61). This means that Planudes connects even more closely than Plato the philosophical analysis of the nature of the Forms (the famous δεύτερος πλοῦς) with the criticism toward Pre-Socratic thinkers (particularly, Anaxagoras). No causes but Forms are essential. This is why Planudes chooses to present these two textual sections in reversed order (compared to the original), so that he is able to give his students an example making Plato’s argument more evident, and, in a sense, ‘concrete.’ In the following (and last) part of the compendium, he goes back to Socrates’ refutation: if two Forms are opposed, the presence of one of them is enough to exclude the other; so, the soul being closely connected to the Form of Life, it can be safely stated that it cannot admit in itself the Form of Death. The human soul is, accordingly, immortal.

It is just such a characteristic nature of Planudes’ compendia that sometimes makes collating them so hard. In spite of this, it is possible to remark some striking analogies with the ‘behaviour’ of Y in the Phaedo: in particular, the Phaedo attested by Syn. seems to share with the text of Y the same plurality of source, with a clear ‘break’ occurring at some point in the second part of the dialogue, where a change of source is to be detected. As I have already mentioned, in spite of Phaedo’s being one of the most represented dialogues in Planudes’ collection, the data we dispose of do not allow us to draw a conclusive picture; one can however safely state the following:13

13 References to the text of Syn. are given according to Ferroni 2015. Syn. 20.9 = l. 9 of comp. 20 of Syn. The siglum W refers to the Vindobonensis Suppl. Gr. 7 (11th century), the ancestor of the so-called third family of Plato manuscript tradition (Tetr. I-VII). The Greek siglum β (employed by Strachan as well as his colleagues in the OCT edition of Tetr. I-II) refers to the sub-archetype of the first family, to be reconstructed on the basis of B, of the Tubingensis Gr. Mb 14 (11th century, siglum C), and of the Venetus Marcianus Gr. 185 (12th century, D). The Greek siglum δ refers to the sub-archetype of the third family, to be reconstructed on the basis of W, of the Vaticanus Palatinus Gr. 173 (10-11th century, siglum P), of the Parisinus Gr. 1813 (13th century, Q), and of a handful of other sources (for a full list of which, see Strachan’s OCT edition, p. 86). All collations of Tetr. I-II have been prepared by comparing the text of Syn. with the recent OCT text. It is almost never possible to be conclusive about Syn.’s stemmatic situation, above all as far as the so-called secondary tradition is concerned. Critical apparatus keep the reader
1. The connection of Syn. with Par appears, in the first part of the *Phaedo* (but also elsewhere in the *corpus*), undoubtable: 62c2 ἀποκτείνοι | ἀποκτιννύοι Par Syn 20.9 : ἀποκτίννει W P V; 69a7 ἄλλαγη | ἄλλα B : xxxx T : om. Par Syn 24.9; 82a1 θηρίον om. Par Syn 28.25. The collation does not allow us to go further in identifying the second family source used by Planudes.

2. A connection between Syn. and the textual tradition represented by the Bodleianus B (the so-called first family of Plato manuscripts in Tetr. I-VII) seems to be certain, in the second part of the *Phaedo*: 99d 6 πάσχουσιν | om. β Syn 32.55; 104d 2 ἵσχειν | σχεῖν β Syn 32.82. See also the following, taken from the first part of the *Cratylus*: *Crat.* 386a 3 τοιαῦτα δέ σοι T : τοιαῦτα δ' αὖ σοι W : τοιάδε B Syn 35.12; 394a 8 καὶ T δ : ἢ β Syn 35.77.

3. Elsewhere in the *corpus*, Syn. (that is, Planudes) appears to be fully aware of the existence of the so-called third family of Plato manuscripts (Tetr. I-VII): *Crat.* 403d 8 ἀπελθεῖν | ἐλθεῖν W Syn 38.14; *Theaet.* 166d 6 ϋ | om. W Syn 52.24; 176b 7 λέγωμεν β T : λέγομεν W P Syn 53.9.

4. It is also to be remarked that elsewhere in the *corpus*, Syn. is apparently the only source sharing two readings with Y: see *Theaet.* 161d 4 διακρινεῖ Y Syn 51.5 : διακρίνῃ β T W; *Parm.* 135b 2 δυνησομένου | δυνησόμενον ex δυνησόμενον T : δυνησόμενον Y Syn 92.3.

Regarding the text of the *Phaedo*, it would be extremely interesting to know which was the first family source chosen by Moschopoulos and Planudes in the first part of the dialogue; no conclusive answer to this question has however been provided yet. Two solutions are, in my view, possible.

For a long time, Plato scholars has talked of the ‘exile’ of B in Patmos, on the ground of data provided by a 15th century catalogue only; of course, the isolation of the ms. in such a peripheral area would have easily explained its quite striking lack of offspring. It is however certain that B underwent a careful restoration, possibly in the course of the 13th century, a process during which the parchment was repaired, several lacunae were filled, some letters, become unreadable because of the humidity, were reintegrated, some marginal notes (in an extremely small handwriting) were added. Clearly, this could have been feasible only in the context of a highly learned *scriptorium*, realistically not far from Byzantium. It is also to be remarked that the hand of Nikephoros Gregoras has been recognized by Boris L. Fonkič in the margins and in the text of B; such proof allows us to ‘see’ the *Bodleianus* in the capital in the first half of the 14th century. It is not impossible, at this point, to think that B was in Byzantium some decades earlier, too, to serve as a (partial) textual source for Planudes’ work on Plato.17

Another first family source was however certainly available in Byzantium in the second half of the 13th century. In fact, one can safely state, with A. Carlini, that

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1 The apparatus entry regarding *Phaed.* 69a7 is reproduced following Burnet’s edition. Surprisingly enough, in fact, Strachan (OCT) does not provide the reader with any data about this passage.

14 The catalogue mentions the ms. among the books belonging to the library of the monastery; it was published by W. Studemund, Philologus 26 (1867), p. 167-183.

15 See, on the identification proposed by Fonkič, Bianconi 2005, p. 414 and n. 17.

16 In his excellent book about the textual tradition of the *Banquet*, Christian Brockmann has hesitatingly suggested the possibility of a “nicht mehr erhändene Zwischenstufe” between Y and the *Bodleianus*. See Brockmann 1992, p. 71f.

18 See Carlini 1997, p. 135f.
the Venetus Marcianus Gr. 185 (12th century, D; Tetr. I-IV, Clit., Resp.) was used by Georgios Pachymeres in several occasions; it is, in fact, on the ground of D that he copies some Plato dialogues in the Parisinus Gr. 1810; it is again on the ground of D that he revises the lemmas in Proclus’ commentary on the Parmenides, and that he copies the final part of the dialogue (not covered by Proclus’ exposition) after the commentary. It is also not to be forgotten that Pachymeres was provably able to use the Vindobonensis Suppl. Gr. 7 (11th century, W), the ancestor of the so-called third family of Plato manuscript tradition. It was actually on the basis of W that he inserted the lemmas in his own copy of Proclus’ commentary on the first Alcibiades (Neapolitanus Gr. III E 17).

To sum up: as one could expect, at least one Plato source for each traditional family (at least two, Par and Esc, for the second family) was available in Byzantium in the second half of the 13th century. Both Y and Syn. undoubtedly attest the fact that a scholar/teacher like Planudes (or a bishop and learned man like Moschopoulos) was able to use them to edit, sometimes even in an ante litteram ‘critical’ way, the often ‘dangerous’ text of Plato dialogues. The unfortunate shortage of data obtainable from Syn. (and the lack of complete information about the secondary tradition) does not allow us, at present, to go further toward the identification of these manuscripts.

**Selected Bibliography**


Abstract
Manuel/Maximus Planudes (c. 1255-c. 1305) was, arguably, the greatest of Byzantium philologists. He was a monk, a theologian, a poet (of sacred and profane verses); he was an avid reader of Greek texts, many of which he edited, commented, provided with scholia, even copied on his own; he was able to read Latin texts and translate them into his mother tongue, at a time when he was almost the only one among Greek scholars to do so; he was also a passionate teacher, and, as such, he was always interested in making some of the texts he had read or was reading accessible to his students. The textual tradition of a number of Greek authors has therefore been marked by his work, and the manuscripts prepared in his scriptorium are often unavoidable sources for the constitution of the text.

One could at first be surprised in remarking the fact that only twice, in the course of his relatively short, yet so intense scholarly life, Planudes devoted himself to the study of Plato. In fact, Planudes decided to insert a substantial Plato section in the anthology of various Christian as well as pagan prose texts he prepared for his students at the end of the 13th century. The collection, usually referred to as Collectanea Planudea or Συναγωγή (henceforth Syn.), presents the chosen textual portions in the form of compendia; in this heterogeneous ‘anthology’, no less than 226 compendia are devoted to Plato Tetralogies I-VII and Spuria (all dialogues are represented at least by one compendium, even though very short).

Around the same time (end of the 13th century/very first years of the 14th century) one can find the Byzantine scholar at the head of a team of nine scribes (among which one could also list Nikephorus Moschopoulos) who copied one of the most interesting preserved Plato manuscripts, the Vind. Phil. Gr. 21 (siglum Y). Planudes himself is at work at f. 30v-39v (Phaed. 97a-Crat. 394a7). The series of dialogues attested by Y (the so-called ‘Y-series’: Tetr. I-II, Parm., Gorg., Men., Hipp. I, Symp., Ti., Alc. I, Alc. II, Spuria) does not respect the traditional tetralogical order, and was reproduced by later copies of the ms.

There are several features shared by both Syn and Y. First of all, Planudes is personally involved in both projects. That means that both works (a prose texts anthology conceived for students and a scholarly ‘edition’ of a choice of dialogues belonging to the first half of Plato’s corpus) are supposed to reflect, at least partially, his views (for instance on culture, or on the preservation of the Greek pagan heritage), his purposes, his interests, and, also, his modus operandi. Now, one cannot but notice that this is exactly the case; and one of the most striking features to be remarked is that the Byzantine scholar is far from being a passive reader of Plato’s Tetralogies I-VII.
In his preliminary “Defence” (62c9-69e4), Socrates tries to emphatically convince his friends and colleagues who were by his side in his last moments –in distress but not without rare pleasure– of something rather unusual (atopos, 62d1) in the light of common sense: that a philosopher should be cheerful in the face of death because he has embraced philosophy as a way of life, which implies the detachment of his soul from his body, and indeed prepares him for death, when the soul is finally released from the body. In that regard, even though Cebes and Simmias, chief interlocutors throughout the dialogue, show personal approval if Socrates’ assertion is true, they cannot help voicing the fear that any person – particularly, a Greek nurtured on Homeric beliefs from childhood – could be filled with, namely:

that [the soul], when it has left the body, it no longer exists anywhere; on the day when a man dies his soul is destroyed and annihilated; immediately upon its departure, its exit, it is dispersed like breath or smoke, vanishing into thin air, and thereafter not existing anywhere at all.. Phd. 70a2-7

As Cebes later asserts (77c1-5), the volatilization of the soul is a rather childish fear –but for this very reason, we might think, visceral, irrational and hard to eradicate– which they expect Socrates to dispel, before facing his own death and leaving them forever, through his rather particular epoidê: the spell cast by his “magic” words, i.e. his philosophical speeches, which –it must be added– were strongly supported by his consistent conduct throughout his entire existence (59a3-4; 64a4-9).

Here I will attempt to show that Socrates’ arguments in the Phaedo are mainly intended to prove two theses on the soul and its immortality, as requested by Cebes and Simmias (70b3-4), namely: a) that the soul subsists after death (hôs esti te hê psychê apotanontos toû anthrôpou); and b) that the soul possesses certain power and intelligence (kai tina dynamin echei kai phronêsín). In that regard, I will show that the twofold definition of the soul –as principle of both life and rationality– is not arbitrary (Robinson 1995: 26). Indeed, this text aims to establish a strong connection between both features of the human soul, in the following manner: i) First, by providing reasons that support the factual subsistence of the soul as principle of life; ii) Second, by establishing the nature of the soul as essentially simple and rational, but also as a potentiality –a dynamis in the Aristotelian sense– requiring moral, epistemological and ontological development to achieve departure from the body and senses, and gain contact with the intelligible to the largest extent possible; and iii) Last but not least, by suggesting a rich combination of i) and ii) in that the soul would attain greater ontological stability –more than mere subsistence– through its growing affinity –though not exactly equality– with absolute Forms, i.e. the soul would participate more fully in the Form of life with the expansion of its rational essence. By practicing philosophy, our soul would attain this ontological-existential condition only partially while the soul is united to our mortal body, and more fully after death. Consequently, we may appreciate that, in the Phaedo, as in other dialogues, Plato intends to show not only that the soul is in fact immortal but
that there are actually different kinds of immortality, which correspond specularly to our habits in our present existence. Therefore, the protreptic nature of the dialogue is based not only on revealing the advantages of pursuing philosophy as a way of life for a potentially better afterlife, but also and most importantly, for our bodily condition here and now.3

Our interpretation here further assumes –although it is not oblivious to the criticism made about the logical consistency of the arguments (Bluck 1955: 18-27; Gallop 1975 and Bostock 1986)– that, in his Phaedo, Plato does not intend to prove but rather purports to offer the best explanation possible about the soul and its immortality (Archer Hind 1883: 16-17; Hackforth 1955: 19), according to his own “method of hypothesis” (99d4-102a3).

In the “cyclical argument” (69e5-72d10), the main goal is to provide, on the basis of certain general principles, reasons supporting the factual persistence of the soul after death. According to the laws of alternation and compensation, on which the interlocutors and Socrates agree after a series of arguments, if “life” is followed by its opposite “death”, the reverse sequence “death-life” should ensue (71d5-72a10). Consequently, it is assumed that the soul persists after death, as the principle of life of all human and other living beings (70d7-e4), which implies constant death and rebirth or paliggenesia.4 If we were to reject such conclusion, which is derived from the more general and broader principle that everything changes into its opposite in a cyclical and balanced way, we would have to accept a whole different consequence, which presents even greater difficulties for our understanding of reality: the possibility of disruption of the continuity of life in the universe (72a11-d10).5 This first argument, which has been rightfully regarded as “mechanistic” by authors like Bluck (Bluck 1955: 20-22) –and is therefore liable to objection in the light of the teleological requirements later prescribed by Socrates to better explain reality (96a5-99d3)–, is more convincingly corroborated towards the end of the purely argumentative part, in the “final argument” (102a4-107b10), which is metaphysical in nature and holds, on the assumption of the existence of Forms (99d4-102a3), that the indestructibility of the soul is based on the soul’s essential participation in the Form of life (105b5-107a1).

Next, in the so-called “argument of anamnēsis” (72e1-77a5), Plato attempts to establish a primary connection between the indestructibility of the soul and our ability to think, asserting that the soul exists prior to its union with the body, by proving its previous knowledge of the Forms, and therefore, its intelligence. However, during our embodied existence, this ability remains latent for the vast majority of people and is only developed by philosophers, who strive to recollect lost knowledge (75c7-76a7). In this respect, it is to some extent true that we all somehow understand “what is equal”, so we can understand and assert that, for example, two logs or two stones are equal. Therefore, we are equipped –in a similar way to Kantian apriorism– with some knowledge of the Forms to bring order to what would otherwise be chaotic multiplicity. Nevertheless, it is only the philosopher who can “go beyond” sensory perception in understanding and telling the difference between “the equal itself” and things that are equal because they partake of equality but can be sometimes equal, sometimes unequal and can include other properties besides equality. The wisdom within the soul in the strict sense (phronēsis, 70b4), i.e. the knowledge of what is itself and by itself –the Forms– is thus a potentiality (dynamis) that we, humans, can develop to a greater or lesser extent.6

As we all know, Simmias and Cebes’ main objection to this last argument for the immortality of the soul –raised by Cebes (77a6-77c5) and, namely, that only the preexistence of the soul had been proved– is answered back by Socrates by suggesting a combination of this conclusion with the one they reached before (77c6-
d5). However, Socrates himself notices that a combination of both arguments is not enough to cast away the fears of the child within them, as acknowledged by Cebes half-jokingly, half-seriously (77d5-e3): even if our soul existed before our birth and continues to exist after our death, if our soul is—as the tradition has largely held—volatile, there is no guarantee that it could finally vanish anyway.

Because of these concerns, Plato then introduces the so-called “argument from affinity” (78b1-80e1), in which Socrates, drawing on points from his “Defence” (62c9-69e4), establishes a closer interconnection between the persistence of the soul and the soul’s knowledge of Forms, by showing how a soul can attain greater ontological stability to the extent its contact with the intelligible dimension of reality intensifies.

Therefore, the dualism of reality is present in man, the soul being akin (syggenês) to the intelligible and the body being akin (syggenês) to the perceptible through the senses (De Vogel 1986: 161-2). This is similar, mutatis mutandis, to Descartes’ substantialist “mind-body” dualism (Ostenfeld 1982; Broadie 2001; Pakaluk 2003). Thus section 80a10-b5 reads as follows:

Would you say, Cebes, that the result of our whole discussion amounts to this: on the one hand, we have that which is divine, immortal, indestructible, of a single form, accessible to thought, ever constant and abiding true itself; and the soul is very like it (homoiotaton); on the other hand, we have that which is mortal, destructible, of many forms, inaccessible to thought, never constant nor abiding true to itself; and the body is very like that (homoiotaton).

However, the soul has an “intermediate/intermediary” status—although Plato does not use these terms here—(Eggers Lan 1983: 54-55 and 1995; Dixsaut 1991: 110; Rowe 1993: 9; Vigo 2009: xviii; Fierro 2013 b), like Eros metaxy at Smp. 202b1-203a8; 204b1-c6 (Fierro 2007). In other words, the soul possesses a “chameleon-like” nature, as posited by other authors (Bostock 1986: 119; Cornelli 2015). Consequently, the soul can either intensify its contact with the intelligible or otherwise undergo degradation upon its association with the perceptible by the senses through the body. Either alternative presents, nevertheless, a status that has to be reached and, for which purpose, we cannot absolutely dispense with our present incarnate existence—i.e. our “embodiment”—as we learn from section 79c2-e7:

Now were we not saying some time ago that when the soul makes use of the body to investigate (tôi sômati proschrêtai eis to skopein) something through vision or hearing or some other sense […] is dragged by the body towards objects that are never constant, and itself wanders in a sort of dizzy, drunken confusion, inasmuch as it is apprehending confused objects. […] But when it investigates by itself alone (autê kath´hautê skopêi), it passes to that other world of pure, everlasting, immortal, constant being and by reason of its kinship (syggenês) thereto abides ever therewith, whenssoever it has come to be by itself and suffered to do so; and it has rest from wandering and ever keeps close to that being, unchanging and constant, inasmuch as it is apprehending unchanging objects. And is not the experience which it then has been called intelligence (phronêsis)?

Nevertheless, because the soul is not only most “similar” (homoiotaton, 80b3) but also most “akin, congener, connatural”—syggenesteron (79e1-2)—to the intelligible (also oikeion—“peculiar, naturally belonging”—to the soul (75c5); Burnet 1911: ad locum), whenever the soul becomes a slave to the body, focuses on bodily needs and is guided by sensory impressions only, it drifts away from its authentic nature and even retains something of the bodily after death, together with the desire of the corporeal that it harbours, as we learn from Socrates’ elaborate descriptions of life after death at 81a-d. Now, in order to develop such affinity with the intelligible, the soul must go through a “simplification” and “rationalisation”
process to strengthen its desire for the truth and weaken its bodily desires—in other words, a process of “moral separation” of the body, of an “evaluative” or “ascetic” kind (Woolf 2004; also Dixsaut 1991: 219 and Pakaluk 2003; Fierro 2013 b: 44-50), consolidated with an “epistemological” and “ontological” separation (Cornelli 2015). Therefore, it is through the “purification” (katharsis 67c5, 69c1, 82d6) of the sôma, which is akin to all that is composite and corruptible, that simplicity and rationality are secured. Because the soul revisits its essential nature, it is implied not only that the soul is independent from the body (Pakaluk 2003: 107) but also that the soul develops affinity with the Forms, which—owing to their eternal, uniform and changeless essence—transfer, to some extent, such ontological qualities to the soul (Hackforth 1955: 85). This naturally leads to Socrates’ need to assert the existence of Forms (100b1-9)—which had been so far just taken for granted—as they provide the best explanation possible.

Based on this assertion of the existence of Forms, the “final argument” (102a4-107b10) also favours the interpretation we have expounded here about the immortality of the soul. This section, as we mentioned earlier, states that because the soul essentially partakes of the Form of life, it is immortal (105b5-107b10). Now, to Plato, the uppermost level of existence is that of the gods, who—as a result of their constant contact with the Forms—are paradigmatically immortal, good and wise (63b6-c4; 80d7; 81a5; 82 b10-e1; Fierro 2001). As already pointed out (Eggers Lan 1983: 70-71), it may thus be inferred that the greater the contact of the human soul with the intelligible is, the greater the soul’s participation in the Form of life will be (cf. also 107c-d; Eggers Lan 1983: 208, n. 238) for, as described at Phdr. 245c5-246a1, the soul would be a source of both constant motion and—as the gods of the myth of the winged chariot at Phaed. 246d5-247c2—intelligent action as well. Therefore, if a soul has embraced a philosophical existence feeding its desire for wisdom as much as possible while it was joined to a body, then, upon death, when it becomes free from the mortal body, the soul may survive at a level of ontological stability similar—though not equal—to that of the gods.

In fact, we find that the same idea is put forward in the colourful symbology of the concluding “geographical myth of the after-life” (107c1-115a9). According to this myth, during our present existence, we do not dwell on the true surface of the earth, which is the realm of pure, imperishable and eternal things, i.e. the Forms; instead, we dwell in an intermediate region, in one of the hollows of the earth, where everything is prone to degeneration and corruption. Upon death, our personal daimôn leads us to regions even deeper than the hollow of the earth we used to live in and we are all judged. Those who have been neither good nor evil, and those who have been irredeemably wicked, are dragged down, depending on the gravity of their wrongdoings, to different underground regions for certain periods of time. Philosophers, on the other hand, are set free from their mortal bodies and live bodiless on the true top of the earth or go to still better abodes—in other words, philosophers are prized with a superior level of existence. Section 114b6-c6 reads as follows:

But lastly there are those who are deemed to have made notable progress on the road to righteous living; and these are they that are freed and delivered from the prison-houses of this interior of the earth, and come to make their habitation in the pure region above. And those of their number who have attained full purity through philosophy live for evermore without any bodies at all, and attain to habitations even fairer than those others. (My italics)

It is clear, then, that Socrates’ hopes for a better destination after death—where he could finally attain what he had sought throughout his entire life—are based on the ontological soundness of his soul, nurtured by its contact with the utmost
reality or ousia –i.e. the essence of things– to the greatest extent possible, through the practice of philosophy. But, above all, he has tried to prove to his friends that philosophy is indeed the best and the most authentic way of life for our incarnate existence here and now.

Abstract (in another language)

Procuraré mostrar aquí que los argumentos de Socrates en Fedón apuntan a probar fundamentalmente dos tesis sobre el alma y su inmortalidad, tal como le requieren Cebes y Simias en 70b3-4: a) su subsistencia tras la muerte (hos ésti he psychè apotanóntos toû anthrôpou); b) su posesión de un cierto poder e inteligencia (kai tina dýnamis échei kai phrónesin). Al respecto mostraremos también que esta doble atribución al alma de ser, por un lado, principio de vida y, por el otro, de racionalidad no es arbitraria, sino que uno de los propósitos del texto es justamente establecer una estrecha interconexión entre ambas características del alma humana del siguiente modo: i) Por un lado, dando razones a favor la subsistencia de facto de toda alma en cuanto principio de vida; ii) Por otro, estableciendo el carácter esencialmente simple y racional del alma, pero como una posibilidad –una dýnamis en sentido aristotélico– que requiere un desarrollo moral, epistemológico y ontológico para lograr separarse del cuerpo y lo sensible, y vincularlo lo más posible con lo inteligible. iii) Por último y fundamentalmente, sugiriendo una fértil combinación de i) y ii) en tanto que el alma alcanzaría una mayor estabilidad ontológica, superior a una mera subsistencia, a través de su creciente vinculación –si bien no una equiparación– con la realidad plena de las Formas, es decir, participaría más plenamente de la Forma de la vida con la expansión de su esencia racional. A través de la práctica de la filosofía nuestra alma adquiriría esta condición ontológico-existencial solo parcialmente mientras está unida al cuerpo mortal, y más plenamente tras la muerte. Así pues puede apreciarse que Platón también aquí en Fedón, como en otros diálogos, no apunta solo a mostrar que el alma de hecho es inmortal sino sobre todo que existen distintos tipos de inmortalidad, las cuales se corresponden especularmente con nuestras formas de existencia actual. De este modo el carácter protrético del diálogo se basa no únicamente en poner al descubierto las ventajas de adoptar la vida filosófica en función de una conjetural mejor forma de existencia post-mortem sino, asimismo y sobre todo, en nuestra condición encarnada aquí y ahora.

Bibliography


(Endnotes)

1 Notes

Translations from Phaedo are taken from Hackforth 1952; text (with references) from Strachan 1995.

2 Here phronēsis is not used as equivalent to sophia – “wisdom” - but rather in its more popular sense of “understanding, intelligence” in connection with the Homeric phrenes (see Burnet 1911: ad locum). Nevertheless, its employment is meaningful and probably hints that full development of phronēsis as understanding or intelligence leads the soul to the acquisition of phronēsis as real knowledge or wisdom (see 66e3; 79e7).

3 Thus O’ Brien 1984 asserts that, in addition to the “vicarious” immortality which is stated at Diotima’s Speech Symposium (see Hackforth 1950), literal and godlike immortality as a prize from the gods for the philosopher is meant at Symp. 212a2-7 – see also Fierro 2001- , and compares with the kinds of immortality which are distinguished at the myth of the after-life at the end of Republic 10. Sedley 2007 displays and compares three kinds of Platonic
immortality: “essential” immortality which he mainly relates to the “final argument” in the 
Phaedo; “conferred” immortality which is bestowed to the souls by the demiurge in the 
Timaeus (see Ti. 41c-d, 32c, 41a, 34a-b); “earned” immortality for whose characterization he 
mainly takes into account Plato’s considerations on this subject in Republic 10, Symposium 
and Laws 10.

4 In fact the noun paliggenesia in reference to the soul appears in Greek literature 
for the first time in s. I A.D. at Plut. De Esu Carnium II. 968c. The term metempsychôsis 
– “transmigration” – also occurs in later texts (for example, D.S. 10.6; Gal. 4.763; Alex. Aprod. 
De an. 27.18; see Chantraine 1968 and LSJ u.v. metempsychôsis). The expression employed 
in the cyclical argument is just the combination of the adverb and verb palin gignesthai 
(70c8-9). On this point see Eggers Lan 1983: 61, n.46 and 119, n. 73.

5 The doctrine of paliggenesia allows us also to envisage, in some way, the sequence of 
life and death for human beings and animals as part of a continuous process pertaining 
to the whole universe within the perspective of eternity. See Archer-Hind 1883: xiv ff.

6 According to the account of the anamnêsis at Phdr. 249b6-d3, “all human 
understanding is the product of an interaction between the information that our senses give 
us, that is particular ideas of physical objects, and universal notions, under which we classify 
our sense-data” (Scott 1987: 348). In this regard Plato’s human soul operates in a similar way 
to Kantian reason which schematizes sensory impressions under the pure intuitions and 
categories for an automatic production of empirical knowledge. However, Plato’s theory of 
anamnêsis is rather focused on the acquisition of real knowledge by reason’s active effort for 
the grasping – “recollection” – of the pure Forms as different from their sense-perceptible 
copies. This is a task which only the philosopher is able to perform. See Scott 1987: 359-63.

7 See n. 2 supra.

8 As V. Julia 2004: 112, n. 99 points out in reference to the description of the 
Form of beauty at Smp. 210c5 as syggenês, this term also implies here things – our 
soul and the Forms – which are of the same origin or gender and share the same 
genealogy and kinship. For that reason she chooses the translation into Spanish 
“connatural” for the description of the Form of beauty, in that case as syggenês with 
itself. However, as Cornelli 2015 points out, the term symphyton at 81c applied to 
the intermingling of soul and body might be ontologically strong and mean that 
the soul and the body “grow together” and so some kind of connaturalty exists 
between each other. But this does not actually conflict with what I have intended to 
show here: although the human soul is akin to the intelligible and is able to develop 
its real nature through the practice of philosophy, it might never lose some kind 
of attraction to the bodily. In fact something similar is suggested in the myth of 
the winged chariot in the Phaedrus where human souls are said to possess “a black 
horse” – in addition to the charioteer (reason) and the white horse (the spirited part 
of the soul) -, that is to say, an irrational part whose appetites blindly yearn for the 
bodily and which cannot be completely eradicated for ever, even in the case of the 
philosophers, after death.

9 As follows from 66b5-d8, the mortal sôma provokes the emergence within 
the soul not only of physical desires, needs and concerns, such as physiological needs 
and illnesses but also includes some phenomena which are nowadays considered 
mental, for example, loves, fears; deceptive representations which originate from 
sense-perception; greediness and willingness to make war. Thus, the sôma constitutes 
not just a physical support for the soul but the whole fact of our incarnated existence. 
See Fierro 2013 b: 46 and 53.
10 In our present incarnate existence the “separation” of the soul from the body implies the transformation of the sôma into an instrument for the intelligent activity of the soul instead of being its slave. See Fierro 2013 b: 48-50.

11 The winged chariots of the gods would represent the heavenly bodies (see Hackforth 1952: 71-4), which, without the limitations of the mortal sômata, work as suitable vehicles for their souls and actually help their souls to devote themselves exclusively to regular contemplation of the Forms and to the expression of this wisdom ‘in practical terms’ through an intelligent administration of the kosmos. These features of the ‘life of the gods’ in the Phaedrus invite some kind of identification between the gods in the Phaedrus and the account of the astral gods and the universe as a whole in the Timaeus and, consequently, between the nature of their respective bodies. See Fierro 2013 a: 34 and 47. Moreover, in the Timaeus the universe –and derivatively the astral gods– is considered as the expression of the best form of life in the realm of what is subject to gignesthai insofar as the demiurge shapes it under the pattern of the “perfect living” (Tī. 30c-31b).

12 At Phdr. 249a1-5 (see also Her. 2.123; Pind. Ol. 2.68) the souls which have chosen to be philosophers in three successive phases of mortal embodied existence, after these three millenniums, acquire wings steadily (that is, they acquire a stable god-like configuration in their souls) and leave behind any kind of mortal embodiment, although they might get some kind of ideal physical support in the fashion of the heavenly bodies. See Fierro 2013 a: 48-50. Similarly in the Phaedo after death the philosopher's soul which frees itself from the mortal sôma might acquire a “vehicle” of this sort (see n. 13 infra). Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that at 114c3-4 it is emphatically stated that the philosophers' souls which achieve full purification “live for evermore without bodies at all (aneu te somatôn zösî to parapan eis ton epeita chronon)” after they have died.

13 At 111a1-c3 there are also references to men who live on the surface of the true earth who enjoy the spectacle of true reality, contemplate face to face the gods and have a healthy, long life.
There are (at least, in my opinion) two kinds of argument Plato uses to prove the existence of Forms. I call the first kind “argument from possibility of knowledge” (APK); the second kind I call “argument based on experiences without self-justification” (AES). I am aware that these are barely understandable formulations. I’m going to discuss the second kind extensively, but I find it useful to explain very briefly the first one as well. Its clearest evidence is Rep. V, 476e4-477b11, but see also Crat. 439b10-440c1, Tim. 51d-52a; very significant confirmations are Aristotle’s Metaph. M 4, 1078b12-17 and De cael. III 1, 298b14-24. We can express APK as a modus ponens: if knowledge is possible, Forms exist; knowledge is possible; then, Forms exist. (This argument lies on a strong Parmenidean framework, but this is another story and I have no time to discuss in the present context).

Right, we now come the point. AES is the second kind of argument to demonstrate Forms. It is, in a certain way, a psychological or cognitive argument: since we have certain concepts in our mind (or soul), we know how to use them, and since we could not have inferred these concepts from experience, the fact that we have and use these concepts is not justifiable on the plan of the mere experience itself. In other terms, we have mental states (in the case of the Phaedo, the notion of Equality) that cannot be derived from our empirical experience of the world. But at the same time we are certain of that mental state (in our case, we cannot confuse Equality and Inequality). We will never make a mistake about which one is the concept we are thinking about. We can claim that two things A and B are equal even if they are not, but we cannot confuse Equality and Inequality when we say “equal” or “unequal” (see Penner 1987, passim). How do we make something like this operation? Plato’s answer is that our mental states depend on our prenatal knowledge of Forms, i.e. the paradeigmata of these notions. I believe it is useful to highlight this point. AES does not depend on the fact we have a prenatal knowledge. In other terms, the knowledge of Forms is not a premise of the argument. It does not run as follow: since we have a prenatal knowledge, then we can say A and B are “equal”, even if they were not really equal. The prenatal knowledge is on the contrary the demonstrandum. Hence, how can we say that two things are equal if it never happens that we encounter two perfectly equal things in the world (see Burnet 1914, 156)?

AES is clearly exemplified by the so-called “Sticks and Stones” Argument (SSA) of the Phaedo (from 74a5). The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate that SSA proves, and not assumes, the existence of Forms, or rather that it is an occurrence of AES. As it is well known, this topic is largely debated. According to some scholars (among others: Penner, Dimas, Apolloni) SSA has the function to demonstrate the existence of Forms, while according to others (for example, Jordan, Svavarsson) SSA is an intelligible argument if and only if it assumes the existence of the Forms.

I need to start concisely summarizing the context. At 72e3-73b2 Cebez carries out an argument based on recollection (an argument expressly stated as shared by Socrates). Simmias asks Cebez to summarize the ἀποδείξεις of this argument. Cebez answers there is only one argument, which is beautiful (ἐνὶ λόγῳ… κάλλιστῳ); it runs as follows:

men, if correctly asked (ἐάν τις καλῶς ἐρωτά), are able to say how each thing
is; this is especially clear when they are asked about figures (the reference is clearly
to the *Meno*);

without ἐπιστήμη...καὶ ὀρθὸς λόγος they would not be able to do so;
therefore, knowledge and right opinion are present in men;
if the soul were mortal, men would not be able to have knowledge;
then, the soul is immortal.

As it is easily understandable, that’s not a good argument! Why do knowledge and right opinion should prove the immortality of the soul? 4. is clearly a *petitio principii*. Socrates then tries to prove 4. He states four points:

perceptions refer to a different thing than that produces them. For example, a lover remembers the aspect of her/his lover seeing the lyre she/he used to play; or someone, seeing Simmias, remembers Cebes since they are used to go around together;

these cases exemplify recollection, which is particularly clear when something has been known long ago and then forgotten;
by seeing the picture of Cebes, it’s possible to remember the man Simmias, therefore we can state that recollection does not depend only on the similarity, but on the dissimilarity as well;

it follows that both similarity and dissimilarity are responsible for recollection.

Simmias agrees on all points. A further point is then established: those who remember something are used to highlight the *gap* between the object that stirs memory and the thing remembered. In other words, the picture of Simmias resembles Simmias but there is a sort of hiatus between the picture of Simmias and Simmias himself. This is of primary importance, but does not prove 4. For instance, I’m able to tell the difference between Lorenzo de’ Medici and his Bronzino’s portrait, but I can do it also without an immortal soul. Socrates wants to link the presence of knowledge and right opinion in men with the immortality of soul, and he intends to do so through our basic experiences, like perceptions and memory. But he has to face a huge problem: it seems that we can use in a right way the set of our mental states without an immortal soul. In other terms, it seems that our experiences are perfectly able of justifying themselves. In my opinion, Socrates introduces SSA to show a case in which it’s evident that the sensible experience is not self-justifiable.

Obviously I don’t have time to discuss every aspects of SSA, one the most controversial Platonic arguments. What I would like to do is to propose a reconstruction of the argument that, in my view, runs as follows:

all (called) “equal” things are also unequal (to different people and/or in different circumstances);
then, we can confuse equal things and unequal things (i.e. we say a pair of things is equal, but they are not);
but we cannot confuse Equality (i.e. the notion or concept of Equality) and Inequality (i.e. the notion or concept of Inequality) – in other terms, if we say two things are “equal” we are perfectly certain of what we are saying, whether they are equal or not;
if “equal” things are unequal in some respect but we know Equality is not Inequality in every respect, necessarily we possess the notion of Equality in an *independent way* (i.e. independent of perceptible experience);
this is the reason why we say there is something like the Equal itself;

evidently our soul knows it;

but since we have begun to have experiences only when we were newborn, it follows that we assimilated the Equal before the birth;
thus, the soul existed before its incarnation.

In my reconstruction SSA proves both the Forms and the recollection but it doesn’t require neither of the two in order to work.

As clarified by Penner 1987, SSA is an anti-Nominalism argument. There are not only the objects we say “equal”, but also another object, the Equal itself, which the soul can have acquaintance with before birth. We can not abstract the notion of Equality from things, because there are not entities such as two perfectly equal things in the sensible realm. Anyway, we are able to recognize the gap between the Equal, which is never unequal, and the things we call “equal”, which are also unequal. Equality is not the result of processing empirical data.

In the remaining time, I’d like answer three questions about SSA.
1) why does Plato choose the example of Equality?
2) is there a undue transition from the psychological plan to the existential plan in our argument?
3) does SSA contain an instance of self-predication assumption (see Ademollo’s paper in bibliography)?

As to the first point, I have already partially answered. Equality is just an example, chosen because it is an effective case of experience lacking self-justification. This interpretation is confirmed by Phaed. 75c7-d5:

“Now if, having got it [the knowledge of the Equal] before birth, we were born in possession of it, did we know, both before birth and as soon as we were born, not only the equal, the larger and the smaller, but everything of that sort? Because our present argument concerns the beautiful itself, and the good itself, and just and holy, no less than the equal; in fact, as I say, it concerns everything on which we set this seal, what it is, in the questions we ask and in the answers we give. And so we must have got pieces of knowledge of all those things before birth” [transl. Gallop]

These lines corroborate my thesis that is not the equal qua equal what interests Plato. Purpose of the inquiry is to demonstrate, through the example of equality, that our soul got in touch with Forms before birth and that our experiential data daily observed are justifiable only by means of recollection. Equality is just one of the “in itself” things, but it is somehow emblematic: it shows better than other cases that empirical data depend on non-empirical paradeigmata. In other terms, among the cases of recollection the Equal is the most resounding one, because we do not see two really equal things in our life. Of course, not even Helen of Troy or the Westmacott Athlete we can admire in the British Museum are perfectly beautiful, but they can fulfill more solid requirements to embody the standard of beautiful.

As to the second point, according to Penner, the “most serious objection” to SSA is the undue transition from the psychological plan to the existential plan. In other words, if from the fact that I can confuse equal sticks with unequal sticks but cannot confuse Equality with Inequality, I deduce there is more to Equality than just equal sticks and stones, and what that something more is actually a Form, this seems to violate, as Penner writes (33), “certain Fregean and Quinean restrictions on the substitutivity of identicals within psychological contexts and on existential inferences from within psychological contexts”. It’s possible that some people think that Hesperus is not Phosphorus, but surely nobody thinks that Hesperus is not Hesperus; but if Hesperus is not Phosphorus, SSA seems to suggest that another object besides
Hesperus, i.e. what we call “Phosphorus”, exists, but this is untrue, because Hesperus is Phosphorus. Penner’s strategy to neutralize the objection is arguing that Plato’s argument is a good one because Moore’s argument against the naturalistic fallacy is a good one. Unfortunately I don’t have time to go deeply into this issue. I’ll go for something much more modest. According to Murphy (1951) and Owen (306, n. 2), the right translation of 74b-c cannot mean that something is equal in the eyes of one man but not of another, because we could infer from this that one of the two man had made a mistake. According to some scholars, for example Irwin (1977, 319), the argument cannot work on the basis of the observers’ mistakes – and this is the reason why he translates ὄς ἐφάνη (74c1) as “evidently were” and not “seemed to be” (see again Penner, 352). For many contemporary philosophers the arguments based on psychological verbs like “thinks that” or “appears” are bad arguments. Ademollo (2007, 4), for example, claims that we can properly understand 74b6-c6 only if we consider Leibniz’ Law. I mean that, according to Ademollo, Socrates’ argument runs as follows: since something is true of the individual equals but not of the Equal itself, then the empirical equals and the Equal itself are not the same. Rebus sic stantibus, we need to avoid verbs of propositional attitude, since it is “notoriously risky” to make use of Leibniz’ Law in such contexts. Risky… for whom? Surely not for Plato. (I’m not claiming that arguments containing psychological verbs or using Leibniz’ Law in such contexts are good argument; I’m much more modestly claiming that they were not bad arguments for Plato).

As for the last point, according to Ademollo (and others) our passage confirms that for Plato the Equal itself is something equal, which means that the first few lines of the text contain an instance of the Self-Predication Assumption, SPA (i.e. F-ness is F). But Socrates is not asking whether we (we in this case has to be taken as “the men”, not the philosophers, pace Scott) usually say that the Equal is equal, but rather whether or not we usually say that the equal is something. Trabattoni (2011, 77) questions the presence of SPA in the text because it does not speak about Forms. I agree with him, but I think Ademollo (and others) is (are) wrong also if we admit that the text speaks about Forms. SPA, indeed, implies that F is literally something that has the property F. But “We say, I think, that equal is something” does not mean that F-ness (Equal itself) is F (equal), but that the Equal itself is something, or rather that it exists.

I would like to sum up my position in an extremely schematic way.

a) SSA proves both the existence of Forms and the recollection (it does not assume any of the two);

b) Equality is just a case of “everything on which we set this seal, what it is, in the questions we ask and in the answers we give”; then is useless for the understanding of the passage to speculate on the nature of equality (for instance, on its relational nature).

c) Plato uses arguments based on verbs of propositional attitude without any problem (it’s possible he is wrong, but I try to know what he says not what he would say);

d) SSA does not imply any reference to SPA, because the question is not if Equality is equal, but if something is equal or if Equality is something. Whether the argument presupposes the Forms, or not, it does not contain self-predicative assumption.

Abstract in italiano
Il mio intervento prende in esame una sezione del *Fedone*, da 74a5, che contiene una tipologia di argomento a favore dell’esistenza delle idee, che chiamo “argomenti fondati sull’incapacità dell’esperienza di autogiustificarsi”. Con questo intendo dire che Platone ritiene di essere in grado di mostrare, attraverso il caso dell’uguale, che non può essere dedotto dall’esperienza sensibile, che la nostra esperienza quotidiana non possa essere giustificata senza ricorrere a entità sovramondane di cui abbiamo, in qualche modo, conoscenza e retta opinione. Queste entità sono le idee. Infatti, mentre noi possiamo confonderci circa due oggetti, che proclamiamo “uguali” quando in realtà non lo sono, non possiamo mai confonderci circa i concetti che “utilizziamo”: non si dà il caso che per noi l’uguaglianza sia anche disuguaglianza. Come spiegare questo fatto? Socrate ritiene lo si possa giustificare solo attraverso due presupposti: che l’anima sia immortale e che abbia conosciuto le idee prima di incarnarsi. Tuttavia, a una prima battuta, la reminiscenza non sembra richiedere necessariamente un’anima immortale, perché per riconoscere lo scarto tra la cosa ricordata e l’oggetto che suscita il ricordo non ho bisogno di un’anima immortale: è possibile che il ritratto di Lorenzo de’ Medici del Bronzino mi ricordi Lorenzo in persona, e che io noti alcune differenze tra il ritratto e Lorenzo, ma per farlo non ho bisogno di un’anima immortale. L’argomento del *Fedone* intende portare all’attenzione un caso, quello dell’uguale, in cui è clamorosamente evidente che sul piano del razionalismo non ci sia soluzione al problema: noi, infatti, non incontriamo mai due cose perfettamente uguali. Perché, allora, sappiamo utilizzare il concetto? L’unica risposta è che devono esistere dei modelli noetici dei concetti e l’anima deve conoscerli in qualche modo; poiché tali modelli non sono empirici, l’anima deve averli conosciuti prima di incarnarsi, e dunque è immortale. L’argomento prova al contempo sia l’esistenza delle forme che l’immortalità dell’anima, dunque non presuppone nessuna delle due cose.

Nella parte finale del paper discuto, brevemente, tre punti:

1) perché Platone ha scelto l’esempio dell’uguale?

2) l’argomento contiene un passaggio indebito dal piano psicologico a quello esistenziale, ovvero è un pessimo argomento?

3) l’argomento contiene assunzioni autopredicative?

Quanto a 1), sostengo, con il supporto esplicito del testo, che l’uguale non interessa *qua* uguale, ma in quanto caso di oggetto “in sé”. Come tale, esso non si differenzia dal bello, dal santo, dal giusto e dagli altri casi che interessano; semplicemente, esso è più clamoroso, perché cose parzialmente belle, sante, giuste (...) le incontriamo nella nostra esperienza, mentre cose uguali no. È dunque inutile, al fine di comprendere l’argomento, speculare sulla natura relazionale dell’uguale.

Quanto a 2), senza entrare nel merito della bontà di argomenti fondati su verbi indicanti attitudini proposizionali, sostengo che Platone ritenesse buoni argomenti quelli fondati su tali attitudini. È dunque inutile tentare di neutralizzare verbi come “pensare” e “apparire”, su cui invece l’argomento si fonda.

Quanto a 3), alcuni critici hanno sottolineato che, se l’argomento non parla esplicitamente delle idee, *ipso facto* non prevede assunzioni autopredicative. Pur essendo questa obiezione corretta, a mio avviso l’argomento non contiene assunzioni autopredicative in ogni caso. Le prime linee dell’argomento, infatti, non chiedono se l’uguale sia qualcosa di uguale, che è un’assunzione autopredicativa, ma se l’uguale sia qualcosa o se diciamo che qualcosa è uguale. In entrambi i casi – il primo allude alle forme, il secondo no – non c’è autopredicazione nel testo.

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The soul in the *Phaedo*: Socrates’ evidence for its intrinsically intelligent nature

Fossati, Manlio

Scholarship on the *Phaedo* has been dominated by the interest in the four arguments Socrates offers to convince Simmias and Cebes that the soul will survive separation from the body. Although it has been noted that in his reply to Socrates’ defence of the philosophical life Cebes asks him to show that after separation from the body the soul will not only continue existing but also retain “some power and φρόνησις” (70b3-4), little attention has been devoted to analysing how Socrates addresses the second point of his interlocutor’s question. In my paper I will first discuss how φρόνησις is best translated in this passage and to what exactly it refers. My proposal will be that φρόνησις means intelligence and it identifies the ability of the soul to acquire knowledge. The second point of Cebes’ request is thus for an argument that the soul retains intelligence after separation from the body. I will then analyse the passages of the *Phaedo* relevant to the question of the nature of the disincarnate soul. My claim will be that, although Socrates does not offer a unitary argument for the notion of the intrinsically intelligent nature of the soul, he disseminates pieces of evidence in favour of the thesis that the soul is able to acquire and possess knowledge even when it is separate from the body. I will focus on the Recollection Argument and on the Affinity Argument. I will argue that the former provides evidence only for part of the thesis Socrates is asked to establish in that it only shows that the soul is intelligent before incarnation, while the latter in Socrates’ eyes establishes the thesis more fully by providing evidence that the soul is intrinsically intelligent. In analysing the arguments Socrates offers for the ability of the disincarnate soul to acquire or possess knowledge of the forms, I will remain non-committal about whether they are able to withstand close scrutiny but exclusively claim that they are evidence that Socrates embraces the notion of an intelligent soul.

Before analysing the relevant passages from the Recollection Argument and the Affinity Argument, I will define the notion of intrinsically intelligent soul. As noted, in order to share the hope expressed by Socrates in his defence of the philosophical life, Cebes requires him to provide evidence that after the death of the body the soul not only continues to exist but also “possesses some power and φρόνησις” (70b4). The word φρόνησις is frequently translated “wisdom”, but “intelligence” or “reason” have also been occasionally used as translators of this word. The translation “wisdom” would reflect the meaning that the word φρόνησις has both in standard Attic Greek and in Socrates’ defence of the philosophical life. In this section of the *Phaedo* φρόνησις occurs nine times (65a9, 66a6, 66e3, 68a2, 68a7, 69b3, 69a10, 69b6, 69c2) and can be aptly translated “wisdom” as it identifies the high level of knowledge the philosopher strives to reach.

Despite the meaning the word carries in Socrates’ defence of the philosophical life, two reasons suggest that, when it is used by Cebes in his reply to Socrates, φρόνησις identifies the ability of the soul to acquire knowledge rather than the high level of knowledge the philosopher strives to achieve. First, in his reply to Socrates Cebes makes no reference to philosophers, but he generally appeals to what “men fear” (70a1). In formulating the doubt that “when it [the soul]’s been separated from the body, it may no longer exist anywhere but […] it may be destroyed and perish, as soon as it’s separated from the body” (70a1-4) and that “it may be dispersed like
breath or smoke, go fly off, and exist no longer anywhere” (70a4-6), Cebes expresses fears that are part of the Greek collective imagery. Indication that the concerns voiced by Cebes are presented as embedded in the Greek culture of the period rather than as felt exclusively or especially by philosophers is given by the use of the Homeric metaphor of the smoke.1 As philosophers are not explicitly mentioned at this point, so are they not singled out as a special category in the final part of Cebes’ reply. In these lines Cebes asks Socrates to give him reassurance that the soul will continue both to exist and possess some power and φρόνησις “when the man has died” (70b3). As the subject of the temporal clause clarifies, Socrates is asked to prove two points concerning the soul as such and not the souls of people belonging to the particular group formed by the philosophers. Since wisdom is strived for exclusively by philosophers, it would thus seem inconsistent to think that φρόνησις in this passages means wisdom.

Assuming that Socrates is required to show that the soul will continue to possess wisdom is also difficult to reconcile with the image of the afterlife depicted by Socrates in the section 80c1-84b8 and in the eschatological myth concluding the dialogue. As both sections consider a wide range of souls different in their moral quality and in the level of knowledge they possess, it becomes clear that souls are maintained by Socrates to survive separation from the body regardless of their moral quality and level of knowledge they possess. If souls with a low level of knowledge are also deemed able to survive the death of the body, it seems inconsistent to think that Socrates seeks to show that in the afterlife all souls retain a high level of knowledge, despite the fact that some of them have never acquired it.

On the contrary, if φρόνησις identifies merely the ability to acquire knowledge, the notion of a soul endowed with this ability would be compatible with that embraced both in Cebes’ request and in Socrates’ description of the afterlife. On this interpretation, it would not be difficult to think that Socrates is asked to show that after separation from the body every soul retains the ability to acquire knowledge regardless of the level of the knowledge it has gathered using the ability it intrinsically possesses. Similarly, souls with no level of knowledge can easily be thought to retain after the death of the body an ability that they possess but have not used during their life on earth.

If it is plausible to translate φρόνησις as “intelligence”, Cebes’ request to Socrates can be properly understood as urging him to argue that the soul has an intrinsically intelligent nature. The Recollection Argument makes an important, although partial, contribution to showing that Socrates embraces a notion of soul such as the one Cebes asks him to establish. In this argument he in fact argues that the soul possesses intelligence before incarnation, but he leaves the question of the nature of the soul after disembodiment undiscussed.

Evidence that the soul possesses knowledge of the forms before incarnation is given in lines 75b10-d3. Before this passage Socrates has proven three points central to his argument. The form of the equal exists (74a9-12), it is fundamentally different from the way in which two sensible objects appear equal to themselves (74d9-e4) and it must be known to us before we see two equal sensible things if we are to notice the difference between the way the two sensible things are equal and the form of the equal (74e9-75a3). After receiving Simmias’ approval on each of this three points, Socrates is in a position to conclude that the soul acquires knowledge of the form of the equal before incarnation:

“Then it must, surely, have been before we began to see and hear and use the other senses that we got knowledge of the equal itself, of what it is, if we are going to

1 Hom. Il. 23.100f: ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἠὕτε καπνὸς ῥέχετο τετριγυῖα.
refer the equals from our sense-perceptions to it, supposing that all things are doing their best to be like it, but are inferior to it.

That must follow from what's been said before, Socrates.

Now we were saying and hearing, and we were possessed of our other senses, weren't we, just as soon as we were born?

Certainly.

But we must have got our knowledge of the equal before these?

Yes.

Then it seems that we must have got it before we were born.

It seems so" (75b4-c6).

In this passage Socrates first settles that knowledge of the form of the equal must have been acquired before the person made use of sense organs, since, as he and Simmias already agreed, knowledge of a form must be prior to the perception of a sensible thing that acts as a reminder of that form. He then observes that sense organs start to be used from the moment of birth. Finally he concludes that knowledge of the forms is available before birth. While this conclusion is a crucial step towards proving the existence of the soul prior to incarnation, it also shows that the soul possesses knowledge of the form of the equal before incarnation. If in this passage Socrates' argument is centred on the forms of the equal, in the immediately following lines he clarifies that it is applicable to all the forms. “Now if, having got it [knowledge of the form of the equal] before birth, we were born in possession of it, did we know, both before birth and as soon as we were born, not only the equal, the larger and the smaller, but everything of that sort? Because our present argument concerns the beautiful itself, and the good itself, and just and holy, no less than the equal; in fact, as I say, it concerns everything on which we set this seal, 'what it is', in the questions we ask and in the answers we give” (75c7-d3). In these lines Socrates generalises the validity of what he has argued for regarding the form of the equal in the previous passage. Knowledge of not only the form of the equal but of all the forms is available to the soul before incarnation.

Although providing evidence that the soul possesses knowledge of the forms prior to incarnation, the Recollection Argument does not however establish the notion of an intrinsically intelligent soul. The argument in fact does not give any indication as to whether the soul will retain the ability of acquiring and possessing knowledge of the forms after separation from the body.

If the Recollection Argument provides evidence that the soul is intelligent only before incarnation, the Affinity Argument shows that the soul is endowed with intelligence for the entire length of its cosmic life. Drawing two analogies, one, between the soul and the forms and the other, between the soul and the gods, the Affinity Argument contains a passage that openly states that the soul has an intrinsically intelligent nature.

When drawing the analogy between the soul and the forms, Socrates explains that incomposite things cannot be dispersed (78c3-4), always remain in the same state and condition (78c6-7), and include “the equal itself, the beautiful itself, what each thing is itself, that which is” (78d3-4). To show that the soul has affinity with this group of things and can be included in it, Socrates offers the following argument:

“Whereas whenever it [the soul] studies alone by itself, it departs yonder towards that which is pure and always existent and immortal and unvarying, and in virtue of its kinship with it, enters always into its company, whenever it has come to be alone by itself, and whenever it may do so; then it has ceased from its wondering and, when it is about those objects, it is always constant and unvarying, because of its
contact with things of a similar kind; and this condition of it is called ‘intelligence’ (79d1-7).

In this passage Socrates states that, when the soul carries out an investigation alone by itself, unaffected by the disturbance caused by the body and the sense organs, it is in contact with immortal and unvarying things. As he explained at 78d3-4, the group formed by the immortal and unvarying things includes the forms. The possibility for the soul to enter the company of immortal things entails thus that, while carrying out its investigation, the soul comes into contact with the forms and gains knowledge of them. This ability is what Socrates names intelligence.

If the assertion that the soul possesses intelligence is a crucial step towards Socrates’ stated goal of settling that the soul has affinity with eternal things, it also shows that he embraces the notion of soul that he is asked by Cebes to establish. While he argues that the soul has affinity with eternal things, Socrates in fact also provides evidence for the intrinsically intelligent nature of the soul. In the passage quoted he attributes the possession of intelligence to the soul on the basis of its kinship with the eternal. As he previously explains at 79a2-4, the reason for the kinship of the soul with the eternal is in turn explained with the fact that it is invisible. In showing that the soul has affinity to eternal things, the Affinity Argument provides thus evidence that the soul is intrinsically intelligent.

L’ anima nel Fedone: le prove fornite da Socrate a favore della sua natura intrinsecamente razionale

In questo intervento identifico gli argomenti usati da Socrate per rispondere al secondo punto della domanda postagli da Cebete nella replica alla sua difesa della vita filosofica. In questo passo Cebete afferma di essere disposto a condividere la speranza che dopo la morte i filosofi incontreranno un destino più felice di coloro che non hanno coltivato la filosofia durante la loro vita terrena solo a condizione che Socrate dimostri che dopo la morte del corpo l’anima non solo sopravviverà, ma manterrà anche “una qualche facoltà e la φρόνησις” (70b4-5). Nonostante la letteratura sul Fedone abbia mostrato scarso interesse ad identificare gli argomenti usati da Socrate per rispondere al secondo punto della domanda di Cebete, la seconda e la terza dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima contengono passi in cui Socrate tocca questo problema. Di seguito mostro che i passi 75b4-c6 e 75c7-d3, contenuti nella seconda dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima, provano che l’anima, prima di reincarnarsi, ha conoscenza delle idee e che il passo 79d1-7, compreso nella terza dimostrazione, dimostra che l’anima ha una natura intrinsecamente razionale.

Prima di analizzare questi passi, propongo due ragioni per ritenere che la parola φρόνησις, quando usata da Cebete nella sua replica a Socrate, significhi intelligenza ed indichi la facoltà dell’anima di acquisire e possedere conoscenza delle idee. In prima istanza, nella sua replica a Socrate, Cebete non fa alcun riferimento alla figura del filosofo ma al contrario considera l’anima in quanto tale e non quella del filosofo in particolare. Indicando un elevato grado di conoscenza, che solo il filosofo aspira a raggiungere, il termine saggezza sarebbe quindi in questo contesto una traduzione inadeguata in quanto indica una determinazione propria solo dell’anima del filosofo. Inoltre, supporre che a Socrate si chieda di mostrare che dopo la morte del corpo l’anima mantenga la saggezza precedentemente raggiunta sarebbe incoerente con l’immagine dell’aldilà dipinta nel passo 80c1-84b8 e nel mito escatologico che conclude il dialogo. Poiché da entrambi i passi risulta che dopo la morte del corpo continuano a esistere tanto le anime moralmente buone e dotate di un alto livello di sapere quanto quelle moralmente cattive e dotate di uno basso livello di sapere,
non è coerente supporre che sia la saggezza a permanere nell’anima dopo la morte del corpo poiché alcune delle anime che sopravvivono non l’hanno mai posseduta. La scelta della parola intelligenza sembra invece offrire una soluzione adeguata ad entrambi i contesti. La capacità di acquisire conoscenza delle idee può infatti essere attribuita a tutte le anime e la richiesta di dimostrarne la permanenza dopo la morte non risulta quindi problematica. Parimenti, appare coerente l’immagine di un aldilà popolato anche da anime con un basso livello di sapere se si ritiene che ciò che ciascuna anima conservi sia semplicemente la capacità di apprendere.

Prova che l’anima acquisisce conoscenza delle idee prima di reincarnarsi è fornita nel corso della seconda dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima ed è svolta in un’argomentazione sviluppata nei passi 75b4-c6 e 75c7-d3. Nel primo di questi passi Socrate svolge tre passaggi cruciali: osserva che, siccome la conoscenza di un’idea deve precedere l’esperienza di un oggetto sensibile che ricorda quell’idea, la conoscenza dell’uguale in sé deve essere stata acquisita prima che gli organi di senso comincino a venir usati; constata poi che gli organi di senso vengono usati a partire dalla nascita; conclude infine che l’idea dell’uguale deve essere presente nell’anima prima di quel momento. Se l’approdo a questa conclusione è per Socrate un passaggio intermedio verso la dimostrazione che l’anima esiste prima di incarnarsi, è d’importanza centrale per il problema della natura dell’anima, in quanto contiene la prova che l’anima acquisisce conoscenza dell’idea dell’uguale prima di reincarnarsi. Mentre questo passaggio è incentrato sull’idea dell’uguale, le righe immediatamente successive (75c7-d3) chiariscono che la validità di quanto dimostrato da Socrate in riferimento all’idea dell’uguale può essere generalizzato a tutte le idee. Sebbene questi due passaggi mostrino che l’anima conosce le idee prima di incarnarsi, rimangono insufficienti a provare che l’anima abbia una natura intrinsecamente razionale in quanto non contengono alcuna indicazione circa l’anima dopo la separazione dal corpo.

Le indicazioni mancanti dalla seconda dimostrazione dell’anima vengono fornite dalla terza. Nel passo 79d1-7 Socrate afferma che l’anima, quando si raccoglie in sé stessa per svolgere un’indagine, si eleva a ciò che è eterno ed immortale ed entra in contatto con queste realtà grazie all’affinità con esse. Poiché, come spiegato a 78d3-4, l’insieme delle realtà etere ed immortali comprende le idee, la possibilità di entrare in contatto con loro implica la possibilità di acquisire conoscenza delle idee. L’affinità dell’anima con ciò che eterno ed immortale era stata affermata da Socrate a 79a2-4 sulla base nella sua invisibilità. Fornendo un’ulteriore prova dell’immortalità dell’anima, il passo 79d1-7 contiene anche la dimostrazione che la sua natura è intrinsecamente razionale.
Reading Socrates’ Drama of Death: Grief and Argument in the Phaedo

Fossheim, Hallvard

The Phaedo’s dual nature

The Phaedo uniquely straddles two extremes in Plato’s authorship. On the one hand, it offers what is among the more concentrated packages of sophisticated arguments in Plato’s productions. On the other hand, in dramatizing the death of Socrates and the reactions of those present, the Phaedo constitutes the by far most violently emotional scene that we have from Plato.

I want to argue that this very contrast constitutes the Phaedo’s most important philosophical contribution. In building this argument, I will take as a point of departure that we cannot ignore the specific dramatics of the Phaedo. The drama in the dialogue shows how arguments and events are taken into human lives, in a way which at the same time reminds us that even the most abstract argument always takes place—in a particular setting, among a certain group of individuals, at a given point in their lives.

The characters’ dual natures

Beyond its general features of its being a dialogue with interacting characters, what is specific to the Phaedo is not least that it offers a dramatization of grief. Before looking more into what grief means for the dialogue, however, let us consider a couple of indications of the Phaedo’s topic that are provided early on in the dialogue.

Before getting into the details of his story, Phaedo chooses to give Echecrates a rather special perspective on the significance of what happened the day Socrates died. Echecrates has not asked for it, but Phaedo makes a topic of his own—that is, Phaedo’s own—emotive reactions on the day. From Socrates being content he explains

That is why I had no feeling of pity, for the man appeared happy both in manner and words as he died nobly and without fear, Echecrates, so that it struck me that even in going down to the underworld he was going with the gods’ blessing and that he would fare well when he got there, if anyone ever does. That is why I had no feeling of pity, such as would seem natural in my sorrow, nor indeed of pleasure, as we engaged in philosophical discussion as we were accustomed to do—for our arguments were of that sort—but I had a strange feeling, an unaccustomed mixture of pleasure and pain at the same time as I reflected that he was just about to die. All of us present were affected in much the same way, sometimes laughing, then weeping; especially one of us, Apollodorus—you know the man and his ways. (59a)

Apollodorus of Phalerum is of course also known to us as the highly charged and extreme person acting as a link to the reader for the tale of the Symposium. Here, we get perhaps more reason to worry about the accuracy of that tale. Be that as it may. For our present purposes, what I want to emphasize is only that emotion, partly analyzed in terms of pleasure and pain, is introduced to us near the beginning of the text. On the face of it, nothing much is made of this. But remember that the whole of the Phaedo is about whether death is to be feared or not as the end of the soul, or perhaps even welcomed. All the arguments that follow are motivated by this concern on the part of those present.
The issue of emotive reactions and of grief, fear, and—we should think—pity in the face of death is brought on once more the moment the scene at the prison is introduced. After having waited around for much of the day, his followers are finally allowed to meet Socrates.

We found Socrates recently released from his chains, and Xanthippe—you know her—sitting by him, holding their baby. When she saw us, she cried out and said the sort of thing that women usually say: “Socrates, this is the last time your friends will talk to you and you to them.” Socrates looked at Crito. “Crito,” he said, “let someone take her home.” (60a)

Once more, we are reminded not only that someone is about to die, but that grief is the reaction of the other characters to what is happening. As if to make sure everybody gets the point, Plato lets Socrates himself too open his communication with us on that same note. Again, without any obvious link to the content of the ensuing discussion, and without any cue from something said by others, Socrates next says the following.

“What a strange thing that which men call pleasure seems to be, and how astonishing the relation it has with what is thought to be its opposite, namely pain! A man cannot have both at the same time. Yet if he pursues and catches the one, he is almost always bound to catch the other also, like two creatures with one head.” (60b)

Now I don’t think it is enough of an explanation for all of this to say that these passages form necessary and natural parts of a text about someone dying. There is no doubt that the whole thing could have been pulled off without mention of any of them. They are clearly there for a reason. As far as I can tell, at least part of the reason must be to prime us to think of our status as emotive creatures.

A further element too has already been quoted but not commented on. And that is the fact that the nature of pleasure and pain has, at this point in the text, been held up for us as the dialogue’s first puzzle. Even though not much has been said about them, Plato has already made sure to include a paradox among the few things that have been said. For notice that Phaedo had characterized his experience as a “mixture of pleasure and pain”. And here Socrates is, pointing out specifically that “a man cannot have both [pleasure and pain] at the same time”. This is not to say that this particular question is the real topic of the dialogue, or that it is given a final answer in the course of it. But by giving us a clear contradiction on the obviously central matter of emotions, one that seems to be significant for understanding what emotion is, the text has taken care to make us focus on and ask about this aspect of what is going on.

Fables and arguments

What is going on? Well, first of all, what is going on is certainly not only argument, but fables and arguments (to use Socrates’ own distinction at 61). Again, we are given a seemingly accidental piece of information. And again, this serves to highlight what is going on in the rest of the text. Cebes asks what induced Socrates to write poetry after he came to the prison (60c–d). Socrates has indeed been “putting the fables of Aesop into verse and composing the hymn to Apollo” (60d).

Besides foregrounding the phenomenon of poetic composition as an art, the answer given by Socrates is among the most dignifying (or least down-putting) references to what we might call the production of fiction that exists in the Platonic corpus. For apparently, Socrates holds open the possibility that this is indeed what the dream meant which told him to “practice and cultivate the arts” (60e). Of course, to Socrates, the highest art is philosophy (61a). But this came in as a believable
number to.

It is difficult, at least for me, not to take this as among other things a comment
Plato’s own activity in writing, for instance, the *Phaedo*. As such, it serves as a
reminder that one is at the moment reading a work or art, a work of art that is at the
same time philosophy. The *Phaedo* clearly is just that: fables and arguments.

So from the very beginning of reading the text, we are made to think of
emotions, of pleasures and pains, and we are made to think of them as present in the
text we are reading.

*Death and philosophy*

However one takes the details of what goes on in the bulk of the dialogue, all or
most would agree that questions about soul are central. It is famously stated that
practicing philosophy in the right way is practicing dying and death (e.g., 64a). And
this means not only learning to not fear death. Although that would be part of it. The
basis for not fearing death is not having reason to fear it, because one has managed
to free one’s soul from the body. Without this, one would still both be and think of
oneself as an embodied being, that is, a being that will be destroyed upon death. And
death and its consequences will not be cozy for such a person.

At birth, the soul is tied to the body. But through the way one lives, one can
further contribute to tying oneself—one’s soul—to the body, through habits and
modes of thinking and living. Or one can live the life of a philosopher and escape
all that. This aspect of the dialogue is well known, and I will not dwell on it. (Notice,
however, that the pleasures of sex are mentioned at 64d-e as one of the things the
“true philosopher” despises. And keep in mind that Xanthippe was just at the prison,
*with their baby*. Anyway.)

The characters in the *Phaedo* have an ideal to live up to that, with the exception
of Socrates, they do not realize. The central virtues—moderation, courage, wisdom,
and justice—each have a shadow version which is bodily, and a real version that is
proper to the perfected philosopher. Mystic rites are throughout evoked as a suitable
simile to the process of perfection through philosophy. This too gives the impression
of somehow transcending mere human life for something that in the *Phaedo* is
divine and found in death if ever.

The famous “child inside” is probably best understood as part of this non-
perfected economy of the “bodified soul”. The child’s foremost quality is fear of
death and dying. But probably both the qualities that are spelled out as revealing
shortcomings of the unperfected could be attributed to it. First, there is being ruled
by pleasure and pain. This is a feature which, while bodily, is really of the non-
perfected soul, which is itself bodily. What we might think of in terms of wrongful
actualization of the potentials or possibilities of the soul “makes the soul corporeal”
(83d). This in turn is what returns us to pleasure and pain (e.g., 84a).

If these descriptions smack of appetite, *epithumia*, as a principle of motivation,
then *thumos* too is represented a bit later on, when the quote from the *Odyssey*
seems to entail that these emotive aspects of non-perfected agency are in fact bodily (94d).

With the impressive exception of Socrates, we are all it seems children in need of
comfort. What is particularly striking, however, is what form the comfort takes. Says
Socrates, “You should […] sing a charm over him every day until you have charmed
away his fears” (77e). In what does this charm consist, then, and why is it necessary?
One might think that the charm is necessary only because of personal weakness
on the part of some. But the text suggests another approach. The myth (starting
at 107d) is perhaps the strongest candidate for a charm—an image as placeholder
for firm arguments, a vision of a just cosmos where the perfect soul would need no
such tale. But that myth is not introduced simply because of individuals' weakness
(although that too plays into it). The myth is first approached because the arguments
are not sufficient on their own (107a-b). They are hypothetical arguments, incapable
of securing safe knowledge.

In turn, these hypothetical arguments seem to have been introduced because
there were no non-hypothetical arguments available that could do the job of securing
knowledge. (The earlier arguments for the immortality of the soul certainly rest on
hypotheses, besides their not establishing anything like the survival of individual
souls.)

This suggests that the relation between reason and the rest of the soul is at
least a complicated one. Reason in even good people is not capable of going it on
its own. And furthermore—and much more interesting, perhaps—reason needs
techniques directed at the other aspects of soul in order to have established even
arguments. With the presentation of the myth, with its detailed geography and
moral map of the world, we see Socrates reverting to what he has, just previously,
said no longer interests him: “When I was a young man I was wonderfully keen on
that wisdom which they call natural science” (96a). By the end of the dialogue, he is
back to speculating about the Earth's middle position in the cosmos (109a) without
providing much by way of argument for it, and even much less for the claims that
follow. Similarly, one is apparently forced to regress to the inner child in order to
move closer to truth and knowledge.

No wonder Socrates inserts a specific reminder to not let oneself turn into
a misologue (89d) because one finds out that the arguments simply aren't good
enough to do what they were supposed to do. This is a timely reminder indeed,
coming as it does before seemingly solid arguments give way to hypotheticals which
again yield to myth. By the end of the dialogue, the moralizing myth is described as
a belief worth risking—nothing more (114d). The entire gamut of effects is set up to
charm our inner child.

Perhaps the language of the mystic initiation, which suffuses the dialogue as a
whole, is all along meant to provide a clue to this state of affairs. In mystic initiation
too one must be shown things and let them work on one.

**Mimetic desire**

A crucial aspect of grief, as of other emotions, is its social power over humans:
the *Phaedo* clearly displays the workings of what we might call a mimetic impulse.

“Apolloodorus had not ceased from weeping before, and at this moment his noisy
tears and anger made everybody present break down, except Socrates.” (117d)
The setting apart of Socrates’ response, while indicating an ideal beyond what is
normally human, also serves to emphasize the universality of the others’ responses.
What is of particular interest in this respect is the claim that it is Apollodorus’
display of grief and anger which makes the others enter into their own similar
reactions.

Overall, this mimetic impulse is presented as a main threat to the ideal of
rationality expounded by Socrates, and as the mode by which irrationality takes
over the individual. At the same time, the division forces us recognize, on the
moral psychological level, a dualism definitive of the characters of the *Phaedo*: one
principle controlling part of their thoughts and behavior is rationality, another—
acknowledged in the dialogue in terms of “the child within”—is emotionally charged
and mimetic in structure.

At the same time, it is crucial to grasp that the relation between reasoned
argument and emotive reaction in no way could amount to an either-or. Notice that
the philosopher (Socrates) too has an emotive reaction, but one of calmness and
friendliness combined with mild exasperation at the others’ lack of control. (The notion of dialectical argument too best taking place in one emotive atmosphere rather than another is explicitly invoked in the *Theaetetus.*) The dramatic dimension of the argument thus demonstrates how two principles, soul parts, or psychological aspects are activated together in any exchange, however rational. Not least, the extreme infiltration of the two moral psychological principles is revealed in how—contrary to standard intellectualizing readings of the *Phaedo*—rational argument itself is repeatedly characterized as a “charm” and supposed to work as such.

The reader’s dual nature

The insight about the psychological setup of the dialogue’s characters has a major impact on how we must understand its function on the level of the work as work. Plato wrote each dialogue as dialogue for one or several purposes. In the case of the *Phaedo*, the drama and the argument find a grounding link in how the dialogue forces the reader to respond to her own responses, that is, to self-reflectively experience two aspects or parts of her own soul and their degree of conflict. An emotive reaction is a crucial part of what the text is designed to invoke, both by narrative structure (a good and familiar man is about to die) and by the narrative of grief (depiction of others’ reactions). Put in a slightly over-simplified manner, the *Phaedo* works as a test and reminder of the reader’s moral psychological setup: a confrontation with oneself that is at the same time an occasion to reflectively engage with one’s own motivational constitution.

Argument as enchantment, myth as reason’s material

Spelling out in further detail the intricate relations between the two psychological principles is best done by considering more closely how genres and resources applied by Plato are made to function in partly unexpected ways. While, e.g., arguments are rational weaponry that also play an enchanting role vis-à-vis “the child in us”, the *Phaedo’s* eschatological myth is an irrational resource that at the same time lays out ideas to be considered in abstract thought, in depicting a rational, ordered system of principles in a sensuous way.

Conclusion

We can conclude that the *Phaedo* is designed as something like a reader test and source of reflection caused by being forced to confront one’s own dual nature. Or rather: the confrontation is one between those two principles.
Socrate e Anassagora, vecchie risposte e nuove domande

Galgano, Nicola S.

Le pagine seguenti trattano del passaggio del Fedone1 dove Socrate critica l’investigazione naturalista dei presocratici e, in particolar modo, di Anassagora. Nel famoso passaggio che comincia in 96a Socrate rifiuta l’investigazione fisica (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία) e racconta che, avendo sentito dire di Anassagora che spiegava tutti i fatti del cosmo con l’azione del nous, si interessò a questo autore e ne lesse avidamente tutti i libri. Purtroppo, però, non ne rimase soddisfatto.

Il discorso di Socrate propone argomenti inquietanti. Anzitutto, rifiuta le spiegazioni che noi oggi chiameremmo riduzionistiche, cioè, quelle che tendono a ridurre al minimo possibile i fattori causali. Poi, non solo introduce una teleologia, facendo intervenire un proposito come causa del fatto, ma introduce specificamente una teleologia eticamente orientata, quindi introduce anche una teologia. Questa impostazione è certamente molto lontana dal pensiero di Anassagora e, in genere, dal pensiero presocratico, con una sola eccezione che anche vedremo. Socrate stesso lo riconosce quando dice che nella ricerca delle risposte alle sue preoccupazioni, non aveva trovato soluzioni soddisfacenti negli studi di altri autori, dovendo iniziare una ricerca per proprio conto, la famosa seconda navigazione (99d).

Tuttavia, le metodologie sviluppate dai presocratici, anche se a prima vista lo potrebbero sembrare, non erano certamente riduzionistiche. Per cui, ciò che Socrate sembra esigere è un certo tipo di spiegazione causale, abbastanza complesso (implicando addirittura una causa teleologica tanto per il fatto specifico quanto per il tutto) e che si può considerare come sconosciuta dai presocratici. Questi infatti, secondo le poche testimonianze che abbiamo, si preoccupavano con un tipo di spiegazione che era già alla radice di tutte le cose, ma che non era riduzionistica nel senso attuale del termine. Per loro, la spiegazione soddisfacente avrebbe dovuto essere fornita da uno o più principi universali, ἀρχή o ἀρχαί. L’ἀρχή non era causa del mondo, nel senso che Socrate sembra esigere. L’ἀρχή era un principio che noi oggi potremmo chiamare di principio strutturale. La differenza fra causa e struttura non è piccola e, allo stesso tempo non è immediatamente chiara. Se si vuole usare l’esempio dato da Socrate dello stare seduti, quando egli dice che la causa (che egli rifiuta) è la contrazione dei muscoli e la posizione delle ossa, egli pone come effetto lo stare seduti; dunque, una causa fisica avrebbe un effetto, anch’esso fisico. Ma il principio (ἀρχή) ricercato dai presocratici, non era la causa di un effetto, ma una spiegazione soggiacente tanto a causa quanto a effetto. Per fare un esempio moderno rimanendo nella fisica, la causa della caduta di un sasso è la forza di attrazione reciproca fra il pianeta Terra e il sasso; invece, la struttura (l’ἀρχή fisica) è la legge di gravitazione universale. Ma non è difficile confondersi e dire che la causa della caduta è la legge di gravitazione! Così come la legge di gravitazione descrive un comportamento fisico, ma non è essa stessa un comportamento fisico, così anche l’ἀρχή voleva spiegare comportamenti fisici ma non era essa stessa un comportamento fisico.

Nel mondo presocratico, l’ἀρχή è certamente un principio intelligibile, e anche se in alcuni casi riceve nomi di enti fisici, come acqua o aria, in altri casi riesce a svestirsi della fisicità, come nell’ἄνευσθος o nel numero o nell’essere e non essere o, come nel caso preso in considerazione da Socrate, nel nous di Anassagora. Quindi Socrate, quando si mostra insoddisfatto, non è perché è la spiegazione fisica ad essere insoddisfacente, dato che la proposta dei presocratici già conteneva una spiegazione intelligibile; piuttosto, egli sembra insoddisfatto della stessa impostazione del problema, che mi sembra, era per lui insufficiente.

Questo tipo di problematica non nasce con Socrate, infatti era già in chiaro sviluppo nei presocratici. Ma Socrate sembra avvertire un insieme di problemi che cominciano a stagliarsi all’orizzonte proprio a partire dallo sviluppo del pensiero presocratico. Infatti, parallelamente all’accentuarsi del naturalismo dei pluralisti – specialmente Empedocle, con

1 Tutte le traduzioni del Fedone sono di Manara Valgimigli 2008.
la sua influenza nella medicina – vediamo lo sviluppare del relativismo della sofistica, che svuota il senso di principio universale naturale oggettivo, come era l’ἀρχή, riconducendolo ad un accordo fra soggetti, come per esempio, vediamo in Protagora. In questo quadro, sembra perdere chiarezza proprio quella preoccupazione iniziale di questi pensatori, e cioè la spiegazione del nascere e del perire. In altre parole, di fronte all’esplosione della problematica dei risultati delle ricerche sulla natura fatte dai presocratici, ciò che sembra perdere nitidezza è proprio la domanda iniziale: come spiegare il nascere e il perire delle cose? Infatti, come vedremo meglio nel testo platonico, Socrate comincia con la tradizionale preoccupazione sul nascere e perire, ma subito gli aggiunge prima di tutto un presupposto completamente nuovo, la necessità di una spiegazione che potremmo chiamare teologica, e poi l’insoddisfazione con le risposte, non perché esse siano sbagliate, ma perché non sono più sufficienti, perché non rispondono completamente alla sua nuova necessità di spiegazioni, cioè non rispondono più alle nuove domande.

Il racconto di Socrate comincia con una dichiarazione della sua passione giovanile: l’indagine della natura (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία)². Della descrizione da lui data, voglio mettere in risalto la prima parte, che è epistemologica: per coloro che si dedicavano alla περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία, conoscere significava conoscere le cause di ciascuna cosa³. Ciò corrisponde anche alla descrizione del conoscere che ce ne fa Aristotele nella Metafisica e, insomma, corrisponde allo spirito antico, sin dai tempi omerici, dove conoscere qualcosa significa essenzialmente conoscere le cause di quel qualcosa. Le cause, nel pensiero presocratico – ‘presocratico’ qui nel senso stretto proprio di prima che Socrate mettesse in discussione, qui nel Fedone, il concetto vigente di causa – e nel pensiero omerico in genere, consistono principalmente nelle cause efficienti e, più precisamente, nel senso del realismo ingenuo, nelle genealogie di ciascuna cosa.

Dopo questo inizio, la passione per la conoscenza delle cause di ciascuna cosa e di tutte le cose, Socrate continua e racconta come quel tipo di studio non gli fosse congeniale e che anzi, alla fine sembrava che ne sapesse meno di prima. A riprova adduce vari esempi dei problemi a cui si dedicava e dei quali cercava di capirne le soluzioni. Per esempio, se la crescita avviene per aggiunta di nutrienti, è in questi nutrienti che bisogna cercare la chiave per capire le funzioni del corpo, come il pensare. Quindi, il pensare sarà una funzione dei nutrienti e cioè del sangue oppure, come dicono altri, di altri elementi come aria o fuoco. E seguendo, dice Socrate, si passa dal pensare all’opinione e alla conoscenza. Tuttavia, questo tipo di spiegazioni causali non gli sembravano verosimi. Infatti, nel fenomeno della crescita, il piccolo (prima della crescita) e il grande (dopo la crescita) non sembrano originarsi l’uno dall’altro. In un altro esempio, ci spiega che il due non è più grande dell’uno perché all’unità si aggiunge un’altra unità e nè il due è qualcosa di composto di uno più uno, infatti, prese due unità, se sono separate sono ciascuna una unità, ma se vengono messe insieme allora sono due. Socrate afferma di non capire la causa di questa dualità, sarà perché sono messe insieme le due unità? Sarà per altro motivo? O, ancora peggio, in un altro esempio, evidenziando quella che sembra essere una contraddizione: se si aggiunge una unità a un’altra unità si dice che sono due, ma se si prende un qualcosa e lo si taglia a metà, anche in questo caso si ottengono due 2 Questo passaggio è fondamentale, perché ci racconta sommariamente così la περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία, anzi si potrebbe dire che ce nè dà una definizione. Essa consiste nel conoscere le cause di ciascuna cosa, e il perché ciascuna si genera, perché perisce e perché è. Ma bisogna tenere in mente, anche per le descrizioni date di seguito, che questa definizione è proprio la definizione generale alla quale si dirige la critica socratica.

3Phd. 96a: “E veramente mi pareva scienza altissima codesta, conoscere le cause (εἰδέναι τὰς αἴτιας) di ciascuna cosa, e perché ogni cosa si genera e perisce ed è.”
unità, dunque, come è possibile che aggiungendo (moltiplicando per due, diremmo noi) e tagliando (dividendo per due, diremmo noi) si ottiene lo stesso risultato se aggiungere e tagliare sono operazioni opposte? Socrate si dichiara ben lungi dal capire.

Ecco che allora, avendo sentito parlare di Anassagora, si decide a leggerne i libri. Cosa lo spinse a questo? Dalle sue parole sembra che il motivo principale sia anzitutto il fatto di riuscire a trovare una spiegazione unica per tutte le questioni, oramai ingarbugliate in mille possibili spiegazioni di uno stesso fenomeno; poi, ma questo ce lo dice lo stesso Socrate, il fatto che questa unica spiegazione fosse un nous, un principio non materiale, che potesse, come un dio che decide, mettere ordine in tutte le cose, dell'uomo, del cielo e della terra. Per meglio capire le sue motivazioni, dovremo scandire in alcuni particolari del testo.

Ma udito una volta un tale leggere da un libro, [c] come egli diceva, di Anassagora, e dire che dunque c’è una mente ordinatrice e causa di tutte le cose, io mi rallegrai di questa causa e, mi parve, secondo un mio modo, che questo porre la mente come causa di tutto convenisse perfettamente; e pensai, se la cosa è così, vuol dire che questa mente ordinatrice origina tutte le cose nel loro insieme e ognuna dispone singolarmente nel modo che per essa è il migliore.

Socrate racconta cosa si aspettava dalla sapienza di Anassagora a partire dal ‘sentito dire’ dell’amico. Quello che sembra attrarlo di più è la nozione di nous, ma prima di parlarci di Anassagora, egli ci parla di se stesso. L’idea di una entità immateriale, il nous che tutto ordina, gli piace; e questo probabilmente perché un tale nous, non potendo essere portatore di contraddizioni come quella esplicitata nell’esempio del due ottenuto con operazioni opposte di raddoppio e divisione, potrebbe spiegare quella contraddizione, la quale non poteva essere che una contraddizione soltanto apparente. A questo punto, introduce per la prima volta una nozione nuova, infatti, secondo lui, il nous ha una funzione ativa e nel suo agire non può se non ordinare tutte le cose secondo il modo migliore (97c: τόν γε νοῦν κοσμοῦντα πάντα κοσμεῖν καὶ ἕκαστον ταύτῃ ὅπῃ ἂν βέλτιστα ἔχῃ·).

Ordinare il mondo nel modo migliore è sicuramente una nozione teologica, oltreché teleologica. Ma, partendo da un presupposto così descritto, si apre un grande problema, quello di poter sapere cosa sia il meglio e, quindi, il peggio per ogni cosa. Allora lo scopo della ricerca si sposta, infatti non si tratterebbe più di indagare le cause – immediate o anche remote – fisiche del mondo fisico ma, per così dire, le cause e la causa – immediate e remote – morali, cioè, il meglio per ciascuna e per tutte le cose. Continua infatti Socrate:

E dunque, pensavo, chi voglia trovare la causa di ciascuna cosa, e cioè come ogni cosa si genera e perisce ed è, questi gli bisognerà trovare di codesta cosa, qual è il suo modo migliore di essere o di fare o di subire [d] alcun che. E, procedendo in questo ragionamento, pensavo che niente altro convenga all'uomo indagare, sia di esso uomo sia delle altre cose, se non ciò che è l'eccellentissimo e l'ottimo; e che, necessariamente, quegli medesimo che il meglio, dovrà conoscere anche il peggio, perché una sola e identica è la conoscenza del meglio e del peggio.

La ricerca del meglio (e del peggio) è certamente nuova nel panorama della περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία, e restano da chiarire i molti problemi della sua applicazione alle cause fisiche concrete4. Però, l’idea di una teologia non lo è e le antiche teogonie erano proprio le spiegazioni causali remote dei fenomeni della natura, dove le regioni di terra, cielo e mare avevano i loro déi così come li avevano ogni parte del mondo e ogni fenomeno. Ma proprio il pensiero teologico anteriore era venuto in crisi ad opera della περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία, la quale aveva messo in evidenza le contraddizioni di tale pensiero (per esempio, Senofane

4 Si veda, per esempio, Sedley, 1989.
DK 21 B 14, 15 e 16). Ora tocca a Socrate mettere in evidenza la crisi della nuova ricerca naturalistica. Infatti dice:

Così ragionando, con grande gioia ritenevo di aver trovato in questo Anassagora chi m’avrebbe insegnato, secondo la mente mia propria, la causa di tutto ciò che è e che egli, per esempio, avrebbe cominciato col dirmi se la terra è [g] piana o rotonda; e, dopo dettomi questo, mi avrebbe spiegato perché è così e perché non può essere che così, allegando la ragione del meglio, e cioè che per essa il meglio era appunto di esser così o così; e se poi mi dirà che ella è nel mezzo, mi chiarirà che per lei il meglio era appunto di essere nel mezzo; e se mi dimostrerà questo, ecco, dicevo, ch’io son pronto a non desiderar più altre cause di altro [98a] genere.

Vorrei sottolineare un passaggio, qui tradotto “secondo la mente mia propria” (κατὰ νοῦν ἐμαυτῷ). Socrate si aspetta che Anassagora gli insegni qualcosa che vada d'accordo con il suo modo di vedere. Ciòè, la ricerca socratica, anche se orientata teologicamente e teleologicamente5, rivendica una autonomia di pensiero che non è disposta a cedere al dogmatismo di nessuno, fosse anche il più famoso dei saggi. Questa caratteristica socratica, profusamente descritta tanto da Platone quanto dal resto della doxografia, si rende perciò autrice in questo caso di un comportamento intellettuale singolare: da un lato Socrate mette in evidenza la crisi del pensiero naturalistico mostrandone i limiti e le contraddizioni e, dall'altro, cerca di superarlo proprio accogliendolo e aggiungendovi le forme di pensiero anteriori, teologia e teleologia, arricchite però proprio dal metodo della recente περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία. Si deve dunque alla sua convinzione, ossia, al suo presupposto teologico e teleologico, il fatto di non avere immaginato che una Mente ordinatrice potesse comportarsi in altro modo, assegnando a ciascuno il meglio. Il meglio qui svolge proprio il ruolo dell’ἀρχή dei presocratici, infatti, egli aggiunge:

E quindi [b] pensavo che egli, assegnando a ciascuna cosa individualmente e a tutte collettivamente questa causa, anche avrebbe dichiarato qual è l’ottimo per ciascuna e il comun bene per tutte. E queste mie speranze non le avrei date per tutto l’oro del mondo; e, presi con grande sollecitudine que’ suoi libri, mi misi a leggerli con la maggiore rapidità, perché volevo con la maggiore rapidità conoscere il meglio e il peggio.

Conoscere il meglio e il peggio significa conoscere la causa di ciascuna cosa e anche la causa di tutte le cose, cioè, la causa ultima. Siamo qui ad un livello di astrazione molto maggiore della teologia tradizionale e sullo stesso livello di astrazione del naturalismo presocratico. Infatti, per la teologia tradizionale, gli dei sono insondabili, ma per il pensiero naturalista l'ordine del mondo soggiacente a tutti i fenomeni, l’ἀρχή appunto, non è per nulla insodabile, anzi si rivela nella natura e nelle sue funzioni. Socrate, allora, ripropone un antico modello di pensiero, una fede teologica e teleologica, arricchita innanzitutto dal pensiero naturalistico nella sua immediatezza, cioè, le spiegazioni fisiche che egli non rinnega affatto, ma anche dallo stesso modello metodologico che esso presentava. Non a caso Socrate parla del meglio, ma anche del peggio; infatti, se nel modello tradizionale le opposizioni sono vissute come entità a sé stanti, ora in conflitto, ora in armonia, per Socrate, l'opposizione fra meglio e peggio è soltanto cognitiva (“identica è la conoscenza del meglio e del peggio”): il mondo non può non essere organizzato per il meglio, ma proprio per capire come è organizzato, bisogna conoscere il meglio e il peggio. Quindi la discussione si sposta sul piano cognitivo, spetta all'uomo saper capire cosa sono il meglio e il peggio perché soltanto così egli potrà capire l'ordine del mondo. Per questo, il metodo che Socrate sente come suo (κατὰ νοῦν ἐμαυτῷ) è effettivamente qualcosa che non può trovare pronto, perché è una visione non solo nuova ma molto complessa.

Prima di continuare, possiamo velocemente fare cenno all'unico esempio contemporaneo a Socrate, di questa nuova teologia e teleologia6. La troviamo, infatti, in Diogene di Apollonia, nel frammento DK 64 B 3º:

5 Sul ruolo del nous di Anassagora come sostituto alle idee tradizionali della divinità nelle aspettative di Socrate, si veda Betegh 2009.
6 Si veda a questo proposito Robinson, 2010. Voglio qui anche ringraziare il professor Robinson dei suoi preziosi suggerimenti, senza dimenticare di sottolineare che le mie colpe nel testo sono di mia intera responsabilità.
7 Diog.Apoll. DK 64 B 3οῦ γὰρ ἄν, φησίν, οἷόν τε ἦν οὕτω δεδάσθαι ἄνευ νοήσιος, ὥστε πάντων μέτρα ἐχειν, χειμῶνος τε καὶ θέρους καὶ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας καὶ ὕετων καὶ ἀνέμων καὶ εὐδιῶν· καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, εἰ τὰς ὀλεθρίας ἐννοεῖσθαι, εὐφρόσυνοι ἀν οὐτῶ διαιτεῖμαι ὥς ἀνώστον κάλλιστα
In effetti, senza intelligenza non potrebbe darsi una divisione tale da realizzare la misura di ogni cosa, sia d’inverno che d’estate, sia di notte che di giorno, sia di pioggie che di venti e di sereni; anche tutte le altre cose, semmai uno intenda esaminarle, le scoprirà ordinate nel miglior modo possibile. (DK B 3, tr. Obinu)

Diogene era contemporaneo di Socrate e forse erano anche amici. In questo frammento si vede come il principio unico, in questo caso, l’aria, era portatore di una intelligenza che dispone tutte le cose secondo il migliore dei modi. Non si sa chi abbia la priorità sull’idea del migliore, se Socrate o Diogene di Apollonia, ma certo è che quest’idea comincia a circolare proprio come istanza interna al pensiero presocratico. Infatti, la περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία, se vogliamo, presentava sì l’esonenzione critica richiesta dal fallimento del pensiero religioso anteriore ad essa, ma presentava anche lo svantaggio di non poter rispondere all’esigenza umana di decidere per il meglio.

L’operazione di Socrate, allora, è brillante non solo perché accoglie tanto la tradizione della saggezza antica quanto i nuovi apporti della scienza ionica, ma anche perché, trasponendo sul piano cognitivo la necessità di conoscere il meglio ed il peggio, allarga l’ambito della ricerca, includendovi la capacità del soggetto cognitivo di riuscire a concepire il meglio e il peggio. Per Socrate, la ricerca del meglio e del peggio è si realizzata nel mondo oggettivo, infatti, come dirà più avanti a proposito della spiegazione fisica dello stare seduti “Ché se uno dice che, senza avere di codeste cose, e ossa e nervi e tutto quello che io ho, non sarei capace di fare quello che mi sembrì dover fare, sta bene, costui dirà il vero” (99a). Ma la ricerca deve essere allargata alla nozione soggettiva del meglio, perché l’uomo che conosce il meglio conosce il mondo e conosce il principio ordinatore del tutto, la causa di ciascuna e di tutte le cose. Proprio per questo egli rivendica che la sua spiegazione del fatto di essere seduto lì in prigione non la si deve cercare nelle disposizioni di ossa e muscoli e nervi, ma proprio nella sua decisione di non fuggire, perché essa è la realizzazione del meglio.

Mi avvio alla conclusione con un corollario inevitabile. Nel pensiero religioso anteriore, il meglio e il peggio sono semplicemente l’adeguazione o meno al volere del dio e, anzi, a volte anche il peggio è il volere di certi déi. In altre parole, il meglio e il peggio sono come che oggettivati nel comportamento suppostamente fisso, regolare e predeterminato della natura. Nel pensiero presocratico, il meglio e il peggio non sono oggetto di studio, perché quei sapienti si dedicavano a studiare la natura e non a giudicarla. Ma ora, con Socrate, nasce lo studio del meglio e del peggio, il quale si rivelera soprattutto uno studio del meglio e del peggio nell’uomo. Tuttavia, l’ambivalenza di meglio e peggio aprono la strada a una discussione che certamente aiuta a dirimere questioni dubbie, ma che, allo stesso tempo porta al possibile relativismo di meglio e peggio. Ciòè, come si fa a sapere che qualcosa o qualche comportamento siano il migliore o il peggiore? Dato un fatto, come decidere se esso è stato il migliore o il peggiore? Qualunqua risposta non potrà essere né precisa e né assoluta, perché quasi sempre si riesce a pensare un virtuale migliore e un virtuale peggiore. Come sappiamo, questo virtuale migliore é rappresentato dalle forme. Comunque, la strada aperta da Socrate è la strada che porta alla contingenza del sapere sul mondo e in questo non è solo, ma è accompagnato da tutto il movimento sofistico. Tuttavia, le domande di Socrate fanno invece che irrimediabilmente le risposte anteriori, sia di Anassagora sia degli altri presocratici. Quelle risposte ora non servono più, nuove domande pongono nuove sfide alle etere questioni dell’uomo.
Abstract

The following pages speak of that passage of Phaedo where Socrates criticizes the naturalistic inquiry of pre-Socratics, mainly Anaxagoras. The paper aims to make clear that the Socratic criticism, starting from the aporias of the former thought, achieves to change the picture in a way that it is not the case of searching new answers for old problems but to remake the whole arrangement of the question.

In the famous passage that starts in 96a Socrates rejects the physical inquiry (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία). He tells us that hearing about Anaxagoras and his explanation of cosmic facts by the *nous*, he was attracted by him and read all his books. However, he was not satisfied. He tells indeed that causes of events should not be searched in their physical behavior (as pre-Socratics used to do), as much as the cause of the fact that he was there in the prison was not a matter of position of muscles and bones.

The speech of Socrates is disquiet. First he rejects those physical explanations and after introduces a teleology ethically oriented, which is also a theology. This arrangement of the question is clearly far from Anaxagoras and the pre-Socratic thought. Socrates himself acknowledges this when he says that his search for answers had not found good solutions in former authors, so he had to start a research by himself, the famous second navigation (99d).

What he seems to require is a certain kind of causal explanation (implicating a teleological cause, for each thing and for all things) that can be considered unknown by pre-Socratics. These indeed paid attention to a kind of explanation that was at the roots of everything, although not reductionist as we understand it today. In their vision, the best explanation should be given by one or more universal principles: ἀρχή or ἀρχαί.

The ἀρχή was not the cause of the world, in the meaning of the Socratic requirement. The ἀρχή was a principle that today we would call structural principle. In the pre-Socratic world, the ἀρχή is an intelligible principle and even if in some cases receives names of physical things, like water and air, in some other cases has no physicality, as in the *apeiron* or the number or being and non-being or, as the case taken by Socrates, the *nous* of Anaxagoras. Thus the Socrates lack of satisfaction is not for the physical explanation, in fact, the pre-Socratic explanations were already intelligible in some degree; he was not satisfied with the manner in which things and facts were considered. For example, he says that he does not understand how we obtain the duality adding one thing to another and dividing a thing in two parts, which is an opposite operation, that means, he does not understand how opposite operations could give the same result.

Socrates seems to perceive a set of problems that are showing up on the horizon of the pre-Socratic thought. In fact, beside the pluralism, increasing mainly with Empedoclean influence on medicine, another important group of thinkers, the sophists, is developing the relativism and deflating the meaning of universal natural objective principle, as the ἀρχή, reducing it to an agreement among subjects, as we see in Protagoras, for example. In this picture, what seems to lose distinctness is the first question: how to explain generation and corruption of things.

With the background of the complexity of the pre-Socratic thought, by *physiologoi* and sophists, the paper aims to shed lights on how the Socratic dissatisfaction is related to new configurations of thinking, and trying to make clear how Socrates, searching new answers ends changing old questions to new ones. Now for Socrates we need to understand the best and the worse.
Bibliografia


Contra dos ni Heracles puede” (*Phd*. 89c5-6)  
El tratamiento platónico de la antilogía en el *Fedón*

Gardella, Mariana

**Introducción**

Una vez que Sócrates expone los argumentos sobre la inmortalidad del alma (*Phd*. 69e5-84b7), Simias y Cebes presentan objeciones que cuestionan que ésta pueda existir separada del cuerpo luego de la muerte (*Phd*. 84c1-88b8). Estas objeciones confunden (ἀναταράξαι) a quienes están presentes en la prisión y los llevan a una situación de duda e incredulidad (ἀπιστία) (*Phd*. 88c1-7). Como expresa Equécrates, interrumpiendo el relato de Fedón: “¿En qué argumento podemos entonces confiar todavía si, a pesar de ser tan fuertemente persuasivo el argumento que formuló Sócrates, ahora se ha precipitado de nuevo en el descrédito?”.

Antes de responder a las objeciones de Simias y Cebes, en un breve pero significativo interludio, Sócrates advierte sobre los peligros de la misología (*Phd*. 88c1-91c5). Ésta es caracterizada como uno de los efectos generados por el uso de la antilogía, que es la técnica de presentar argumentos opuestos sobre un mismo tema de investigación (*Phd*. 90b9-c2). En este trabajo me propongo analizar las críticas de Platón a la antilogía, con el objetivo de determinar cuál es su sentido y cuál es la relación que éstas guardan con los problemas tratados en el diálogo. Intentaré demostrar que la antilogía es presentada en *Phd.* como una práctica argumentativa con objetivos erísticos que no permite conocer la verdad. Las críticas dirigidas a este procedimiento justifican el desarrollo de un nuevo método de investigación, el método hipotético, que supera las limitaciones del procedimiento erístico, al restaurar la confianza en el lógos como vía de acceso al conocimiento de lo inteligible.

**Misología, antilogía y erística**

En *Phd.* la misología es comparada con la misantropía, pues ambas tienen una causa común: la falta de conocimiento experto (τέχνη, *Phd*. 89d5, e7, 90b7, d3). Quien carece de tékhne cree ingenuamente que todas las personas son buenas y que todos los argumentos son verdaderos. Esta ilusión se rompe cuando se descubre que la mayoría de las personas se ubica en un término medio entre la bondad y la maldad, mientras que son pocas las que pueden considerarse completamente buenas o malas (*Phd*. 89d4-90b3); y cuando se advierte que algunos argumentos son verdaderos; pero otros, falsos (*Phd*. 90b4-5). El error de juicio provocado por la falta de conocimiento técnico (ἀτεχνία *Phd*. 90d3) genera una gran decepción. Sin embargo, en lugar de reconocer la propia ignorancia y asumir la responsabilidad del error, se termina por odiar esas cosas sobre las cuales se presumía saber. Los misántropos aborrecen a las personas, creyendo que todas son viles y desleales (*Phd*. 89d8-e3); los misólogos, a los argumentos (*Phd*. 90d3-7).

La misología es el efecto producido principalmente por el uso de la antilogía (*Phd*. 90b9-c2). Según la clásica definición de Kerferd sobre la antilogía, “it consists in opposing one logos to another logos, or in discovering or drawing attention to the presence of such an opposition in an argument or in a thing or state of affairs.” Teniendo en cuenta esta caracterización general, en el marco de una disputa argumentativa es posible:

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1 La traducción de *Phd.* pertenece a Vigo (2009).
(1) Que un interlocutor sostenga la tesis A y su rival, no A. Este modo de exponer argumentos es propio de procesos judiciales e instancias de deliberación política, y también de los agónes dramáticos, e.g. el enfrentamiento entre el discurso más fuerte y el más débil en las Nubes de Aristófanes (vv. 890-1114).

(2) Que un interlocutor enuncie al mismo tiempo las tesis A y no A, al constatar que ciertos hechos o fenómenos poseen propiedades contrarias. Esto es lo que habría señalado Zenón de Elea, al mostrar por medio de la técnica de la antilogía que las mismas cosas son similares y, al mismo tiempo, disímiles; unas y, a la vez, múltiples; y que se encuentran en reposo y, al mismo tiempo, en movimiento (Phdr. 261d6-8, DK 29 A 13). Algo similar expresa Protágoras de Abdera, para quien “sobre cualquier cosa, existen dos discursos opuestos uno a otr o (δόδο λόγους εἶναι περὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἀντικειμένως ἀλλήλως, Diógenes Laercio, IX 51 1-2; DK 80 B 6a). Este fenómeno se observa en los primeros capítulos del tratado anónimo Dissoi lógoi, donde se prueban dos tesis opuestas: la tesis relativista, según la cual la definición de valores como bueno-malo, noble-vergonzoso y justo-injusto depende de las personas que, en situación particulares, emiten un juicio basado en su propia percepción; y la tesis no relativista, según la cual los valores y propiedades que se adjudican a las cosas son constantes e independientes de quien juzga.

En Phdr. se presentan dos críticas a la antilogía. La primera, de tipo ontológico, indica que está se fundamenta en la tesis metafísica según la cual todo está en constante fluctuación y cambio, tesis que Platón suele atribuir a Heráclito de Éfeso (Phdr. 90c2-6). En efecto, dado que ningún argumento es seguro ni firme, se supone que las cosas tampoco lo son. Esta descripción se ajusta al ámbito sensible, pero no al intangible, cuyo conocimiento queda vedado para quienes utilizan este procedimiento. La segunda crítica, de tipo epistemológica, señala que el objetivo principal de la antilogía es contradecir al interlocutor de turno para obtener la victoria en la discusión (ἀφτερ όι πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονίκως, Phd. 91a2-3). Quienes emplean este método no se preocupan por discutir cómo son realmente las cosas, sino por imponer sus propias creencias y persuadir a quienes los escuchan, con el fin de ganar el debate (Phd. 91a3-6; πιστεύσα, 89d5; πιστεύσῃ, 90b6).

Aunque esta última característica acerca la antilogía a la erística, se insiste usualmente en diferenciarlas. Mientras la antilogía es un método argumentativo que consiste en oponer un discurso a otro, la erística no es un método, sino que representa la intención de conseguir la victoria en la conversación, haciendo uso de cualquier estrategia argumentativa y sin preocuparse por la verdad o falsedad de los enunciados utilizados. Mientras Platón se mantiene siempre crítico de la erística, su actitud hacia la antilogía es diferente. En efecto, en la última sección de Phd., reconoce que ésta puede ser una técnica de investigación válida, siempre y cuando se utilice con base en el conocimiento que aporta el método dialéctico de unión y división, pues sólo gracias al conocimiento de las diferencias reales que existen entre las cosas es posible presentar discursos opuestos sobre ellas (Phdr. 260c5-7, 262b5-c3, 265c8-266c1).

6 Phdr. 261d6-8 (DK 29 A 13): “¿No sabemos que el Palamedes eleático habla en efecto con esta técnica, de modo tal que a quienes lo escuchan las mismas cosas aparecen similares y disímiles, unas y múltiples, y que no sólo permanecen quietas sino que, a su vez, se trasladan?” (τὸν οὖν οἰκετικὸν Ἐπαναλήξεως ἀλλήλως, Phdr. 90c2-6). En efecto, dado que ningún argumento es seguro ni firme, se supone que las cosas tampoco lo son. Esta descripción se ajusta al ámbito sensible, pero no al intangible, cuyo conocimiento queda vedado para quienes utilizan este procedimiento. La segunda crítica, de tipo epistemológica, señala que el objetivo principal de la antilogía es contradecir al interlocutor de turno para obtener la victoria en la discusión (ἀφτερ όι πάνυ ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονίκως, Phd. 91a2-3). Quienes emplean este método no se preocupan por discutir cómo son realmente las cosas, sino por imponer sus propias creencias y persuadir a quienes los escuchan, con el fin de ganar el debate (Phd. 91a3-6; πιστεύσα, 89d5; πιστεύσῃ, 90b6).

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7 Otras versiones de esta misma tesis se encuentran en Clemente de Alejandría, Strom. VI 65 (DK 80 A 20); Cicerón, Brut. 12. 46 y Quintiliano III 1 10 (DK 80 B 6).

8 Véase, por ejemplo, DL. 1. 1-4: “Discursos dobles son dichos en la Hélade por quienes filosofan sobre lo bueno y lo malo. Pues, por una parte, dicen que lo bueno es una cosa y lo malo, otra. Por otra parte, <dicen> que lo mismo es <bueno y malo>, para unos sería bueno, para otros, malo, y para el mismo hombre <sería> algunas veces bueno, otras, malo”.

9 Cit. 385e4-386e4, 402a4-c3; Thit. 152c8-e10, 160d5-c3, 179c1-183b5.

10 Gallop (1975, p. 154, ad 90b4-91c5).

11 Kerferd (1981, p. 62), Dixsaut (1991, p. 360, n. 212) y Rowe (1993, p. 215). Por el contrario, Robinson (1953, p. 83) no establece diferencias marcadas entre ellas: “The more detailed connotation of ‘eristic’ and ‘antilogic’ tends to be whatever Plato happens to think of as bad method at the moment, just as ‘dialectic’ is to him at every stage of his thought whatever he then considered the best method”.

Ahora bien, la perspectiva de *Phd.* es levemente diferente, pues allí sólo se contempla la utilización de la antilógía con fines erísticos. Se ha señalado que la crítica a la antilógía podría estar dirigida a Protagoras, ya que en *Tht.* el relativismo protagónico se combina con el heraclitismo extremo, como se observa también en *Phd.* 90c2-6. Sin embargo, existen algunas razones para pensar que la crítica podría estar también dirigida a los filósofos megáricos y, particularmente, a Euclides, quien junto a Terpsión acompañó a Sócrates en su último día en la prisión (*Phd.* 59b5-c6). En efecto, algunos aspectos de la descripción de la antilógia de *Phd.* se reiteran en *Euth.*, diálogo donde Platón presenta una crítica profunda a la erística megárica. En primer lugar, en *Phd.* 89c5-10 Sócrates compara la tarea de responder a Simias y Cebes con el combate que Heracles mantuvo con la Hidra de Lerna y el cangrejo, para vencer a los cuales necesitó de la ayuda de su sobrino Yolao. La misma comparación se emplea en *Euth.* 297b9-d2, para caracterizar el comportamiento agresivo de los hermanos Eutidemo y Dionisodoro, al cual Sócrates no puede hacer frente solo.

En segundo lugar, algunos de los razonamientos utilizados por los hermanos erísticos en *Euth.* poseen una estructura antilógica similar a la que se describe en *Phd.* 90b5-c6, pues presentan explicaciones opuestas sobre un mismo fenómeno sin establecer cuál de ellas es la verdadera, e.g. las paradojas del conocimiento de *Euth.* 275d3-277c7, que sostienen que aprenden los que saben y, al mismo tiempo, que aprenden sólo los que ignoran; que se aprende lo que se sabe, y, al mismo tiempo, que sólo se puede aprender lo que se ignora (cfr. *Men.* 80d8-e5). En *RS IV.* 165b30-34 Aristóteles denuncia que este razonamiento explota la homonimia del verbo *manthánein*, que puede significar tanto “comprender” cuando ya se tiene un conocimiento, por eso aprenderían sólo los que ya saben; como “aprender”, *i.e.* adquirir un conocimiento nuevo que no se tiene, por eso sólo podrían aprender los ignorantes (cfr. *Euth.* 277d3-278a7). Este argumento pone en evidencia las ambigüedades de los conceptos de “enseñanza” y “aprendizaje”, cuya utilización genera contradicciones y equívocos. Múltiples argumentos megáricos persiguen el mismo objetivo: poner en evidencia las ambigüedades del lenguaje por medio de la construcción de paradojas que operan con base en esas mismas ambigüedades, a fin de mostrar que el *lógos* es una herramienta precaria y falible que no sirve para acceder al conocimiento de la realidad.

En tercer lugar, en *Phd.* 90d6-7 Platón señala que una de las consecuencias del uso de la antilógía es quedarse privado de la verdad y del conocimiento de lo que es (τῶν δὲ ὃντων τῆς ἀληθείας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης στερηθείη). Esto se debe a que quienes practican la antilógia utilizan las proposiciones para persuadir o refutar, sin importar cuál sea su valor veritativo. Es decir, utilizan al *lógos* con independencia de la realidad, socavando así la relación que justifica la verdad y la falsedad. Un punto de vista similar sostienen los hermanos Eutidemo y Dionisodoro, quienes declaran que su intención es “refutar lo que siempre se dice, ya sea igualmente falso o verdadero” (ἐξελέγχειν τὸ ἀεὶ λεγόμενον, ὁμοίως ἐάντε ψεῦδος ἐάντε ἀληθὲς ᾖ, τὸ ἐάντε). En *Symposium Platonicum,* ha aportado razones para defender que los hermanos Eutidemo y Dionisodoro no eran sofistas, sino megáricos, debido al modo en que conducen el intercambio dialéctico y al tipo de razonamientos que utilizan para refutar al adversario. En tercer lugar, en *Phd.* 90d6-7 Platón señala que una de las consecuencias del uso de la antilógía es quedarse privado de la verdad y del conocimiento de lo que es (τῶν δὲ ὃντων τῆς ἀληθείας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης στερηθείη). Esto se debe a que quienes practican la antilógia utilizan las proposiciones para persuadir o refutar, sin importar cuál sea su valor veritativo. Es decir, utilizan al *lógos* con independencia de la realidad, socavando así la relación que justifica la verdad y la falsedad. Un punto de vista similar sostienen los hermanos Eutidemo y Dionisodoro, quienes declaran que su intención es “refutar lo que siempre se dice, ya sea igualmente falso o verdadero” (ἐξελέγχειν τὸ ἀεὶ λεγόμενον, ὁμοίως ἐάντε ψεῦδος ἐάντε ἀληθὲς ᾖ, *Euth.* 272a7-b1). De acuerdo con esta precisión, la erística no aspira a conocer lo que es a través de la postulación de enunciados verdaderos, sino por el contrario a refutar cualquier tipo de proposición con el fin de ganar el debate.

**Antilógia y método hipotético**


Ahora bien, ¿cuál es el valor de las críticas a la antilogía que se presentan en el interludio de Phd.? En primer lugar, en el contexto inmediato, estas críticas sirven para censurar el comportamiento de Simias y Cebes. Luego de aceptar que el alma es inmortal, ellos proponen nuevas objeciones que cuestionan que ésta pueda existir separada del cuerpo luego de la muerte, de modo que, a la manera de los contradictores, sostienen que el alma es y no es inmortal. Aunque las objeciones son valiosas y obligan a Sócrates a presentar argumentos que fortalecen su propia doctrina, éste aprovecharía la oportunidad para advertir sobre los peligros de presentar argumentos sólo con la intención de contradecir.

En segundo lugar, las críticas a la antilogía de Phd. ponen en evidencia la necesidad de desarrollar un método de investigación que permita alcanzar el conocimiento de las Formas. Éste no es otro que el método hipotético, que supera los defectos y limitaciones de la antilogía. Por una parte, el uso de la antilogía con fines erísticos engendra odio hacia el lógos (Phd. 90b9-c2). El método hipotético, en cambio, pretende restaurar la confianza en el lógos, al restablecer el vínculo que éste mantiene con la realidad. Por este motivo, prescribe “refugiarse en los enunciados” para poder examinar a través de ellos la verdad de las cosas (ἔδοξε δή μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν) (Phd. 99e4-6). Lejos de ser una imagen deficiente de la realidad, el lógos se presenta como una vía segura para acceder al conocimiento de lo inteligible que, de otro modo, es inaccesible a los mortales.17

Por otra parte, la antilogía no se preocupa por distinguir los enunciados falsos de los enunciados verdaderos. La consecuencia de esto es que los argumentos verdaderos suelen ser desechados por quedar asociados a otros que no lo son (Phd. 90c8-d3). Para revertir este problema, el método hipotético establece un criterio para diferenciar las proposiciones verdaderas de las falsas y poder desechar estas últimas. En efecto, tras elegir la hipótesis que se considera más fuerte, e.g. que existen Ideas, se juzga como verdadero todo lo que concuerda (συμφωνεῖν 100a5, συμφωνεῖ 101d5) con ella, y como falso lo que no concuerda (διαφωνεῖ 101d5) (Phd. 100a3-7).18

Este método propone además un procedimiento para el tratamiento de hipótesis que evita incurrir en el vicio de discutir sólo por el afán de hacerlo. En efecto, si alguien pidiera razones para justificar la hipótesis de partida, luego de examinar si sus consecuencias concuerdan o no entre sí, se postularía una nueva hipótesis de orden superior que permita explicar la primera (Phd. 101d3-e1).19 De este modo, se evita proceder como lo hacen quienes se dedican a contradecir (οἱ ἀντιλογικοί, Phd. 101e1-2). Éstos suelen obstinarse en discutir la hipótesis inicial, presentando un argumento contrario a esta hipótesis, sin tomar en cuenta las conclusiones que se extraen de ella (Phd. 101d3-5), como parece haber hecho Euclides de Mégara quien, al criticar otros razonamientos, no cuestionaba las premisas, sino que se oponía directamente a la conclusión, sin importar qué razones la fundamentaran.20 Los que se dedican a la contradicción parecen no poseer un procedimiento de indagación sistemático y, por tanto, discuten al mismo tiempo la hipótesis y sus consecuencias, mezclando y confundiendo (φύροι, Phd. 101e1; κυκῶντες, Phd. 101e5) niveles de análisis sin poder obtener ningún tipo de conocimiento sobre el asunto tratado.21

De lo dicho hasta aquí se desprende que las críticas a la antilogía presentadas

en el interludio de Phd. no sólo ponen en evidencia las falencias de aquellas prácticas argumentativas que destruyen la confianza en el lógos, sino que allanan el camino para proponer un nuevo método de investigación que, superando estas dificultades, utilice al lógos como medio para acceder al conocimiento de lo inteligible.

Résumé
Après que Socrate présente les arguments sur l'immortalité des âmes (Phd. 69e5-84b7), Simmias et Cébès proposent des objections qui remettent en question qu'elles puissent survivre à la mort du corps (Phd. 84c1-88b8). Avant de répondre, Socrate appelle l'attention sur les risques de la « misologie », i.e. la haine des arguments. La « misologie » est causée par le manque de connaissance (atekhnia, Phd. 90d3) qui est produit par l'emploi de l'antilogie, technique de la controverse proposant des arguments pour et contre le même sujet (cfr. R. III. 411c4-e3, La. 188c5-6).

Or, Platon présente deux critiques contre l’antilogie. En premier lieu, elle s’appuie sur la thèse métaphysique selon laquelle tout est dans un mouvement et un flux continu (Phd. 90c2-6). Bien que ce point de vue décrive le monde sensible, il ne rend pas compte de la réalité intelligible, dont la connaissance reste inaccessible pour ceux qui utilisent l’antilogie. En deuxième lieu, étant donné que les adeptes de la controverse ne s’inquiètent pas de savoir ce que sont les choses dont ils discutent, ils n’emploient l’antilogie que pour contredire et réfuter aux interlocuteurs, afin de gagner la discussion (Phd. 91a2-6. Cfr. Woolf 2007, p. 6). En effet, en utilisant cette procédure, ils essaient d’imposer leurs propres croyances et de persuader à tous ce qui les écoutent, avec des arguments vrais ou même faux (Phd. 91a3-6; pisteusai, 89d5; pisteusei, 90b6).

Même si on distingue souvent l’antilogie de l’éristique (Kerferd 1981, p. 62; Dixsaut 1991, p. 360, n. 212; Rowe 1993, p. 215), dans cet exposé je me propose de défendre que dans le Phédon Platon présente l’antilogie comme une pratique argumentative éristique qui ne sert pas à connaître la vérité, étant donné qu’elle utilise le logos comme un outil dont la fonction n’est pas exprimer ce que la réalité est, mais réfuter, contredire ou persuader. L’antilogie détruit la liaison entre logos et réalité et, donc, le fondement de la vérité. Je signalerai aussi que la critique platonicienne ne s’adresse pas seulement à Protagoras, comme l’on a souvent remarqué, mais aussi à Euclide de Mégare, d’où la ressemblance entre certaines objections faites par Socrate dans le Phédon et dans l’Euthydième, ou l’on trouve une critique lapidaire aux arguments éristiques des philosophes mégariques (cfr. Gallop 1975, p. 155; Dorion 2000, pp. 35-50; Mársico 2015, p. 140).

D’ailleurs, je suggérerai que les critiques dirigées contre l’antilogie justifient le développement d’une nouvelle méthode de recherche, la méthode des hypothèses, qui nous permet d’acquérir la connaissance des Formes, en surmontant les défauts et difficultés posées par l’antilogie. D’une partie, cette méthode restaure la confiance dans le logos, en prouvant qu’il est le seul moyen pour accéder à la connaissance de Formes (Phd. 99e4-9). D’autre part, elle établit un critère pour distinguer la fausseté et la vérité des hypothèses, afin d’éviter la réfutation compulsive et trouver une explication de la réalité qui soit vrai (Phd. 100a3-7).

Bibliografía


German, Andy

The central section of the *Phaedo*, between 88c8 and 102a3, begins with the dangers of misology and ends with Socrates' second sailing, his “flight” into logos. Beyond its specific concerns with the immortality of the soul, then, it is an extended treatment of reasoned speech. Twice in this section, Socrates employs images to illuminate the nature of logos. Nothing unusual in that, of course. It is his standard *modus operandi*.

Here, though, Socrates does so in a notably odd way. Today we focus on this oddity.

Our first passage is at 89d1-91b6, where Socrates warns his compatriots against misology by likening it to misanthropy. The second occurs during his description of the “second sailing.” On both occasions, Socrates carefully articulates an analogy between logos and something else. In the first, hatred of logos (*misologia*) and misanthropy come about *ek tou autou tropou*, “in the same manner.” In the second, we must abandon sense perception for logos in order to avoid blinding the soul, just as one must not look directly at the sun, but at its reflection.

In both cases, no sooner has Socrates finished speaking then he promptly reverses course and says that matters are not like what he himself made them seem to be.

Why does Plato bother with these seemingly trivial reversals? Surely, Socrates is quite capable of saying what he has to say directly. Or, if images are necessary, then why not an accurate image, which Socrates need not correct the moment he has spoken it? With precious few exceptions, we generally ignore such conversational “eddies,” which is not a particularly seaworthy hermeneutical principle when reading any great author. In the case of Plato, however, it borders on sheer recklessness.

I believe Socrates’ “iconography” in the *Phaedo* has two (or at least two) purposes, one that I call “doctrinal”, *faute de mieux*, while the other is “experiential”. That is, each *eikon* illuminates something about logos while Socrates’ sudden reversal also aims at a certain *pathos*. This *pathos*, though, has its own crucial “doctrinal” implications. Closer inspection will reveal a window onto Plato’s thinking about the way *doxa*, logos and, perhaps most surprisingly, self-consciousness, are related in philosophical rationality. We turn first to the misanthropy passage.

88c1 is an emotionally acute point in the dialogue. Phaedo is just relating to Echecrates how everyone felt “ill at ease” under the impact of Cebes’ and Simmias’ objections to the arguments for immortality. They began to doubt, not merely any particular logos (or themselves as judges), but whether the matters themselves

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1 This whole section is framed nicely by Echecrates’ two interruptions into Phaedo’s narration of the dialogue. See Phd. 88c8-e4 and 102a4-6. All translations from Greek are my own, though, for the *Phaedo*, I have consulted the translation by Brann, Kalkavage and Salem. The Greek text used is the new Oxford edition, by Duke, et al. (1995). For all other dialogues, I use the standard Burnet editions (1900-1907), with the exception of citations from the *Republic*, which refer to Slings, (2003). Unless preceded by a title abbreviation, all Stephanus references henceforth are to the *Phaedo*. Abbreviations of dialogue titles follow those in the Liddell-Scott-Jones lexicon.
2 The most vivid examples, of course, are Socrates’ three images of Sun, Line and Cave in *Republic* VI and VII.
3 That is, at 99e5-6.
4 89d3-4.
5 99d7.
6 As he does, for example, in describing thinking (*dianoesithai*) as the soul’s logos with itself at *Theaet*. 189e6.
7 I owe this term to the fine study by Thomas Miller (2015), 155. For others who have had something to say about it, see White (1989), 135 and Ahrens-dorf (1994), 138.
8 That is, to the arguments about (i) the soul as *harmonia* and (ii) the soul as a weaver of bodies, respectively.
were not beyond trust. Moreover, says Phaedo, Socrates himself “sharply perceived how we were suffering under the *logoi*.” Note that what we are facing here goes well beyond the usual Socratic *aporia*. It is more like a general rout, a total loss of confidence in articulate speech as a medium for the highest truths.

In this context, Socrates warns that misology and misanthropy both arise from an artless, excessive trust, which measures its object by unattainable standards. The misanthrope starts out believing people are true, sound and trustworthy altogether, until repeated encounters with human villainy convince him that “there is nothing at all sound in anybody.” This “shameful” result, says Socrates, arises from the lack of that art of human things that would allow him to consider people as they are. In fact, the truly worthy or utterly wicked are rare; most people are in the middle (*metaxu*), along a continuum from *chrēstotēs* to *ponēria*. In a wickedness pageant, Socrates says, few people would take firsts.

If this analogy holds for logoi, they too must be some mixture of truth and falsehood; few would be completely rotten. But logoi are “not the same as human beings in that respect.” He only made it seem they were because he was “following Phaedo’s lead.” Now, this is an odd little aside indeed. What lead was Socrates following? Phaedo made no positive statement about the roots of misology or about logoi. He merely called Socrates’ conclusion about most people being middling, “likely.” Two questions require our consideration, then: What is the actual situation with regard to logoi in contrast to people? And why make it seem that logoi resemble people in some respect, when they do not? We turn to the first question now and leave the second for later.

If logoi are *not* middling like human beings then, while most people appear rarely at the extremes, logoi would so appear. And this makes a certain sense, since truth and falsehood are not points on a continuum but binaries. What follows from this, though? Are most logoi true, while a few are false, or vice versa? In respect of truth and falsehood, at least, it is more reasonable to assume that there will be few good (true) logoi and an abundance of false ones. This, however, is not the case. Phaedo made no positive statement about the roots of misology or about logoi. He merely called Socrates’ conclusion about most people being middling, “likely.” Two questions require our consideration, then: What is the actual situation with regard to logoi in contrast to people? And why make it seem that logoi resemble people in some respect, when they do not? We turn to the first question now and leave the second for later.

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9 88c1-7.

10 89a4-5.

11 See especially the military language at 89a6-8 and at 99cff, as noted by Shipton (1979), 39. Miller (2015), 152 remarks on the comprehensive nature of the crisis.

12 Echecrates himself takes up the general sentiment at 88d1-2: “In what logos can we trust from now on?” (tini ouν eti pisteusomen logó). Burger (1984), 112-113.

13 …sphodra tini pisteusai aneu technēs… 89d5-6.

14 89d5-e4.

15 ἡσπερ εχει houtos, 89e8.

16 90b1-2.

17 90b4-5.

18 Hackforth, in a note to his translation, remarks that it is difficult to see how Phaedo “has lead Socrates on” except perhaps “by the readiness of his assent to what Socrates has been saying.” Hackforth (1972), 107 (n. 2). In fact, however, Phaedo’s assent was not quite so readily given at all, as we can see by noting the difference in his tone at 90a3 (pós legeis) and at 90a11 (panu ge). Phaedo seems unaware, even surprised, by Socrates’ observation that most people are middling. Yet he is not at all surprised, but immediately assents to the conclusion that in the case of something really small or big, really fast or slow, really ugly or beautiful, or white or black, the extremes are rare while those in between are in full supply. It is only with regard to the health and soundness of human beings that Phaedo has his doubts. Both Miller (2015), 154, and Burger (1984), 116, remark on how strange it is that Phaedo seems unaware of this elementary fact about human life.

19 There are two other possibilities which we can dispense with in short order: that all logoi are true or that all of them false. If the first were true, misology would be impossible since the experience which gives rise to it, being deceived by logoi, would never occur. As for the second possibility, Socrates seems to foreclose it at 90c8ff: The misologist would be in an unfortunate pickle, he says, in rejecting all argument when there was in fact a true, stable and detectable logoi to be had. He speaks there of the “pitiable” (oiktron) condition of the misologist. But there would be nothing pitiable in being a misologist if a true logos were impossible.

20 As Aristotle says, there are many ways to go wrong, only one way to get it right. Arist. *Eth. Nic.* II, 6, 370
only, or even the most important, difference between logos and anthropos to which Socrates draws attention. Logoi, he continues, are not similar to human beings “in that respect…but rather in this one,”

Whenever someone trusts an argument to be true without the art of arguments, and then, a little later the argument seems to him false…and this happens again with another argument and then another – And, most of all, those who spend their time with contentious arguments end up thinking that they have become the wisest and that they alone have noticed that there is nothing sound or stable…but that all beings simply toss to and fro, just as in the Euripus, and do not abide anywhere for any length of time.21

Here too, the language should give us pause. The epeidan (“whenever”) at b6 is the protasis of a sentence without an apodosis.22 We would expect to read that whenever someone trusts excessively in logoi and then encounters some that seem false, he will end up believing all logoi are unsound.23 Instead, beginning abruptly with kai malista (at b9), Socrates takes up a new theme: the antilogikoi. These men do not merely conclude that all logoi lack stability, but that everything does: panta ta onta are swept along in the Heraclitean flux. Someone who associates with such arguments will, in his distress, become a misologist robbed of tōn ontōn tēs alētheias te kai epistēmēs – truth and knowledge of the beings.24

Logoi, then, are like human beings because one can handle them properly only with art. Yet in another, altogether more fundamental, respect, the analogy does not hold. To be betrayed by this or that person can undermine one's faith in human beings, but the kind of disorientation which Socrates’ companions are undergoing can be preliminary to losing faith in being having a logos, in its intelligibility simpliciter. Therefore, we require an art that not only allows us to see logoi as they really are, but also their connection to ta onta. This connection is the theme of our next example.

II.

Socrates begins his description of the second sailing by remarking that his experiences with peri physeōs historia had taught him to be “on guard” against suffering the fate of “those who try to behold and examine the sun during an eclipse.”25 Since they destroy their eyes if they do not look at its reflection in something else, like water,

I also considered something like this and feared lest my soul be totally blinded by looking at things with my eyes and attempting to grasp them by each of the senses. So it seemed to me necessary to take refuge in logoi and examine in them the truth of the beings.26

Once again, matters appear straightforward: just as one looks at the sun in some reflective medium to avoid blindness, so too, one must look at ta pragmata, not via sense perception, but in speeches. The unmistakable implication seems to be that logoi are reflections, linguistic-conceptual constructs about beings. In the next sentence, however, Socrates complicates matters: “Perhaps…in a certain way, it isn't quite like what I'm likening it to. For I don't at all concede that somebody who looks

1106b29-31: eti to men hamartanein pollachōs estin….to de katorthoun monachōs. Cf. Hackforth (1972), 107: “Socrates is perhaps hinting that in a context logōn ponērias there would probably be plenty of first classes”, and Rowe (1993), 213.
21 90b4-c6.
22 Duly noted by Burnet (1911), p. 89 and Rowe (1993), 213.
23 That is, words, as Hobbes says, are the currency of fools. Leviathan, I, 4, 13.
24 90d6-7.
25 Cf. with 90d9.
26 99e1-6: Toiouton ti kai ego dianwēthen, kai edeisa me pantapasi tēn aithēseōn tuphλȳtheiēn blepōn pros ta pragmata, tois ommasai kai hekastē tōn aithēseōn epicheirōn hapteshai autōn. Edoxe dē moi chrēnai eis tous logosous kataphugonta en ekeinois skopein tōn ontōn tēn alētheian
into beings in accounts looks at them in likenesses more than one who does so in actions. 27 Socrates’ own analogy was misleading, then. But why should correcting it require attention to the relation between speech and action? 28

Generally, we assume that our most direct relation to "pragmata" is through action. In "erγa" we relate to "pragmata" themselves; “mere” talk is abstract, the doing is the thing. Socrates denies this, but not because either logoi or "erγa" are in unmediated contact with beings. Both are images. Whatever else may be the case, logoi are not “more” imagistic – not “farther” from beings – than "erγa." 29 Nevertheless, there is a difference because apparently, in some circumstances, logoi allow access to the “truth” of beings. Nothing comparable is said about "erγa."

We begin by noting that, for Plato, the "pragmata" that surround us cannot be originals in any simple sense. Qua moments of genesis, they are instances of forms or formal complexes. 30 The ultimate fate of any instance is destruction, but unless we intend to reduce ordinary experience to total nonsense, this cannot also be the case for that which makes something an identifiable instance of a certain kind. Now, clearly, the difference between the determinate thing and the cause of its determinacy is not a pressing quotidian concern. We are perfectly capable of riding a horse without asking what it is that makes two different horses tokens of the same type, say, or judging something to be “useful” without asking how utility is related to goodness. But Plato’s dialogues prove that we do become concerned with just these problems as soon as we begin to think, that is, to think through what it means to be something. Simply put, we confront the Socratic "ti estin" question in dianoia, and it is through dianoia that we reason our way to an awareness that only eidos can satisfactorily answer it. This, however, means that logoi, unlike "erγa", are potentially images of two things at once: the particulars, the furniture of ordinary experience, about which we speak, and their intelligible structure, which we seek to express in speech. In order for the second sailing to be possible, logoi cannot be reflections only in the way that the surface of water reflects. If they were, logoi would actually be reflections twice removed: reflections of images of beings. Socrates’ method would amount to exchanging sunstroke for fog. The method depends, for its coherence, on the assumption that our use of speech is evidence that we register the intelligible structure of beings, what Aristotle called to eidos to kata logon. 31 Speech is a unique kind of image, then: it reflects (and thus may distort), but it can also let through. Indeed, its telos is to become a translucent medium for the noēton eidos of the sensible particulars it images. 32 Socrates’ very decision to continue to search for

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27 99ε6-7: Ἰσός μὲν οὖν ὢν ἄρῇ εἰκαζό τραπον τίνα οὐκ εἰκονικ. 28 Commentary on this reversal usually takes one of two directions: In the first, we simply assume that Socrates meant to say that he is turning from empirical, physical inquiry to conceptual analysis. As I argue, this is clearly wrong. The second possibility is to articulate how the turn to logos allows the eidê to manifest themselves, as Burnet says on p. 99 of his commentary. Burnet’s approach is clearly the correct one, provided we take the time to understand why this should require a correct rank-ordering of logoi and "erγa." 29 Kosman (1983), 208: “Forms…have sovereignty over logoi as well as ergon; they determine the structure of beings, what Aristotle called to eidos to kata logon.” 30 R, 520c4-6, and Phdr. 250b3-4. Burger (1984), 145 also notes that the "pragmata" cannot be τὰ οὐντα αὐτὰ kath’ auta. 31 Arist. Ph. 193b1-2. Klein (1968), 73: “We must not overlook the fact that the procedure by "hypothesis" stressed by Plato is not a specifically “scientific” method but is that original attitude of human reflection prior to all science which is revealed directly in speech as it exhibits and judges things. Thus compared to the study of nature embarked upon by the physiologists, that “second-best sailing”…of Socrates, which consists in “taking refuge in reasonable speech”…is indeed nothing else than a return to the ordinary attitude of the dianoia; it is for this reason that Plato can characterize the method of "hypothesis" as ‘simple and artless and perhaps naïve.” 32 None of this is to deny that explaining the mode of being, the tropos tou einai, of eidos is an excruciatingly difficult problem. The relationship between Plato and Aristotle suffices to confirm this. (At Metaph. M, 1, 1076a35-37, Aristotle remarks that for him, the controversy about τα mathêmatika will not be about their being (ou peri tou einai) but about their mode of being (alla peri tou tropou)). Indeed, even the brief section of the
aitia despite the shipwreck of all his previous efforts assumes the duality of logos, as medium for both dokein and einai. This duality, I believe, explains the pathos that inaccurate images aim at, and their particular suitability to the topic of logos.

III.

We can approach the matter indirectly, but fruitfully, through Socrates’ example of three fingers in Republic VII. Among perceptible objects, he explains there, some are sufficiently judged by their respective senses so that the soul need not “summon the activity of intellect to investigation.” However, in cases with two contradictory sensations – a finger that is both large and small, or soft and hard – the reports of sensibility become confused and the soul is at a loss. Here we need investigation (episkepsēs deomenai) and therefore summon logismos and nous to do what the senses cannot do: count and distinguish among perceptible contents according to kind.

Similarly, inaccurate images compel the soul to be in aporia, not about sensation but about a higher order faculty, judgment. It is doxazein that is being manipulated when Phaedo is first led to see logoi as like human beings but then unlike them, or when Socrates says that logoi are reflections but then again not quite. I have focused only on the Phaedo, but there are examples elsewhere.

At Republic 375aff, Socrates first leads Glaucon to the conclusion that guardians resemble guard dogs, since both must be thymotic. Subsequently, however (because guardians must be spirited only with enemies, but gentle with citizens) Glaucon admits that this is an impossible combination of opposites. We are at a loss, says Socrates. Why? Because they failed to “notice” (ouk enenoêsamen) that their own eikon of the guard dogs, which they had abandoned, already contained the required combination of gentleness and ferocity.

At Theaetetus 163cff, Socrates constructs a lengthy argument to prove knowledge cannot be sense perception. If it were, then in remembering something we once perceived, we could not know that remembered thing (since we are not now perceiving it). Just when Theaetetus agrees that his identification of epistēmē and aisthēsis leads to impossibilities, Socrates, like the water in the Euripus, suddenly switches direction. “But Theaetetus, what in the world are we about to do?”, he asks, and then remarks that they have been behaving like antilogikoi, agreeing about mere names (onomatōn) rather than about what the named things themselves are.

At Republic 451e1, Glaucon agrees to the revolutionary proposal that men and women must share the same tasks in the city. Next, Socrates leads him to conclude that different natures must be assigned different practices and that man and woman clearly differ by nature. A straight contradiction, then. They are in this fix, says Socrates, because they engaged in antilogikē rather than trying to distinguish things properly kat’eidē. That is, they failed to consider (episkepsametha d’ oud’) in what Phaedo that we are examining has a surfeit of unresolved questions: What exactly is being hypothesized here (Is it the existence of Forms or the account about Forms? Or is Socrates saying that in each case, some specific form must be laid down as the beginning of any inquiry)? What are we to make of “participation” as an explanation of how the cause is a cause when Socrates himself is so opaque on this point? What beings are there forms of?

33 R. 523a10-b4: ta men en tais aisthēsēs ou parakalounta tēn noēsin eis episkepsin, hōs hikanōs hupo tēs aisthēsēs krisomena.
34 Ibid, 524a7.
35 thumoeidēs, R. 375a11.
36 R. 375c10-d1: agathon phulaka adunaton genesthai.
37 Thrt. 163c8-164b9.
38 Thrt. 164c1-10.
40 R. 453b4-9.
41 Ibid, 454a4-9.
respect men and women differ and whether it is relevant to the specific business of guarding and managing the polis.\(^{42}\)

These examples share a common structure.

The interlocutor first commits to a judgment. Immediately thereafter, he is compelled (i) to realize that this judgment issued from a failure to notice something, from an insufficient episkepsis,\(^{43}\) and (ii) to look again at the mode of looking or noticing which led to it. In each case, Plato could easily have his characters avoid the mistakes that required the reversal,\(^{44}\) but this would miss the whole point of the description of paideia as a periagōgē of the soul rather than a conveying of information.\(^{45}\) In order to turn from Becoming to Being, the whole soul – and not only nous – must be turned around, just as the whole body must turn around with the eye.\(^{46}\) The inaccurate images we are studying turn the whole soul, by forcing it to become aware of how it experiences appearance. It is not for nothing, then, that our two examples occur during the discussion of logos in the Phaedo. They are performed examples of the genuinely philosophical relationship to logos as a whole, one best described as a kind of purification, by logos, of itself.

Simply put the persistent Platonic distinction between dianoia and nous means that thinking depends on discursivity while also transcending it.\(^{47}\) Logos is best used as a means to enable nous to see through it, to see the “what” which is being spoken about.\(^{48}\) However, because logos is the medium of dokein and einai, the ability to transit from the one to the other requires a deepening of our awareness of how speech both discloses and distorts. In other words, the completed awareness about speech necessarily means complete awareness of its limits.\(^{49}\)

Socrates’ eikones are agents of this kind of awareness because they forces us to thematize the fact that we judge X to be such and so, for the most part based on X seeming to us to be so. Misology arises from a general loss of confidence that we could ever tell the one thing from the other. Forcing us to look again, by contrast, assumes that a better look would yield a clearer and more comprehensive grasp. For example, we are told that logoi resemble humans beings in one aspect, but not in another. To get an arm around the whole phenomenon, we must think these two aspects together, thus delineating more rigorously what seems to us to be the case. Being able to do this, however, means that our doxai are not simply false; they are partial and provisional, but the partial implies the whole and the provisional, the more definitive. It is these implicative relations that underlie the Socratic practices we have been studying. There would be no point whatsoever in having me take a “second look” at something if I am hermetically trapped within my perspectival judgments at any given time. These relations are also the conditions for transformed role of logos in the second sailing.\(^{50}\)

\(^{42}\) Ibid, 454b6.

\(^{43}\) It is only after having first committed themselves that Socrates springs the trap on his interlocutors. The only exception is the second sailing passage, embedded, as it is, in a Socratic monologue.

\(^{44}\) For example, Plato could simply have Socrates stick with the eikon of the guard dogs or not construct the contentious argument about sense perception at all.

\(^{45}\) R. 518c-d

\(^{46}\) R. 518c6-d7 and 521c5-8.

\(^{47}\) See, as only one example, the distinction between tōi dialegethai dia tou logou and the noēsis which grasps the good at R. 532a5-2.

\(^{48}\) An excellent example of this is the passage in Republic IV, Socrates tells Glaucis that in order to confirm the city-soul analogy we must rub together the accounts of justice in the city and in the man until the form of justice itself “flashes forth” (eklampsei). R. 435a1-3. A similar theme is found in the Seventh Letter (Ep. VII. 344b4-7).

\(^{49}\) For all these reasons, Gadamer’s description of Platonic thought as “logos philosophy” can only be true in a complex and qualified sense.

\(^{50}\) I cannot therefore agree with Miller (2015), that what Socrates criticizes in the antilogikoi is not their lack of dialectic but their lack of rhetorical skill. Miller argues that the antilogikoi are not simply mistaken in their
Like Gorgias, Socrates knows very well that logos is a “mighty ruler”.

For Gorgias in the Encomium and On Non-Being, of course, logos rules over pathē and doxai, but not being. Socrates, by contrast, is seeking a way out of doxa toward being. His iconography suggests that logos itself is the exit, provided we are fully self-conscious about the multiplicity of relations to the world we express in it.

IV.

I conclude with a final remark, brief but not for that reason ancillary: By referring to self-consciousness (or self-awareness), I do not intend that interpretation which holds that the decisive act of cognition is apperceptive synthesis – the recombination and representation, by consciousness to itself, of the obscurely intuited content of sensibility. This view is indeed foreign to Plato, not because he is a philosophical naïf, but rather because he is concerned with an entirely different consequence of apperception. Socrates’ reversals are indeed a rebounding of thought on itself, and hence a form of self-relation, in which we become aware of the soul as that to which things appear and which then judges based on those appearances. In so doing, these images can reveal the true contours of ignorance. Ignorance, says Michael Davis, is not emptiness because the soul is never empty, but always filled with doxai, the cognitive currency of our everyday transaction with the world. The fundamental problem with these pre-reflective doxai is not that they are perspectival and sometimes false, but that they are unaware, namely, of their own partiality; they carry an implicit assumption of universality. In making the interlocutor stop short and turn inward on himself, Socrates makes the interlocutor aware opinion as opinion: an incomplete articulation of the structure of experience. This self-awareness is the vital impetus for that process whereby thought gains increasing clarity about the criteria of unity and determinacy by virtue of which anything can appear to it, and hence be opinable or thinkable, at all. For Plato self-awareness and the catharsis of logos, whose highest expression is dialectic, are the same process: the soul’s refinement of its native power for discerning intelligibility.

La section centrale du Phédon (88c8-102a3), qui débute par les dangers de la détestation du logos et qui se termine après la “seconde navigation” de Socrate, pessimism about logos. Their mistake lies in using logos to sow universal mistrust, rather than trying to build trust and persuade to the maximum extent possible. The soundness of logos, he says on 161, can never be finally verified. What we must look for instead is a trustworthiness that can at least benefit us pragmatically (166). I agree with Miller about the importance of rhetoric for understanding this entire passage. Indeed, I must, since I am arguing that Socrates’ use of inaccurate images is a rhetorical tool of periaigöe. The difficulty is that Miller divorces the misanthropy passage from the discussion of the search for the truth of beings in logos in the second sailing. If Socrates’ approach to logos is merely pragmatic – i.e. a concern with what is “trusty” (pistai), rather than with what is true (to paraphrase Miller at 169) – then in what sense is the kataphugein eis tous logos philosophical? Are we to say that the second sailing is merely of practical value? But then, the rhetoric taught by the sophists, too, is eminently practical. It won’t do to say that sophistry is concerned only with practical political advantage and filthy lucre, while philosophy is superior because it is the care for the whole soul. This assertion of the superiority of such epimeleia over mere advantage would, on Miller’s own premises, be purely rhetorical.

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52 Socrates, by contrast, is seeking a way out of doxa toward being. His iconography suggests that logos itself is the exit, provided we are fully self-conscious about the multiplicity of relations to the world we express in it.  
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51 “Logos dunastēs megas estin”: Gorgias, In Helenam Laudatio, 8.
53 I owe this formulation to Davis’ excellent study of the dramatic structure of the Phaedo in Davis (1980), 574:

54 R. 534b8-d1. Regarding logos and catharsis, see the description of “well-born” sophistry at Sph. 230b4-d4. Elenchus is a catharsis that removes the doxa that impede mathēsis.

55 Friedländer has the following perceptive comment on the second sailing passage, which is not, he insists a Socratic, or even Platonic biography, but rather the biography of Greek philosophy from Thales to Plato, “as the way philosophy discovers itself.” At the same time as the path of purification in philosophical thought becomes visible, the conversation about the soul rises beyond the level on which concepts deriving from natural science predominate, and reaches the level of the pure philosophy of Forms.” Friedländer (1969), 3:56-57.
constitue une étude élargie de la nature et de la fonction de la parole raisonnée (logos). Par deux fois dans cette section, Socrate recourt à une image afin d’illustrer un point relatif au logos, mais il le fait d’une manière particulièrement étrange. Ce sont cette singularité et sa signification philosophique sur lesquelles nous voulons nous concentrer ici.

Notre premier passage se déroule pendant l’épisode dramatique central (89d1-91b6) où Socrate met en garde ses compatriotes contre la « misologie », en employant une analogie avec la misanthropie. Le second se produit lorsque Socrate introduit sa fameuse description de sa « seconde navigation » (99e5-6).

La première image semble impliquer que la misanthropie est infondée parce que les gens ne sont pour la plupart ni très bons ou très mauvais mais disons «entre les deux». Le misanthrope ne voit pas cela, parce qu’il ne maîtrise pas l’art des choses humaines qui lui permettrait de considérer les gens «comme ils sont» réellement (89e7-90a1). En conséquence, il estime a priori que les êtres humains sont «en tout point vrais, sains et dignes de confiance» (89d) et il est forcément déçu. Par analogie, les logos aussi doivent se situer la plupart du temps «entre» la vérité et le mensonge, et être très rarement entièrement corrompus. Mais, dit Socrate, les logos ne sont pas «comme les êtres humains à cet égard» (90b4-5). Socrate ne fait que raisonner comme s’ils l’etaient.

Plus loin, après avoir décrit ses frustrations des essais précédents d’étudier les êtres intelligibles (99d5), il dit qu’il cherche une nouvelle approche afin d’éviter d’être aveuglé. Tout comme ceux qui regardent une éclipse de soleil doivent protéger leurs yeux, il évite de regarder les choses directement dans la perception du sens et «se réfugie dans le logoi, afin d’y trouver - de façon médiate - la vérité des êtres (99e5-6)». Cela implique clairement qu’en passant par le logoi, nous ne recherchons pas les choses elles-mêmes, mais leurs reflets ou images conceptuels. Dans la phrase suivante, Socrate refuse précisément cette implication.

Puis par deux fois, Socrate emploie avec précaution les termes de l’analogie pour finalement exécuter une volte-face abrupte. Mais alors pourquoi employer des images inexactes quand il aurait pu tout aussi bien dire directement ce qu’il avait à dire ? Par ailleurs, si les images sont inévitables, pourquoi ne pas employer une image plus précise, que Socrate n’aurait pas eu besoin de corriger aussitôt après l’avoir décrite? Pour répondre à ces questions, nous présenterons les arguments suivants :

Chaque image poursuit deux buts, l’un «doctrinal» et l’autre «expérientiel». Tout d’abord, et c’est le plus évident, chacune souligne un aspect de la nature du logos, ce que nous étudierons en profondeur. Au-delà de cela, quoi qu’il en soit, les deux images impliquent une certaine expérience, un pathos, chez l’interlocuteur. Celui-ci arrive premièrement à la conclusion que le logos est comme X à certains égards, puis réalise que ce qui semblait être ne l’est en fait pas tant que ça. La ressemblance inexacte est en soi un outil de periagōge puissant et efficace, particulièrement adapté à une réflexion philosophique sur les logos. Comme l’exemple des trois doigts employés par Socrate dans sa République, ces images obligent l’âme à se perdre et à invoquer la pensée afin de questionner, non pas nos sens, mais notre doxai.

Les images inexactes sont efficaces précisément à cause de l’ambivalence du logos, qui est à la fois la structure intelligible des êtres et notre discours à leur sujet. Le discours essaie de rendre manifeste la vérité des choses, mais il n’est néanmoins pas identique aux êtres dont nous parlons. Le logos est irréductiblement imagé : il
est et n'est pas ta onta. En tant que tel, il est le support à la fois du dokein et du einai. Les images inexactes mettent en évidence cet écart qui sépare le logos des êtres. Quoi qu'il en soit, la misologie découle de l'incapacité de voir que cet écart peut être réduit. Après tout, le but de la dialectique est de faire un logos aussi transparent que possible à la structure intelligible, à l'eidos, d'un être. Le logos peut devenir un moyen par lequel les Formes deviennent visibles, mais seulement s'il est employé d'une manière réflexive et consciente, comme nous l'exprimons ici :

Ces «revirements» socratiques - qui font qu'une chose semble être un cas, puis révisent cette apparence - sont un rebondissement de la pensée sur elle-même, à travers laquelle nous prenons conscience de nos opinions en tant que telles et qui révèle ainsi les vrais contours de l'ignorance. Une âme ignorante n'est pas vide puisque l'âme n'est jamais vide, mais toujours pleine - de la doxa - la «monnaie cognitive» de nos transactions quotidiennes avec le monde. Les images inexactes apportent à notre conscience le caractère provisoire et partiel de la doxazein. Ceci est l’impulsion indispensable pour le processus par lequel la pensée, par une réflexion critique sur elle-même, prend progressivement conscience des critères d’unité et de détermination, qui font toute chose pensable par tous. Une étude attentive de la méthode didactique de Socrate révèle ainsi que l’autoréflexion critique et la purification des logos sont une seule et même chose.
Bibliography


1.

In *Phaedo* 95A4-102A9, we find the famous account by Socrates of his own intellectual history. Our best evidence, including Aristotle's testimony, should lead us to suppose that this is Plato's own autobiography on display.\(^1\) It contains the most concise and complete statement of the nature of Platonism from Plato himself, both its distinction and separation from the philosophies of Plato's predecessors and the outline of its positive construct.

In this autobiography, Socrates rejects the explanations of the natural philosophers given for problematic scientific phenomena. Instead, he posits separate Forms as the source of true explanation. The naturalism of Plato's predecessors—explicitly here, that of Anaxagoras—presumes materialism and mechanism as the matrix for scientific explanation. Thus, Anaxagoras is reported as explaining natural phenomena by, broadly speaking, the elements (98C1-2). Socrates conjectures that Anaxagoras, if he were asked to explain why Socrates is sitting in prison, would give an explanation in terms of anatomical and physiological features of Socrates' body (98C2-E1). By contrast, Socrates hoped for an explanation that would invoke intellect or νοῦς, for with such an explanation it would be possible to say why it was best for Socrates to remain in prison (98E2-99A4).

Socrates maintains that the sort of explanation offered by Anaxagoras is not a real explanation or αἴτιον, but only "that without which the explanation would not be an explanation (ἐκεῖνο ἄνευ οὗ τὸ αἴτιον οὐκ ἄν ποτ εἴη αἴτιον)." In the case of Socrates remaining in prison, he says that his decision to do so because it is best to do so is the real explanation (99A8-B1). He thus clearly distinguishes between an explanation and a condition.\(^2\) Unfortunately, the full appreciation of the claim made by Socrates is impeded for modern readers by the contemporary philosophical definition of "cause" as a product or sum of necessary and sufficient conditions and by assimilating explanation to cause. By contrast, given the sort of explanation that Socrates is going to advance, this could never be reduced to or analyzed in terms of a collection of necessary and sufficient conditions. To reduce the explanation to a sum of "that without whiches" misses the distinctiveness of the new meaning of αἰτία that Plato is advancing.

Instead, Socrates expects the true explanation to explain why it is best for something to be the way it is, including presumably why it is best that it come to be and perish when it does. When he proceeds to sketch an approach to such an

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1 Aristotle, *Meta.* A 6, 987a32-b10, says that (a) Socrates was not interested in natural philosophy, that (b) Plato, not he, separated the Forms, and that (c) Plato's philosophy was Pythagorean in shape. The autobiography has “Socrates” interested in both (a) and (b) and (c) friends with Pythagoreans, Cebes and Simmias. We should compare *Parmenides* 129Eff, where the "young Socrates" is represented as having a “theory of separate Forms.” This is patently a self reference by Plato. It is implausible that in one dialogue Plato is representing the real historical Socrates in his youth but that in another he is using Socrates to represent his own youth.

2 At 99A4-5 Socrates says that it would be “exceedingly absurd” (λίαν ἄτοπον) to call the sorts of accounts given by Anaxagoras αἴτια. And then a few lines later, C5-6, he says that it is “the Good” (τὸ ἀγαθόν) or “that which binds” (τὸ δεόν) that is the real αἰτία.
explanation, he has recourse to a method of hypothesis, hypothesizing on “each occasion” an “account” (λόγον) that seems to him to be strongest (100A2-7). The “hypothesis” turns out in each case to be a Form. It is not for now of central importance to decide whether the Form itself is the hypothesis or whether the hypothesis is the proposition that a Form of such-and-such a nature exists and that it is the explanation for the phenomenon at issue.

What is of central importance, however, is that the hypothesis seems to diverge from the sort of explanation that Socrates wanted from Anaxagoras but failed to get. For even if it is indeed the case that, say, Helen's beauty is explained by the Form of Beauty, nothing is thereby said about why it is best that the state of affairs that consists in Helen being beautiful obtains. But among the examples of Forms, there is one that is mentioned, the Form of the Good (100B6), that might be thought to provide the right sort of explanation. This clearly cannot be so, however, for several reasons. First, this Form is listed among others including Beauty and Largeness and if Good provided the requisite explanation, what about the others which are adduced as each providing the sought for explanation on its own? More important, to say that something partakes of the Form of Good does not even begin to explain why it is good that it should do so. It is true that Socrates thinks that it is good that he remain in prison. But whether it is in fact good and why this should be so is not explained by saying that if it is good, that is because the act or decision partakes in the Form of Good. The vacuity of the proposed explanations by Socrates felt by critics from Aristotle to this day rests on the assumption that his explanations are supposed to be complete or satisfactory explanations without a teleological element.

So, with the hypothesizing of Forms—the “simple” hypothesis in each case—we are left with the problem of how this is supposed to provide the sort of explanation that Socrates failed to find in Anaxagoras and that he longed to have given. Gregory Vlastos and others are mistaken in supposing that when Socrates turns to his “second sailing (δεύτερον πλοῦν),” he rejects as a goal explanations that tell us why it is good that things are the way they are.3 For Socrates says explicitly

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3 See G. Vlastos, “Reasons and Causes in the Phaedo,” Philosophical Review 78 (1969), 297-8, n.15. Vlastos is followed by E. Burge, “The Ideas as Aitiai in the Phaedo,” Phronesis 16 (1971), 1-2, n.2 and R. Sharma, “Phaedo 100B3-9,” Mnemosyne 68 (2015), 408, n.39, though in an earlier paper, “Socrates' New Aitia: Causal and Metaphysical Explanations in Plato's Phaedo,” OSAP 36 (2009), 169, Sharma explicitly connects Socrates’ rejection of materialism with teleology as necessary for adequate explanation. But this claim seems to contradict what Sharma says earlier, 142, when he endorses Vlastos’ interpretation. Vlastos himself followed P. Shorey, What Plato Said (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 534 and N. Murphy, The Interpretation of Plato's Republic (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951), 146. In all these works, it is assumed that if the “simple explanation” makes no reference to teleology, then it is not there. It must be insisted, however, that this self-imposed constraint on interpreting any dialogue of Plato is itself and assumption. And incidentally, this assumption has no currency in antiquity, even though all ancient Platonists and commentators on the dialogues knew perfectly well that each one was a literary unity. C.C.W. Taylor, “Forms as Causes in the Phaedo,” Mind 78 (1969), 47, at least acknowledges that a reference to Republic would explain the τι ἱκανόν, though he claims that this is “speculative.” D. Bostock, Plato’s Phaedo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 175, thinks that taking τι ἱκανόν as referring to the unhypothetical first principle of all “receives no support from the Phaedo.” But this is so only if δεύτερος πλούς is taken to be an alternative to the explicit goal of Socrates’ quest.
that his “second sailing” has as its destination the sought for explanation (99D1). The second sailing is not a voyage to an alternative sort of explanation; rather, it is an alternative method of attaining the type of explanation that Anaxagoras could not give and that Socrates desired. The goal is to explain the operation of intellect on the cosmos and it is this that Anaxagoras promised, but failed, to do. It seems to me to be philosophically and dramatically maladroit in the extreme to suppose that the characterization by Plato of the young Socrates as an earnest seeker of wisdom simply devolves into the “simple hypothesis” ignoring the sort of comprehensive metaphysical explanation that turned Plato away from his naturalist predecessors in the first place. So, we need to keep before us the question: how are the sorts of explanations that Socrates is going to provide in his second sailing a means to the desired goal of a satisfying and true comprehensive and teleological explanatory framework?

We do not have to wait long for some words that, at least, seem relevant to the answer to this question. Socrates makes two points: first, the proffered hypothesis should be examined to see if its consequences are consistent (101D2-5). Second, the hypothesis itself should be examined, and if need be another hypothesis should be offered (101D5-7). Neither of these two methodological comments are entirely clear, though the first is clearer than the second. Presumably, the examination of consequences pertains to dilemmic reasoning about the putative properties of that which participates in the hypothesized Form. As for the second comment, there are two obvious possibilities. First, Socrates may be alluding to what he will explain later when he offers as an adumbration of his simple hypothesis a “cleverer” hypothesis, according to which it is not the original hypothesized Form that is the true explanation, but another Form which brings with it necessarily the original Form (105B5-C7). The second possibility is that the additional hypothesis could be a “generic” Form, for example, Virtue, offered instead of a “specific” Form, say, Temperance. This would be necessary, for example, if it turned out that all the Virtues

4 The words ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησις at D1 refer to the αἰτία that Socrates sought from Anaxagoras but did not provide at 97B8ff, which is how νοῦς is an explanation for why things are in the best possible condition. I.M. Crombie, _An Examination of Plato's Doctrines_. V.2. On Knowledge and Reality (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 161, sees this clearly. However, he ignores the full description of the hypothetical method, which ends with τι ἱκανόν and, accordingly, he is unable to give a plausible account of how Socrates’ “simple hypothesis” has any teleological relevance. He says that the teleology comes in only by adding the Aristotelian point that in defining something, we thereby know its final cause because the formal cause and the final cause are in a way one. It is true that Socrates, 99D1, says that the method that constitutes the δεύτερος πλοῦς is one that he “has practiced (πεπραγμάτευμαι),” indicating that despite his yearning for teleological explanations, he is doing something else. For Vlastos and others, this means that the teleological explanation is no part of the Socratic methodology. But as in so many, many other places in the dialogues, this passage easily counts as one of the _Aussparungsstellen_, where Plato tells us that what is presently being said is fragmentary and rests upon deeper principles.

5 Cf. _Sts_. 300C; _Phil_. 19C; Aristotle, _Pol_. 1284b19, _E.N_. 1109a35.

6 See 97D1: “On the basis of this explanation, indeed, a man should consider nothing else but the best, the highest good....”

7 See D. Gallop, _Plato's Phaedo_. Translated With Notes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 189, who plausibly suggests that the possible contradictory consequences of the initial hypothesis of a Form are similar to those described in _Parmenides_ 131A-3 with respect to the Form of Largeness and Smallness.
were really identical. I do not see any reason to exclude either of these possibilities. My main concern, though, is to point out that in neither case would we have solved the problem about the kind of explanation that Socrates originally desired.

We do, however, get from Socrates a third point. This is that the examination of the hypothesis will proceed “upwards” until “something adequate” (τι ἱκανόν) is reached (101E1). And with this comes a warning, that once having attained something adequate, one must not confuse the beginning or starting-point or principle (ἀρχή) found with the consequences of that explanation (101E1-3). The τι ἱκανόν is the ἁρχή. Its consequences presumably include all the consequences of the hypothesizing of the Forms as well as the consequences for the Forms themselves of having attained an adequate principle.

The best way to bring out the fundamental difference between the explanatory analysis offered by Anaxagoras and others that adduces necessary and sufficient conditions for coming-to-be and passing away (95E8-96A1, 8-10; 97B3-7, C7) and the explanatory analysis that rejects these as truly explanatory is to begin by reflecting on the fact that no Form adduced by Socrates is the sought for principle or ἁρχή. The implicit contrast is threefold: (a) the necessary and sufficient conditions that are in fact “that without which the explanation would not be an explanation;” (2) the explanatory role of Forms; (3) the ἁρχή or principle that is “sufficient” for an explanation. It is the relation between (2) and (3) that reveals the sort of explanatory path taken here by Plato, not the relation between (1) and (2) or (1) and (3). How are the Forms supposed to be related to the ἁρχή?

At this point in our examination of the autobiography, we reach a sort of hermeneutical crossroads. On the one hand, if we resolve as a matter of principle to stay within the confines of Phaedo, we can insist that this ἁρχή is not necessarily, as Burnet insisted, the ἁρχή ἀνυπόθετος of Republic (510B7). In that case, it might be another hypothesis although it is quite obscure what then “adequate” would mean. Presumably, it could only be adequate either for the time being or so long as

8 See J. Burnet, Platonis Opera. Phaedo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 101. R.S. Bluck, Plato’s Phaedo (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), 199, grants that “Plato may...have believed that his Forms represented the best approach to a teleological explanation of causation (by comparison with which Socrates’ λόγοι were only a second-best), and that these ’causes’ would be confirmed as correct and as truly teleological when the nature of the ultimate principle became clearer to him.” R. Hackforth, Plato’s Phaedo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), says that “the injunction which Socrates gives in a later passage (107B), that our first hypotheses, even if we are convinced of them, ought to be further examined, does strongly suggest—inasmuch as the first hypotheses there in question are simple the existences of this or that Form—the doctrine of the unhypothetical first principle, identical with that Form of good which is the source of all Being, and itself ‘beyond Being’. Nevertheless I do not believe that Plato is alluding to that doctrine here, in the words τι ἱκανόν: for surely the phrase could not easily be understood as carrying this vast implication; moreover Socrates is not envisioning a process of reasoning which will satisfy a philosopher’s ultimate demand, but one which will serve the purpose of proving to the satisfaction of an interlocutor some particular theorem.” The words “strongly suggest” and “I do not believe that Plato is alluding to that doctrine here” do not present a coherent interpretation. Further, when Hackforth says the words τι ἱκανόν “could not easily be understood as carrying this vast implication,” he is assuming that the only intended readers are those ignorant of Plato’s intra-Academic teachings. Why assume that? And why could it not both be true that some (Academics) would understand it perfectly well and some (non-Academics) would not?
investigators can find no contradictions flowing from it. But this alternative leaves us with no path to the desired conclusion of the second sailing which was, we recall, an explanation of why, broadly speaking, it is good that things are the way they are.9

On the other hand, if we suppose that the ἀρχή that is “adequate” is the “unhypothetical first principle of all” of Republic, every single one of the desiderata of the whole passage are met. For, first, in the superordinate and absolutely incomposite Idea of the Good, we do have a logical stopping-point for the investigation. Second, as we learn from the Divided Line passage which follows immediately after the introduction of the Idea of the Good, it is not possible to grasp the role in explanation that the Forms have without recourse to this first principle of all.10 This means far more than: you cannot know if Justice is good without knowing that it participates in the Idea of the Good. It must mean that you cannot know what Justice is without knowing how the Idea of the Good provides existence and essence (εἶναι τε καὶ οὐσίαν) to all the Forms. This is so because only the Idea of the Good makes the Forms knowable. And without knowing the Forms, they obviously can provided nothing more than a nominal explanation for anything. Third, with the introduction of the Idea of the Good, we not only have the principle that will serve to give Socrates the sort of explanation he desires, we can also remove from the Forms the false assumption that they can provide the explanation. This does not mean that the Forms are, with the introduction of the Idea of the Good, irrelevant; rather, it means that they can only fill an instrumental role for the explanation that the Idea of the Good provides.

The instrumental causality of Forms in an adequate explanation of the “why” of coming-to-be and passing away, does not preclude the explanatory role of Forms in a more localized or specific context. Thus, it is true that Helen is beautiful because she participates in Beauty and Simmias is tall because he participates in Tallness. Focusing on this sort of explanation is relevant to the answer to many questions, including the question of the immortality of the soul. But the global account sought for by Socrates and found absent in Anaxagoras is one which adduces the Forms as instrumental to the ultimate explanation role of the first principle of all, in Republic the Idea of the Good.

Further, if we adduce Timaeus, the role of a divine intellect in explaining why the cosmos is as it is, and ignored by Anaxagoras, is made explicit.11 The Demiurge wanted the world to be “as beautiful as possible (κάλλιστον) (30B5).” To do this is to make it as close as possible to the “Living Being” (τὸ ζῷων) which is

9 Horn, for example, art. cit., 141, eschews any speculation about what τι ἱκανόν might mean, assuming that it is not licit to go outside of Phaedo for its meaning.

10 At Rep. 511B2-C2, the necessity for dialectic of ascending to the unhypothetical first principle of all is made explicit. Thus, the connection with being unhypothetical and being sufficient is clear. So, perhaps one can argue that in Phaedo, Plato held that τι ἱκανόν could be something other than that which is unhypothetical, but that in Republic he changed his mind and held that only that which is unhypothetical could be ἱκανόν, for the purposes of explanation. But in doing this, one is committed to maintaining that either Plato did not know what he meant himself by the words τι ἱκανόν or else he meant to refer to another hypothesis, in which case one would have expected the words τις ὑπόθεσις instead of τι ἱκανόν. Cf. the previous words: ἥτις τῶν ἅνθωεν βελτίστη. This is what Crombie op., cit., 541-545, for example, supposes. So, too, R. Dancy, Plato's Introduction of Forms (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 299. Either alternative seems quite implausible and gratuitous, particularly if our goal is to understand Plato’s philosophy.

11 That the works of the Demiurge are the works of νοῦς is indicated at 47E4: τὰ διὰ νοῦ δεδημογρημένα.
comprised of all intelligible being. That is, things are good insofar as they resemble intelligible reality, this reality including both the Forms and the Demiurge himself. Insofar as things deviate from their eternal paradigms, they are defective or evil. The Demiurge performs the task of making the cosmos like the Living Being by imposing on it “shapes and numbers,” that is, by using geometry and arithmetic (53B5). The connection between the Republic passage and this account in Timaeus, that is, between the Idea of the Good and the Demiurge and Forms is alluded to later in the dialogue where Timaeus declines to discuss “the first principle or principles” of all things owing to the difficulty of doing so within the framework of the current method of exposition (48C2-6; cf. 53D4-7).12

Further, in Philebus the Idea of the Good is said to be revealed in three perspective, that of beauty, commensurability, and truth (65A1-5). This is the beauty, expressed as commensurability, that the Demiurge brought to the world by the imposition of shapes and numbers, and the truth that the Idea of the Good provides to the Forms in Republic (508C10).

Finally, if we take Aristotle's testimony seriously, we have a clear indication why the unhypothetical first principle of all, the Idea of the Good, can have the ultimate explanatory role for all Forms and, hence, for the being of all things. Plato, Aristotle tells us, identified the Idea of the Good with the One from which, along with the Indefinite Dyad or the Great and Small, it produces the Form Numbers.13

Now within a hermeneutical framework, I think it is as very good question to ask why we should favor the approach that in principle can explain nothing over the approach that can explain everything? It seems to me that the only possible reason for preferring the first approach is that one thinks that there is no evidence to support the second approach and, given this fact, it is another “simple hypothesis” that Plato should only be approached one dialogue at a time. But to take this approach is to suppose that either Plato had no clear idea of what he meant when he wrote the words τι ἱκανόν or that he simply meant “some other hypothesis.” If the latter, then the mistake is corrected in Republic; if the former, then we shall be attributing to Plato what Vlastos called in another context his “honest perplexity” about what would count as an adequate ἀρχή. However, since we do have evidence that before Plato wrote any dialogues at all he embraced a “two-world metaphysics,” and since we do have evidence, albeit far from conclusive, that in addition, probably before he wrote any dialogues, he traveled to Megara, to Cyrene, and then to Italy to study with Philolaus and Eurytus, it hardly seems defensible not to use it.14 The relevance of this evidence is that the principled position of agnosticism about what Plato thought τι ἱκανόν was when writing Phaedo is exceedingly feeble, especially given his Pythagorean interests. Furthermore, this agnosticism is philosophically exigous, given that the Republic, Timaeus, and Philebus passages along with Aristotle's testimony obviously provide the content for τι ἱκανόν whether or not it was in his mind when writing Phaedo.

The superordinate Idea of the Good is the obvious candidate for the referent of τι ἱκανόν. But it does not serve its purpose without the instrumentality of the Forms and without a divine intellect, the Demiurge, whose goal it is to make the cosmos as perfect as possible. But only if the Good is the One and if Forms are Numbers

12 The reference to “principle or principles” seems to suggest that the question of whether the Indefinite Dyad is a principle separate from the One or reducible to it is not yet settled in Plato's mind.
13 See Metaphysics A 6, 988a8-14; cf. N 4, 1091b13-15. See H.J. Krämer, Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics (Albany, 1990), 203-17, for a convenient digest of the Aristotelian evidence along with the evidence of the indirect tradition.
does the explanation role of the Good make any sense at all. This raises the following intriguing possibility. The only reason anyone has ever given for categorizing *Phaedo* as a “middle” dialogue and not an “early” dialogue is that it contains the “two-world metaphysics” that is supposedly absent in the “early” dialogues. But on the basis of Aristotle’s testimony, Plato embraced the two world metaphysics at a young age, almost certainly before he wrote dialogues. This fact, coupled with the fact that *Phaedo* is a dramatic conclusion to the trilogy *Apology, Crito,* and *Phaedo* suggests that either the first two dialogues are not early or that the third one is. If the latter is the case—and I can see no reason for preferring the former—then it would seem that Plato’s doctrine of an unhypothetical first principle of all is not, as Ross and others have assumed, a late “development” in his thinking, but on the contrary, something that is rooted in his very early Pythagorean speculations. The positing of the Ida of the Good seems to be of a piece with his very early rejection of natural philosophy as the path to true wisdom.

2.

All of our evidence regarding Plato’s philosophy tells us that Forms are instruments in a larger explanatory framework with the unhypothetical first principle of all at the top. The rejection of the naturalist framework of Anaxagoras, and *a fortiori* that of lesser philosophers is of a piece with the positing of the metaphysical principles of explanation. By this I mean that the materialism and mechanism of Anaxagoras can be conclusively rejected only if an alternative framework is provided. It is a mistake to think that the Platonic framework is not a complete alternative but only an extension or adumbration of an explanatory project which can include both materialism and mechanism. It is a profoundly different approach to wisdom or comprehensive explanation. In addition, the Forms, as participatable οὐσίαι, can only fulfill their explanatory roles if nominalism is false, that is, if it is false that the only things that exist are unique individuals. So, Plato announces in this passage his rejection of materialism, mechanism, and nominalism. In addition, the focus on Forms as explanatory entities is preceded by the argument that we already know these Forms prior to embodiment. So, the claim of Pre-Socratic

15 Certainly, other Pre-Socratics such as Diogenes of Apollonia, Archelaus, Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Alcmeon are included in the condemnation. See R. Sharma, *art. cit.,* 408. Sharma says that “Socrates turns at 100B to a mode of investigation that involves considering the ontological basis for the truth of certain descriptive statements like ‘Helen is beautiful or ‘Simmias is tall’.” But Sharma denies that the ontological basis is inseparable from the teleological goal. Perhaps this is why Sharma, 409, says that Socrates’ simple explanation is “suggestive of the further developments in Platonic thought that will famously be set forth in the Sun-Line-Cave trptych *Republic* 6-7.” It is not clear, however, why Sharma thinks that the δεύτερος πλοῦς and the τι ἱκανόν are only suggestive of something else rather than indicative.

16 Thus, the συναίτιαι of *Timaeus,* 46C7, D1, 76D6, should not be understood as “auxiliary causes,” that is, as part of the causal framework, but rather as “auxiliary to the true cause or explanation.” In the last mentioned passage, the contrast between that which is auxiliary to the cause and the causes itself is explicit. See C. Horn, “Kritik der bisherigen Naturforschung und die Ideentheorie (95a-102a),” in *Phaidon.* Edited by Jörn Müller (Alkademie Verlag: Berlin, 2011), 133, who thinks that the introduction of formal causality by Socrates does not exclude the efficient and material causality of Anaxagoras and other Pre-Socratics. Such an exclusion “steht ausser Frage.”
skeptics that knowledge of the ultimate explanation of things is not available to us, particularly if these explanations are non-sensible, is rejected, too. Finally, insofar as the Forms fulfill an explanatory role, both the epistemological and ethical relativism of Sophists like Protagoras is rejected. This is owing to the universality of Forms as well as their objectivity.

But it is the Idea of the Good or the One that is needed to connect the anti-materialism, anti-mechanism, anti-nominalism, anti-skepticism, and anti-relativism. For without this unhypothetical first principle of all, explanatory adequacy is lost, adequacy in the sense of completeness without need or possibility of further steps. I take it that this is the main sense of τί ἱκανόν. Of course, a Form could well be “just enough” or “adequate” for a localized purpose, as in Phaedo itself, where the Forms are explicitly introduced for the purpose of proving the immortality of the soul (100B1-9). But even for local purposes, the Forms are explanatory only as short-hand for a more complete explanation. This fact itself speaks to the cogency of the evidence for the reduction of Forms to Numbers and their derivation from the One and the Indefinite Dyad. For both the “simple” and “cleverer” hypotheses only explain at all if the explanation can move beyond the barely non-tautological claim that “X is F” because there is F-ness in it. This is possible only if F-ness is a name for an intelligible structure which is found in its instances, despite the utter diversity of, say, perceptual beauty and Beauty itself. It is Plato’s intuition that intelligible structure or simply intelligibility is essentially a mathematical concept, not of course mathematical in the sense of arithmetic or geometry, but in the logically prior sense of mathematical ordering. This intuition is shared, for example, by Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead in their Principia Mathematica, with the crucial difference that for Plato logic is not independent of metaphysics but rather derived from it.

We do not find anywhere in the dialogues or in the indirect tradition an argument for the positing of a superordinate first principle of all that is “beyond existence and essence.” It is, though, not difficult to discern Plato’s reasons for doing so based upon three unquestionable philosophical assumptions held by him. First, he assumed that there were ultimate explanations for things; the ways of the world, including their teleological aspect, were not in the laps of the inscrutable gods. Second, following along the philosophical/scientific trajectory of all of his predecessors—including those whose views he rejected—Plato was an explanatory reductivist. That is, he sought for explanations that were foundational and, therefore, as simple as possible. Third, and related to the second assumption, the sought for principle must be fundamentally different from that of which it is a principle, else the putative principle is always reducible to an explanandum rather than an explanans. These three assumptions taken together led Plato inexorably to an utterly simple or incomposite first principle of all. A fourth assumption, which perhaps is not found before Plato himself, is that the first principle of all, if it is to explain the existence and essence of everything else, must also be the explanation for end or goal of everything else. This is so because the essence of anything is to be understood as, in a way, “bipolar.” That is, it is both an endowment and achievement. One achieves one’s essence or fulfills one’s nature by achieving one’s good insofar as this is possible. So, if the Good is the source, it is also the goal. That things with different essences have different ends or goods is explained by the existence of a coordinate, generic Form of Good, which includes all possible perfections.17 But the superordinate Idea of the Good

17 For a coordinate Form of Good, see Phd. 65D4-7, 75C10-D2, 76D7-9; Tht. 186A8; Parm. 130B7-9; Rep. 507B4-6, 608E6-609A4; Phil. 15A4-7. Cf. Epin. 978B3-4. This Good must be sharply distinguished from the Idea of the Good since the former is an οὐσία and the latter is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας.
Good is additionally necessary both to satisfy reductive exigency and to explain the cosmic integration of all specific goods.

These four assumptions seem to me to explain why Plato makes the first principle of all the Idea of the Good. I have already alluded to the reason for identifying this principle with the One. As the first principle of all, it must be ultimately adduced to provide explanations for cosmic phenomena alternative to the unsatisfactory explanations provided by the philosophers whom Plato repudiates. Without the Idea of the Good, the sorts of explanations that the Forms might be thought to provide—whether in the simple or cleverer hypotheses—could at best seem to be question-begging alternatives to the explanations provided by materialists and mechanists. At worst, they could only be incorporated into an explanatory framework that sees formal cause as part and parcel of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a given event or process to occur. If this is the route taken, the true place of Phaedo in the history of metaphysics and its elegantly concise expression of Platonism are lost.

Abstract (french)
Dans Phédon 95A4-102A9, nous trouvons le fameux récit par Socrate de sa propre histoire intellectuelle. Notre meilleure preuve, y compris le témoignage d’Aristote, nous amène à supposer que cela est propre autobiographie de Platon sur l’affichage. Il contient, comme je soutiendrai, la déclaration la plus concise et complète de la nature du platonisme, à la fois sa distinction et de séparation des philosophies des prédécesseurs de Platon et le contour de sa construction positive. Dans cette autobiographie, Socrate rejette les explications des philosophes naturels donnés pour des problèmes scientifiques. Au lieu de cela, il pose les formes distinctes comme la source de véritable explication. Le naturalisme des prédécesseurs de Platon, explicitement ici que d’Anaxagore, suppose le matérialisme et le mécanisme comme matrice pour l’explication scientifique. La position du rôle explicatif des formes implique le rejet de ces présomptions. En outre, l’autobiographie ‘hypothèse’ formes comme des explications, ajoutant que toute hypothèse est provisoire jusqu’à ce que l’on vient ‘quelque chose adéquate’ (τι ἱκανόν). Je soutiens ici, sur la base d’une analyse de la signification de ‘hypothèse’ de la République et ailleurs, que ce qui serait ‘suffisant’ ne peut pas être une autre entité hypothétique, mais plutôt l’entité unhypothetical que l’Idée du Bien est explicitement dit être et que, comme Aristote nous dit, est identique à l’Un. Ce qui est ‘suffisant’ ne peut pas être quelque chose qui est complexe, qui est, tout ce qui existe et a un οὐσία. Voilà pourquoi le premier principe unhypothetical de tous doit être ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας.
Esperanza, confianza y temor como actitudes proposicionales en el *Fedón*

Giménez Salinas, José Antonio

1. Introducción

La conversación entre Sócrates y sus amigos el día de su muerte puede entenderse como el intento del maestro de vencer con argumentos el desánimo y el temor de sus discípulos, haciéndoles participar de su actitud confiada y de la esperanza en que la muerte es un bien para el hombre (cfr. 63b-d). En vez de concentrarme en los argumentos de Sócrates a favor de la inmortalidad del alma, quisiera analizar en este trabajo el papel que cumplen las disposiciones afectivas de Sócrates y sus interlocutores con respecto a la pregunta por el destino del alma después de la muerte. En mi opinión, la posibilidad de que Sócrates logre hacer participar a su auditorio de su actitud confiada y de su esperanza frente a la muerte no se depende exclusivamente de la fuerza persuasiva de sus argumentos a favor de la inmortalidad del alma, sino también de que los amigos de Sócrates experimenten en sí mismos una atracción por los asuntos del alma.1

Si bien en el *Fedón* no encontramos una tematización de las disposiciones afectivas de la “confianza” (*thárros*), la “esperanza” (*ēlpíς*) y el “temor” (*φόβος*), estos conceptos son utilizados una y otra vez a lo largo del diálogo para explicar la posible relación afectiva del hombre con la muerte. En diálogos posteriores como el *Filebo* y *Las Leyes* estas disposiciones afectivas son tematizadas como formas de placer y dolor que se fundan en determinados estados de creencia acerca del futuro. En particular, mientras en el *Filebo* se presentará una comprensión de estas disposiciones afectivas como “actitudes proposicionales” susceptibles de ser falsas o verdaderas, en *Las Leyes* se considerarán éstas en su función de fuerza motivadora de la acción. Quisiera en esta conferencia analizar el tratamiento de estas disposiciones afectivas en el *Fedón* a partir de la descripción de las expectativas en el *Filebo* y en *Las Leyes*. Para esto intentaré responder a tres cuestiones relativas al *Fedón*: i) a qué hace realmente referencia la esperanza socrática; ii) qué factores determinan el carácter de verdad de esta esperanza y; iii) qué función práctica o motivacional cumple esta disposición afectiva a lo largo del diálogo. Finalmente intentaré señalar la conveniencia de una lectura del *Fedón* que reconoce el peso de factores no argumentativos para la comprensión del sentido del diálogo.

2. Expectativas en el *Filebo*

La consideración de las disposiciones afectivas de la esperanza y el temor se ordena en el *Filebo* en el contexto más general del análisis de los placeres (31b-55b) y tiene

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una función fundamental en relación a la determinación de las especies de placer (i.e. placeres verdaderos) que pueden convivir con el entendimiento en la buena vida mixta (62d-63e).

Encontramos una primera descripción de estas disposiciones afectivas en Filebo 32b9-c6. Los placeres mentales corresponden a una “especie diferente” (ἕτερον εἴδος) de placer que aquellos que se fundan en la repleción de un vacío fisiológico (32a7-b5). Un placer fisiológico es experimentado cuando actualmente el estado de necesidad corporal está siendo dejado de lado (32a3: ἀπόδοσις). El placer mental no depende, en cambio, de la repleción actual del cuerpo (32c4-6: χωρίς τοῦ σώματος ἀυτῆς τῆς ψυχῆς), sino que más bien es originado por un contenido mental o “expectativa” (προσδόκημα).2 El sujeto puede gozarse y confiarse (ἡδὺ καὶ θαρραλέον) anticipadamente en la mera “perspectiva” (τὸ .... ἐλπιζόμενον) de un placer futuro, como bien puede también atemorizarse y dolerse (φοβερὸν καὶ ἀλγεινόν) por anticipado en la perspectiva de un sufrimiento futuro. La “esperanza” (ἐλπίς) y el “temor” (φόβος) son así dos formas de placer/dolor anticipatorio o de expectativas.

Ahora bien, aunque la actual repleción fisiológica ya no es requerida en este tipo de placeres, la “estructura de la repleción” (πλήρωσις; cfr. 36a7-c2) se mantiene en líneas generales, en la medida en que tanto a los placeres fisiológicos como a los de expectativas les antecede por igual un deseo del alma (34d1-3: ἐπιθυμία). Si bien Sócrates se refiere aquí particularmente a las expectativas de repleción fisiológica en el futuro (36a4-6), no hay razón para limitar el alcance de las expectativas a la repleción de un vacío corporal. Así, por ejemplo, podemos representarnos un futuro lleno de riquezas o la consecución futura de un deseo de venganza y experimentar placer en tales expectativas (40a9-12; 47e5-48a2). En estos casos la satisfacción del deseo no supone un vacío fisiológico, sino más bien un estado de carencia de orden espiritual (47d5-10).

En la discusión sobre la falsedad y la verdad de los placeres (36c-41b) encontramos otras pistas para entender la naturaleza de los placeres de expectativa. Después de haber acordado que el placer, al modo de la opinión, refiere a un contenido intencional (36c-38b), Sócrates explica cómo las opiniones y las representaciones pueden llegar a ser verdaderas o falsas (38c-40a). Para esto Sócrates trae nuevamente a la palestra los placeres de expectativas. Las opiniones y representaciones (falsas o verdaderas) son por los hombres “usadas” en relación al futuro a modo de expectativas (39e1-2: περὶ δὲ τὸν μέλλοντα). Las esperanzas, es decir, los placeres mentales que se refieren a la obtención de un placer futuro, dependen de los “discursos” que han sido generado por las opiniones alcanzadas previamente por la percepción (40a6-7: λόγοι μὴν εἰσιν ἐν ἑκάστοις ἡμῶν τῆς μέλλοντος ἡμῶν). En este sentido, es importante apuntar acá, que la falsedad de las esperanzas no se funda meramente en el error perceptual, puesto que no hay percepción del futuro. Las esperanzas serán falsas si el “razonamiento discursivo” (cfr. 21c5-6: λογισμός) falla en prever que el estado futuro del sujeto será efectivamente placentero. Las opiniones que han surgido de la percepción son usadas en este caso para prever el futuro, sin ser ellas mismas el contenido de las esperanzas futuras. La experiencia presente de placer deja, sin embargo, al sujeto predisposto a esperar del futuro la misma satisfacción y más aún en la medida en que la momentaneidad del placer vuelve a dejar al sujeto en el estado de necesidad y de apetencia previos.3 Por esta razón, Sócrates considerará necesario reconocer en la producción de esperanzas verdaderas y falsas la importancia del carácter moral del sujeto (40a-41b).

Sin entrar en el amplio debate sobre la conexión entre la bondad del sujeto y la

verdad de sus esperanzas quisiera señalar sólo dos cuestiones que importan para nuestro actual trabajo. En primer lugar, Sócrates conecta la moralidad del sujeto con la “ilusión” acerca del placer futuro. La enormidad de los placeres pintados en el sujeto impide tanto prever cuáles son las posibilidades realistas de obtenerlo como reconocer las necesidades fundamentales del alma humana (40a9-c6). En segundo lugar, Sócrates apunta que las esperanzas del bueno serán mejores que las del malo “la mayoría de las veces” (40b2-3: ὡς τὸ πολύ). La referencia de las esperanzas a la contingencia futura (cfr. 40d7-10) impide alcanzar certeza absoluta sobre ellas; sin embargo, en la medida en que el bueno sabrá cómo lidiar con el fracaso de sus expectativas, podrá garantizar tener esperanzas que “a largo plazo” sean confirmadas.

3. Temor y confianza en Las Leyes

La organización política desarrollada en Las Leyes se propone como objetivo fundamental hacer a los ciudadanos hombres virtuosos (I 631b-e). El placer y el dolor cumplen para esto un papel fundamental en la medida en que las distintas virtudes son entendidas como modos de relacionarse con estos dos estados afectivos. La imagen de la marioneta sirve en este sentido para explicar la psicología moral que es necesario presuponer en la educación en la virtud ciudadana.

El Extranjero Ateniense introduce la imagen de la marioneta tras haber enumerado los factores motivacionales que se encuentran en cada individuo (I 644c4-d5). En el nivel más básico coexisten en nosotros dos consejeros insensatos, a saber, el placer y el dolor. A partir de estos estados afectivos se generan en nosotros opiniones que al ser referidas al futuro reciben el nombre de “esperanza” (ἐλπίς). El “temor” (φόβος) consiste en una expectativa dolorosa, mientras que la “confianza” (θάρρος) nace de una placentera. Por encima de estos cuatro factores se encuentra el “razonamiento” (λογισμός) acerca de lo que es mejor o peor en cada situación.

Ahora bien, para entender la interacción de estos factores el Extranjero Ateniense nos propone pensar en el hombre como una “marioneta divina” compuesta de cuerdas o tendones cuya fuerza no controlamos del todo (I 644d7-645c7). En este set de cuerdas podemos distinguir una cuerda de oro de un conjunto de cuerdas de hierro. La cuerda de oro, correspondiente al razonamiento, es débil, en la medida en que éste puede dar forma y dirección a las emociones sin ejercer coerción alguna sobre ellas. Las demás cuerdas, correspondientes a las afecciones en general, son duras y luchan unas con otras. Ahora bien, si estas cuerdas constituyen una misma especie, ¿qué puede explicar la contrariedad interna entre ellas? ¿Cuáles de los factores motivacionales irracionales se oponen entre sí? El Extranjero Ateniense sugiere la adición de un tercer set de cuerdas – probablemente de plata – que podría auxiliar a la cuerda de oro a conducir el mecanismo interno de la marioneta (645a5-b1). Sin embargo, la decisión final de mantener sólo dos especies de cuerdas da razón de la necesidad de que en el mecanismo interno del set de cuerdas de hierro exista ya una oposición que pueda ser favorable al razonamiento. Si bien no encontramos en Las

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6 A diferencia del uso de elpis en Filebo como la forma positiva de la “expectativa” (prosdokía), aquí nos encontraremos con el uso más general de elpis como la “espera” de un estado de cosas futuro (ya sea positivo o negativo).
7 Frede considera, en cambio, que todo el set de cuerdas de hierro corresponde a “expectativas” sobre el futuro, cuya contrariedad interna se superaría por medio del cálculo del razonamiento (cfr. Frede [2010] 117-118). El posterior desarrollo que hace el Extranjero Ateniense de estos estados afectivos prueba, en mi opinión, suficientemente, que se trata de fuerzas que se oponen al apetito del presente.

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Las Leyes una “parte irascible” del alma que auxiliaría a la parte racional, la confianza y el temor con respecto al futuro cumplen una función similar como fuerzas contrarias al deseo de placer y aversión de dolor presentes.

Esta interpretación es avalada por la posterior referencia al temor y a la confianza en la formación de la virtud ciudadana. El temor, por una parte, es considerado como una fuerza motivacional negativa cuando consiste en la huida frente al dolor futuro. En este caso, temor y confianza se oponen uno al otro. El temor, sin embargo, puede nacer de un impulso contrario, a saber, la “vergüenza”. En este caso, el temor puede oponerse precisamente a la aversión del dolor presente, impidiendo así que el dolor anticipado tenga alguna vez lugar. Temor y confianza son en este sentido impulsos opuestos, pero que pueden complementarse cuando buscan el mismo objetivo – por ejemplo, vencer al enemigo (I 647a-c) –. Por otra parte, la confianza no siempre es proporcionada, siendo susceptible de volverse en determinados casos desvergüenza (I 649a-b; II 671c-d). El criterio racional que guía la confianza en Las Leyes es por cierto la creencia propuesta por el Extranjero Ateniense de que “la vida virtuosa es la más feliz” (II 663a-c). Esta tesis no puede convencer racionalmente al ciudadano que se está educando, sino que se trata más bien de una expectativa placentera presentada con argumentos persuasivos. Finalmente, encontramos en Las Leyes una coincidencia con la caracterización del Filebo de las expectativas como propias del ámbito de la contingencia – “lo humano” (cfr. III 687c; V 732e-733d) – y sujetas al error (cfr. IX 864b-c) como con la conexión entre un buen carácter moral y corrección de las expectativas (IV 716a-718b).

4. Esperanza y temor a la muerte en el Fedón

A continuación intentaré responder a las tres cuestiones planteadas en la introducción acerca del papel de las esperanzas en el Fedón.

i) La primera dificultad que nos preocupa aquí consiste en determinar adecuadamente el objeto de la esperanza socrática. En los pasajes revisados de Filebo y Las Leyes las expectativas se circunscriben al ámbito de la contingencia humana, en la medida en que éstas a) no se refieren a “lo que siempre es”, sino tan sólo a “lo que será”, b) dependen epistemológicamente de opiniones y representaciones que se fundan en su origen en ciertas experiencias de placer y dolor, y c) que éstas lleguen a ser confirmadas o no dependerá en parte de la praxis humana.

Salta a la vista la dificultad que trae la aplicación de esta concepción de la esperanza a la situación del Fedón. Sócrates intenta probar aquí con argumentos lógicos una tesis de orden metafísico, a saber, que “el alma es inmortal”. Esta afirmación no consiste en un hecho futuro, puesto que la inmortalidad es una propiedad que siempre el alma tendría, ni parece estar fundada en la experiencia ni menos se trata de algo que esté en manos del hombre realizar o confirmar. En este sentido, la “esperanza” socrática no se referiría al ámbito de la contingencia humana.

Ahora bien, cuando Sócrates comunica a sus amigos su creencia en la inmortalidad del alma lo hace a modo de explicación de su estado de ánimo confiado – placentero – ante una situación que despierta a los demás presentes un estado de ánimo contrario (63b-c). Sócrates no se place anticipadamente en la inmortalidad del alma, sino más bien en la creencia de que lo que espera a los muertos es “algo bueno”. La representación confiada de la muerte como “el mayor de los bienes” (64a1-2: μέγιστα ἀγαθὰ) – que se funda en la creencia en la inmortalidad del alma – es absolutamente verosímil si se introduce la tesis condicional de “haber vivido una vida dedicada a la filosofía” (64a-b). La confianza del filósofo frente a la muerte se funda así a) en
su creencia de que un estado donde el alma exista sólo en sí misma es algo bueno y b) que el que ha vivido en lo posible liberado de las pasiones del cuerpo (67e5-6: εἰ γὰρ διαβέβληται μὲν πανταχῇ τῷ σώματι), puede esperar un mayor bien de la muerte (67e2-68b7). La esperanza socrática sí se refiere por tanto (en cierto modo) al ámbito de la contingencia: la inmortalidad del alma será un bien sólo para el que haya vivido de cierta manera. Que esta tesis se funda en parte en la “experiencia” y no solamente en argumentos dialécticos intentará mostrarlo en el tratamiento de la siguiente dificultad.

La tesis de la inmortalidad del alma no haría a un “amante del cuerpo” representarse la muerte con placer anticipado, en la medida en que éste no podría concebir cómo un estado donde el alma exista sola en sí misma puede ser en absoluto anhelado. ii) El segundo problema que hay que considerar es el carácter de verdad que se debe adscribir a la esperanza socrática en el *Fedón*. Con respecto a la tesis de la inmortalidad nos encontramos con una serie de argumentos que buscan persuadir al auditorio de la corrección de la actitud socrática frente a la muerte. Si consideramos la doctrina del *Filebo* sobre la verdad y falsedad de los placeres de expectativas, cabe preguntarse si el único factor relevante para la determinación de la corrección de la esperanza socrática es el set de argumentos que encontramos en *Fedón* 69e-107b.

Antes de ser introducida la parte argumentativa y central del diálogo, Sócrates intentará justificar la confianza del filósofo frente a la muerte sin ponderar todavía la validez de la creencia en la inmortalidad del alma, sino tan sólo argumentando a favor de la conveniencia de un estado en el que el alma exista sola en sí misma. Los “amantes de la sabiduría” (φιλόσοφοι) – amantes del alma – se oponen a “aquel que vive apegado a lo corporal” (68c1: φιλοσώματος). A esta oposición le corresponden disposiciones afectivas contrapuestas frente a la muerte. En este contexto argumentativo es indiferente si el “amante del cuerpo” cree o no en la inmortalidad del alma, en la medida en que, si no reconoce ningún beneficio en la obtención de los bienes propios del alma, tampoco verá bondad alguna en la existencia separada del alma sin el cuerpo. Frente a la esperanza socrática se contrapone la actitud hedonista de temor al dolor. Es digno de notar que Sócrates se refiere aquí a solo tres estados afectivos, a saber, placer, dolor y temor, sin hacer mención alguna de un placer anticipatorio con respecto al futuro (69a5-8; 83b5-c2). Se podría inferir de esta omisión que la confianza socrática constituye el elemento faltante en esta enumeración.

El temor a la muerte se funda en la convicción de que la muerte se encuentra entre los peores males (68d5: τῶν μεγάλων κακῶν), en la medida en que significa la supresión de todo posible placer (del cuerpo) y sobreviene ciertamente después de episodios de largo dolor (enfermedad) o en situaciones de breve pero intenso dolor (accidente). Ahora bien, la creencia del amante del cuerpo con respecto a la muerte es consecuencia de una representación hedonista del futuro. Más adelante Sócrates describirá la situación del amante del cuerpo como la de un prisionero que se comporta a su vez como su propio cómplice o carcelero (82e5-83a1: ὡς ἄν μάλιστα αὐτὸς ὁ δεδεμένος συλλήπτωρ εἴη τοῦ δεδέσθαι). En esto se muestra precisamente la disposición engañosa frente al futuro del *Filebo*: el hedonista no puede esperar la inmortalidad del alma, en la medida en que ha reducido su campo de expectativas al ámbito de lo corpóreo. Esta reducción no es consecuencia necesariamente de una visión materialista del mundo, sino que es producto de la fuerza del deseo de placer y la huida de dolor impresa en las representaciones que el sujeto anticipa del futuro (cfr. 82e4-5: δὲ ἔπιθυμιάς). De esto no se sigue que la esperanza socrática en la inmortalidad del alma tenga que ser una verdadera, sino tan solo que una disposición tal con respecto al futuro no está al menos contaminada por el apego al placer pre-
Quisiera considerar un segundo pasaje del *Fedón* que sirve para comprender la corrección de la esperanza socrática a la luz de factores no argumentativos. Frente a las réplicas de Simias y Cebes, Sócrates prevece a la audiencia de caer en el sentimiento de “misología” (89d4: μισολογία) (89c-90d). Así como la misantropía es un sentimiento adquirido después de haber sido defraudado por los hombres al haber puesto en ellos demasiada confianza (89d5: σφόδρα) y entrega – producto de una falta de conocimiento del trato humano (ἄνευ τέχνης) –, el “odio a los argumentos” es el resultado del fracaso de expectativas injustificadas en la búsqueda de la verdad. El misólogo desprecia el acceso racional a la verdad, por decirlo así, por causa de haberse entregado demasiado a él (90d4: διὰ τὸ ἀλγεῖν). La genealogía dada por Sócrates del escéptico o misólogo nos permite distinguir tipos de esperanzas. La actitud escéptica se cierra a la posibilidad de ser convencido por la verdad, en la medida en que la investigación racional padece para ellos de una enfermedad endémica. La actitud socrática, en cambio, considera que la enfermedad afecta antes que a los argumentos al sujeto que investiga (90d9-e3). El sujeto puede mantener entonces la esperanza de sanarse y poder desarrollar los argumentos como es debido para ser efectivamente persuadido por la verdad. Ahora bien, Sócrates reconoce la posibilidad de no alcanzar con sus esfuerzos el convencimiento ni de la audiencia ni de sí mismo (91a6-b7) y, de esta manera, manifiesta que no padecía del tipo de expectativas desmesuradas e injustificadas que conducen al fracaso de expectativas del escéptico.

iii) Finalmente, cabe preguntarse qué función práctica juega la disposición esperanzada y confiada de Sócrates a lo largo del diálogo. La actitud confiada de Sócrates se funda, como hemos visto, en la expectativa de que el estado del alma en sí misma es deseable para el filósofo. Dado que éste espera poder ejercitar las actividades propias del alma, desea también que ésta sea inmortal. De esta manera, la expectativa inicial de Sócrates puede ser reformulada como una que se funda en la creencia en la inmortalidad del alma y en la posibilidad de que el hombre pueda acceder a esta verdad (a partir precisamente del ejercicio de la actividad propia del alma).

Sócrates intenta oponer de distintas maneras su actitud confiada al enfrentar la hora de la muerte a la tristeza de sus amigos. La tristeza con respecto a la muerte del maestro no sería posible sin el temor por la muerte propia. Paradójicamente – si se considera el ascetismo defendido por Sócrates a lo largo del diálogo – la intención del maestro no es otra que producir alegría y placer en el espíritu de su auditorio. Este “placer” es producido evidentemente por la comunicación de la esperanza de que la muerte no puede ser un mal para un hombre bueno. Sin embargo, hay otro mecanismo que utiliza Sócrates para aliviar la tristeza de sus discípulos: la misma conversación es para todos los presentes motivo de placer intelectual o, al menos, de compensación frente a la tristeza ante el destino del maestro. Así se puede entender la experiencia que Fedón le comunica a Equécrates en la conversación con la que se abre el diálogo: durante la conversación a él y a los demás los embargaba un sentimiento mezclado de dolor y placer (59a5-6: κρᾶσις ἀπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λυπῆς), dolor por la muerte del maestro, placer por su actitud y su conversación (58e7-b1).

En mi opinión, estos dos tipos de placer han de entenderse en relación uno con otro. El placer anticipatorio en la inmortalidad del alma supone el conocimiento previo de aquella actividad que puede realizar el hombre cuando está sólo con su alma, esto es, la actividad intelectual. Sócrates busca así a través de su conversación producir en sus discípulos aquél estado que anhela precisamente el filósofo, incubando en ellos también el anhelo y la esperanza en la inmortalidad. La esperanza en la inmor-

10 Cfr. Simposio 206a4-209e5.
talidad del alma se presenta en este sentido como una fuerza motivacional suficiente para oponerse a la actitud hedonista. Si bien en el Fedón no encontramos una distinción entre partes del alma, la función de la esperanza y la confianza encarnadas en la figura de Sócrates cumplen en parte la función del apetito irascible en diálogos posteriores. De esta manera, a la valoración de los placeres intelectuales habría que añadir en el Fedón la de los placeres de expectativa, los cuales, si bien se fundan en este caso en la reproducción del estado placentero de la vida intelectual, no son en sí mismos placeres intelectuales, sino representaciones anticipatorias del futuro en cuanto repleción del vacío actual del alma.

5. A modo de conclusión

He intentado interpretar en este trabajo algunos pasajes del Fedón a la luz de la tematización de las disposiciones afectivas con respecto al futuro que encontramos en diálogos posteriores como el Filebo y Las Leyes. Si bien no puede suponerse de antemano que el uso fundamental de los términos esperanza, confianza y temor a lo largo del Fedón debe adecuarse a la teoría desarrollada por Platón en otros diálogos, este trabajo intenta hacer al menos plausible esta tesis al mostrar los réditos positivos que entrega un análisis de este tipo.

Una controversia histórica en la comprensión de esta obra fundamental del pensamiento filosófico consiste precisamente en dirimir el peso que Platón le da a los argumentos esgrimidos por Sócrates a favor de la inmortalidad del alma. Esta cuestión está ciertamente vinculada con el papel que juega en la argumentación la metafísica platónica de las Ideas.11 Sin pretender decidir esta controversia, este trabajo subraya la importancia de otros factores que los argumentativos a la hora de valorar el sentido del diálogo. Lo que (el personaje) Sócrates está intentando llevar a cabo en el diálogo no es, en mi opinión, tanto demostrar la inmortalidad del alma, como vencer la tristeza de sus amigos haciéndoles participar de su estado confiado. Esta tesis no ataca ciertamente la validez de los argumentos, puesto que la esperanza socrática se funda en la posibilidad humana de acceder a la verdad sobre la naturaleza del alma. Pero tampoco depende, en último término, de la comprobación cabal de estas creencias. A la esperanza le es inherente una cierta inseguridad. El Fedón nos quiere persuadir, filosófica y dramáticamente, de que la actitud confiada frente a la muerte es para el hombre – sino una actitud verdadera – al menos, la más adecuada.

Summary

The conversation between Socrates and his disciples at the day of his death can be understood as the attempt of the master to defeat with arguments the fear and despondency of his disciples, encouraging them to take part in his confident attitude and in the hope that death is a good for man (cfr. 63b-d). “Trust” (thárros), “hope” (elpís) and “fear” (phóbos) are in the Phaedo affective states that are grounded in certain states of belief about the future.

An explicit development of the propositional character of these affections of soul can be traced in the Philebus. While the “expectation” of what is pleseant shows itself to be pleseant and trustworthy, the “expectation” of what is painfull produces anticipated pain and fear (32b9-c3). The pleasure of expectations depends fully on a state of belief, in so far as the expectations are in some way “speechs” (lógoi) (40a6-7). However the speeches and images about the future of the good man will be confirmed the most of the times as effective, while those of the evil man will...
show themselves soon or late as groundless (40b2-c6). *The Laws* takes up again the propositional conception of what is pleseant, and painfull expectations, all this in connection to the moral character of the subject where it takes place. Nonetheless there is a particular focus introduced in the motivational function of trust and fear. While actual pain and pleasure play as motivational forces in human action, the expectations that are aimed to the acquisition of these affective states in future – fear and trust respectively -, can be constituted by themselves as motivational forces opposed to the search of pleasure and the escape of pain in the present (I 644c4-d3; I 646e4-647b1). 

I would like in this conference to analyze the treatment of these soul dispositions in the Phaedo from the description of expectations as propositional attitudes in the Philebus and from the introduction, in *The Laws*, of the affective states that allude to future as motivational forces of action. 

For this purpose I will try to answer three matters relative to the Phaedo: i) to what exactly the reference to the Socratic hope refers, ii) if this hope is true and what kind of truth is here in play, and iii) what practical or motivational function plays hope across the dialogue. In relation to i) I will try to prove that the hope shared by Socrates with his friends at the beginnings of the dialogue, is not so much grounded in the claim for soul immortality, but in the belief that the state of soul in itself is desirable to whom has devoted his life to philosophy (cf. 63b-c; 64a). In this sense, the socratic hope will be refered to a contingent event, inasmuch as immortality will be a good only to whom has lived in a certain way. In relation to ii) I will try to show that the Socratic arguments in favor of immortality of soul are not the only factors which cooperate in the determination of truthfullness of Socratic hope. On the one hand the fearful attitude towards death is closely conected with the attachment and care of things related to body (83b-d). So fear is understood essentially as a form of hedonistic attitude. On the other hand Socrates admits from one side a sound attitude which is distrustful towards questions that are hard to prove, as in the case of soul's immortality, and from another side an inappropiate attitude of skepticism, which he describes as “hate to arguments” (89d-e). The one who distrusts about every argument, however persuasive it is, and even so insist argueing in an eristic mode, is totally closed to the possibility of truth. This attitude is described by Socrates as a product of the “experienced sorrow” facing the impossibility to find answers, that is, as a form of “fail of expectations” (90d). Finally, in relation to iii) I will try to prove that the hope and trust that Socrates communicates to his friends are affective states, which play an important motivational force in the opposition, and control affective states of body, synthetized in the propositional attitude of the “fear of death”. In this way and contrary to the usual anti-hedonistic interpretation of this dialogue, one can claim that not only the value of pleasures of knowledge (114d8-115a2) is recognized, but as well the pleasure which is connected to the propositional attitude of hope and trust as an affective state.

In this way this work purport to make contribution to an interpretation of the Phaedo, which considers other factors than those of the argumentative ones, when it comes to assess the sense of the dialogue.

**Bibliografía**


Why the Minotaur is Misology

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Some readers of the *Phaedo* have taken the Theseus myth referred to in the dialogue’s prologue as having a function that goes well beyond its ostensible one of explaining the delay in Socrates’ execution. If the delay is caused by the commemoration of Theseus’ rescue of the fourteen youth from the Minotaur, these readers suggest that Socrates is to be seen as the new Theseus and that his final conversation with his followers, fourteen of whom are named, in some way reenacts the rescue being commemorated. While I wish to defend this reading here, I will also argue that it has often been weakened by a misidentification of the Minotaur from which Socrates is saving his followers.

The Minotaur is most often identified with the ‘fear of death’.” Such an identification is certainly plausible, given Socrates’ repeated efforts to allay such a fear in his followers. But the full significance of the myth for understanding the action and the message of the dialogue becomes evident only when we recognize that there is a much stronger case for identifying the Minotaur with *misology* or, as it can be translated, “the hatred of reasonable discourse.” Only then can the myth help explain not only the crisis of faith in reasoning at the dialogue’s center, but also Socrates’ notoriously enigmatic final words. Indeed, one could go so far as to say that it is only then that we can understand the kind of immortality truly at issue in the dialogue.

The major argument for interpreting the dialogue as a reenactment of the Theseus myth must in the end be the coherence and fruitfulness of the reading such an interpretation yields. But before making the case for misology being the key to the myth’s significance, I must address arguments that have been made against even considering the myth’s significance for the dialogue. This is because, if some readers have seen Socrates and his fourteen followers as re-enacting the Theseus myth, others have denied this. Theodor Ebert in his commentary of the dialogue” has maintained that the reference to Theseus is sufficiently explained by the need to account for the delay between Socrates’ trial and execution and therefore should not be given any other significance. This argument, however, does not have much force. First, the delay in Socrates’ execution could simply have been left unmentioned instead of being made an explicit topic of discussion or it could have been mentioned without

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1 K. Dorter, *Plato’s Phaedo: An Interpretation* (Toronto, 1982), p. 5; R. Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven 1984), p. 19; D. Futter, “The Myth of Theseus in Plato’s Phaedo,” *Akroterion* 59 (2014): 89-103. Eva Brann considers the possibility that the Minotaur is misology, though suggesting that it could be at the same time the fear of death (with Peter Kalkavage & Eric Salem, *The Music of the Republic: Essays on Socrates’ Conversations and Plato’s Writings* [Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2011], pp. 6 & 18). Brann also suggests that Phaedo is the Ariadne who with his narrative leads us through the dialogue’s labyrinth (6). Laurel A. Madison, “Have We Been Careless with Socrates’ Last Words? A Rereading of the Phaedo,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 40, n. 4 (2002): 421-436, argues for identifying the Minotaur with “carelessness with one’s soul” (423). This interpretation is not incompatible with the one I defend here since, as I will attempt to show, misology is tied to carelessness with one’s soul. But it is still more accurate to identify the Minotaur with misology for reasons presented below.

being explained or it could have been explained without an explicit reference to the Theseus myth, as is done at the beginning of the *Crito.* Of course, one could respond that Echecrates, on account of not being Athenian, requires from Phaedo a full explanation of the delay. But it is Plato’s choice to frame the *Phaedo* with a conversation between Phaedo and a foreigner who requires this full explanation. We are after all not reading a transcript of a conversation that actually took place. Within the fiction it is indeed the case that Phaedo’s sole and sufficient reason for mentioning the Theseus myth is to explain the delay of Socrates’ execution to someone unaware of the cause, but this tells us nothing about Plato’s reason for creating a fictional conversation in which the myth would need to be mentioned. The second point is that if the Theseus myth serves to explain the delay, this obviously does not prevent it from serving other purposes. It is arguably typical of Plato’s writing that a dramatic detail serving initially a rather prosaic function comes to acquire greater significance in the course of the dialogue. Think of the “katabên” with which the *Republic* begins: it would be wrong to insist that the only reason why the dialogue begins with this word is that the Piraeus lies south of Athens, though this is certainly the immediate and most obvious reason. Ebert himself rather undercuts his point in noting how the Theseus myth draws attention to Socrates’ special connection to Apollo (Socrates explicitly affirms his consecration to the god at 85b5), a connection Socrates of courses shares with Theseus since both are entrusted by Apollo with a mission of saving others; if the myth can serve that additional purpose, then why not the other of drawing attention to how Socrates’ conversation with his followers mirrors Theseus’ rescue of the fourteen youth? But Conrado Eggers Lan in his commentary on the dialogue rejects this reading of the significance of the myth for another reason: he notes that there are not only fourteen followers present in Socrates’ prison cell for the final conversation. Besides the fact that Phaedo must be added to the fourteen as also present, others are said at 59b9-10 to be present without being named. This objection is greatly weakened, however, when we recognize that it could be used to support rather than refute the interpretation in question: if many more than fourteen were present in the prison with Socrates, we need to explain why Plato has Phaedo name precisely fourteen, neither more nor less. And what better answer could there be than that he wanted to connect in the reader’s mind the situation in the prison cell with the Theseus myth?

3 Christos A. Zafiropoulos indeed remarks: “Plato goes into some detail to describe the aition of this festival, seemingly at the expense of the dramatic content and the narrative priorities of his dialogue that called for Socrates’ ultima verba and facta. This suggests that this digression is most probably intentional . . .” (*Socrates and Aesop: A Comparative Study of the Introduction of Plato’s Phaedo*, *International Plato Studies* 34 [Sankt Augustin: Akademia Verlag, 2015], 39).


5 In addition to Lan’s objection, Zafiropoulos makes the further objections that half of the fourteen named followers are not female and that they do not constitute seven pairs, as would be necessary if the parallel with the fourteen youth saved by Theseus is to be a strict one (47). But why must the analogy be so strict in order to be significant? Zafiropoulos himself accepts the aspect of the analogy having to do with the salvation of Socrates and his interlocutors (46-47), an aspect that requires no more than the very loose correspondence established by the number of fourteen. Zafiropoulos also makes an observation that might connect the Theseus myth to the prison scene in another way: if Socrates’ prison was located in the Poros Building of the Agora where some have located it, there would have been from it an unobstructed view of the south side of the Hephaisteion, the metope of which depicted Theseus’ feat against the Minotaur (p. 47, n. 22).
If, then, we are justified in at least asking how Socrates’ conversation with the fourteen named followers might mirror Theseus’ rescue of the fourteen youth, the answer depends on discovering in the conversation an analogue to the Minotaur. As already noted, most take this analogue to be the fear of death and with some plausibility. Yet Socrates himself at the very center of the dialogue identifies an evil greater than the fear of death and greater even than death itself. Indeed, he claims that there is no greater evil one could suffer than to hate logoi (ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν . . . ὅτι ἀν τις μεῖζον τούτον κακόν πάθοι ἢ λόγους μισήσας, 89d2-3). If Socrates therefore seeks to save his followers from some evil, that evil is and must be misology. Socrates’ comment indeed occurs in a context in which he recognizes the danger his followers are in of falling into misology. Socrates’ complex and seemingly compelling proof for the soul’s immortality on the basis of the affinity between the soul and the Forms has been hit by two powerful objections on the part of Simmias and Cebes, objections from which it will not recover. So major is the crisis thereby occasioned that Echecrates must interrupt Phaedo’s narrative to express his dismay and wonder, “In what argument will we still be able to put our trust (πιστεύσομεν)? For the one that was so very persuasive, the one Socrates gave, has now fallen into distrust” (ἀπιστίαν, 88d1-2). As Phaedo proceeds to narrate, Socrates is well aware of this loss of trust among his own followers. This crisis is central to the dialogue, both literally and figuratively, since it represents a shift from death to misology as the major concern of the dialogue. This shift is conveyed very forcefully in a little scene occurring right after the objections of Simmias and Cebes have plunged them all into despair: taking Phaedo’s golden hair into his hands, asking him if he will cut it in mourning on the following day, and receiving a positive reply, Socrates insists that instead they should all cut their hair in mourning that very day if the argument dies and they are not able to bring it back to life (ἐάνπερ γε ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τελευτήσῃ καὶ μὴ δυνάμεθα αὐτὸν ἀναβιώσασθαι, 89b10-c1). It is then that the true monster to be defeated appears: not the fear of death, but that hatred of reasonable discourse that could lead to the death of philosophy itself. It is striking, and unlikely to be an accident, that Plato, while not referring to the Minotaur by name in his reference to the Theseus story, though any Athenian reader would know that it is from the Minotaur that Theseus saved the fourteen youth, should choose, in naming that from which Socrates seeks to save his fourteen followers, a word that starts with the same letter. Misologia thereby becomes a stand-in for Minotauros.

Socrates’ task for the rest of the dialogue then becomes to save his followers from this monster by bringing the argument back to life in a way that restores and strengthens his follower’s trust in argumentation. This task does not require Socrates to provide a completely trustworthy proof of the soul’s immortality. On the contrary, according to Socrates’ diagnosis the cause of misology is putting too much trust in arguments, just as the cause of misanthropy is putting too much trust in people. The cure is to recognize that arguments, like people, are neither all good nor all bad, and therefore require what we could call a ‘critical trust’. Socrates’ final argument for the immortality of the soul elicits precisely such a response by inspiring both trust and misgiving: it is persuasive while still leaving fundamental questions open and therefore in need of further examination. The response from Simmias this time is therefore not a knock-down objection, but rather the following: “But indeed I too have no longer a way of not trusting (ὁπῇ ἀπιστῶ) on the basis of what has been said. However, given the greatness of the topic the arguments are about and my low estimation of human weakness, I am compelled to still harbor within myself some distrust (ἀπίστεια) concerning what has been said” (107a6-b2). This admittedly peculiar ‘trusting distrust’ is seen to be precisely what the doctor ordered when we take seriously Socrates’ diagnosis of misology.
Phaedo in recommencing his narrative after Echecrates' interruption indeed notes that Socrates, with the diagnosis and cure he offered for misology, 'healed' them well (εὖ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο, 89a5-6). What corresponds to Theseus saving the fourteen youth from the Minotaur is Socrates curing his followers of the illness of misology. But then do we not have here the key to understanding Socrates' enigmatic final words in which he claims to owe a cock to Asclepius (118a7-8)? Since such a debt to Asclepius was normally incurred as the result of some cure for a sickness, the key to interpreting Socrates' words is identifying the sickness and the cure in his case. The interpretation that has had the longest life from the Neoplatonists to Nietzsche and up to the present day is simply unsustainable: that Socrates owes thanks for escaping from the sickness of life itself is ruled out most directly by his use of the plural and by his talk of a debt that has already been incurred: we owe, he tells his followers, a cock to Asclepius, thereby suggesting that they all have been cured already of some illness. So the question that must be asked is what this illness could be. The answer, as we have seen, is evident in the text: misology. That is the evil Socrates describes as the greatest one can suffer, that is the sickness he diagnoses in the central crisis of the dialogue, and that is the sickness of which he has cured his followers by the end of the discussion. This interpretation of Socrates' last words therefore does not require tendentious speculation; it stares us in the face if we take

6 For a list of readers, both ancient and modern, defending this reading, see Glenn W. Most, “A Cock for Asclepius,” The Classical Quarterly vol. 43, no. 1 (1993): p. 100. More recent proponents are Alessandro Lami, Platone: Fedone (Milano, 1996), p. 386, n. 258, and C. J. Rowe, Plato:Phaedo (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 295-296, who oddly thinks that the only alternative to this interpretation is to take Socrates to be referring to a private debt, as does Conrado Eggers Lan who in contrast defends precisely this alternative (pp. 349-350, n. 287).

7 See Most, 105-106, Ebert, p. 459, and Monique Dixsaut, Platon: Phédon (Paris: Flammarion, 1991), pp. 408-9, n. 382, who nevertheless tries to render compatible a version of the 'life is sickness' interpretation with the 'misology' interpretation.

8 For the point that Socrates cannot owe Asclepius a cock for a cure (death as an escape from the illness of life) he has not yet received at the moment the words are uttered, as well as for other arguments against this reading, see Most, pp. 101-104.

9 A similar interpretation has been defended by J. Crooks, “Socrates's Last Words: Another Look at an Ancient Riddle,” Classical Quarterly 48, n. 1 (1998): 117-125. Eva Brann also sees the hatred of argument as the deeper concern behind the fear of death and explains the cure for which Socrates gives thanks as follows: “Perhaps this [the hatred of argument] is the deeper reason behind Socrates’ thank-offering: On the day he dies, surrounded by intensely anxious friends, he does indeed somehow manage to ward off the fear of death. But he does so not, as we have seen, by constructing irrefutable 'proofs for the immortality of the soul', but by redirecting his friends’ care to the renewed life of philosophic inquiry and discourse” (32-33).

10 This is the kind of speculation that characterizes the interpretation of Most who requires us to believe the following: that Socrates after drinking the poison has a clairvoyant vision that Plato will recover from the illness that, according to Phaedo, has kept him away from this final reunion (Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἠσθένει, 59b10); that Socrates also has the clairvoyant vision that Plato will be the one member of his circle that will save his philosophy; that he therefore believes that they all owe Asclepius thanks for the salvation of Plato (106-111). Apart from the difficulty of swallowing all of this, Most's interpretation appears discordant with Socrates’ overall message at the end of the dialogue: after insisting that his followers should take care of their own souls rather than simply agreeing with him (115b), does it make sense for Socrates to suggest in his final words that what they should care
the misology passage seriously as the central point of the dialogue rather than as a mere interlude meant only to gives us a break from the arguments.

But if the plural ‘we’ poses a problem for the traditional interpretation of Socrates’ last words, does it not also pose a problem for the present interpretation? Socrates as the speaker of these words must include himself in the ‘we’ that owe a cock to Asclepius. My reading therefore requires us to believe that Socrates himself was vulnerable to the danger of misology. Indeed, in this respect the final words echo the insistence in the retelling of the Theseus myth that Theseus saves from the Minotaur not only his companions but also himself (καὶ αὐτὸς ἐσώθη, 58b1). Can Socrates possibly have needed to save himself from misology? Could he ever have distrusted the importance and efficacy of arguments?

In his warning against misology Socrates not only describes it repeatedly as a danger ‘we’ are subject to, but notes in particular how he himself is in the present moment and on the present issue in danger of becoming unphilosophical (οὐ φιλοσόφως ἔχειν) and contentious (φιλονικῶς) (91a1-3). He does indeed immediately distinguish himself from the contentiousness of the completely uneducated, but only in this one respect (τοσοῦτον μόνον ἐκεῖνων διοίσειν, 91a7): that he seeks to convince not others but himself. The suggestion, then, is that Socrates in the present moment is understandably eager (προθυμήσομαι) to prove the immortality of his soul and that this eagerness puts him in danger of becoming contentious. This danger has perhaps already been manifested by his attempt to charm away the fear of death by means of an argument (the ‘affinity’ argument) with the serious flaws exposed by Simmias and Cebes. He explains this danger a little later by warning his companions that he may in his eagerness (προθυμία) deceive both them and himself (91c4-5). When, therefore, Socrates suggests that rather than believe there is nothing sound or healthy in arguments, they should recognize that they are the ones who are unhealthy (ἡμεῖς οὔπω ὑγιῶς ἔχομεν, 90e2-3) and should fully exert themselves to become healthy, his use of the plural ‘we’ is not a matter of politeness: Socrates proceeds immediately to explain and justify his inclusion among the sick by referring to the danger he is in at the present moment. If Socrates recognizes the danger of putting too much trust in arguments we are eager to trust, he also recognizes that he is not immune to this danger, especially not at the present moment. His diagnosis of that sickness with respect to arguments that makes one vulnerable to misology is a self-diagnosis.

But surely, it will be objected, all this must be completely ironic. Socrates’ faith in rational argumentation is unshakeable and he is utterly immune to any impulse or consideration that might interfere with or lead astray such argumentation. In maintaining this, however, we simply ignore one of the most surprising features of the dialogue’s dramatic action. Socrates, we learn, has been composing poetry in prison. When asked to explain this strange behavior, he makes a surprising confession: having in the past always interpreted a recurrent dream commanding

about is the salvation of Plato? In any case, Most’s interpretation should be accepted only faute de mieux; the interpretation proposed here is not one he even considers. If one is allowed to speculate, however, I could suggest a way of reconciling Most’s reading with the one defended here: what if Plato in referring to a sickness or ‘weakness’ that kept him away from the discussion were signaling his own crisis of faith in philosophy and suggesting that his cure was the very act of writing this dialogue?

11 This is the objection made by Ebert: “Vor allem war aber Sokrates selber gar von diesem mangelnden Vertrauen auf die Kraft der Argumente gar nicht affiziert; gleichwohl schließt er sich aber in den Kreis derjenigen ein, die dem Asklepios dieses Opfer zugesagt haben” (460).
him to practice *mousikê* as a command to practice philosophy as the highest *mousikê* (60e7-61b2), he now has his doubts about this interpretation. What if the dream was instead commanding him to write poetry or *mousikê* of the more common sort (δημώδη, 61a7)? Just in case he was wrong, Socrates has dedicated himself in prison to writing poetry, starting with a poem to Apollo (specifically, a προοίμιον, 60d2). This is because it is Apollo, through the festival commemorating the story of Theseus and the Minotaur, that has prevented Socrates from dying earlier and thus given him the opportunity to reinterpret his dream. But Socrates did not stop there: thinking that to be a poet one must compose *muthoi* and not *logoi*, he proceeded to set into verse some fables of Aesop with the explanation that he is not a composer of *muthoi* himself (61b3-7). Furthermore, despite this last claim, Socrates at the end of the dialogue, after the arguments for immortality, composes a myth (μῦθος: 110b1, 114d8), not as something to defend rigorously, but as something to recite to ourselves as an incantation (χρὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ, 114d6-7).

What are we to make of all this? At the very least the following: that Socrates has now come to suspect that composing *logoi* is not sufficient, that the mission on which Apollo has sent him through dreams and oracles requires him to become to some degree a poet capable of constructing fables. But why? If Socrates wants his followers to take care of and not neglect their own souls (107c5, 115b5-c1) by living a life dedicated to philosophical argumentation, the diagnosis of misology shows us that this dedication is an *emotional* commitment that as such is fragile and always under threat. The opposite of the hatred of logos is the love of logos, but this love can easily turn into its opposite when, overcome by fear, especially the fear of death, we eagerly put blind trust in whatever doctrine protects us from this fear. What is needed, in contrast to the traditional poetry that, as Socrates argues in the *Republic* (386a-388e), inspires only the fear of death, is a new poetry that inspires dedication to the philosophical life. So that we do not despair of the doubts that every argument must awaken, we need a poetry that gives us, not a doctrine that would put an end to all argumentation, but a ‘belief’ worth ‘risking’ (ἀξίον κινδυνεῦσαι οἴομένῳ οὕτως ἔχειν καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος, 144d5-6), a belief that will prevent us from simply giving up. What Socrates recognizes is that the logos is fragile, that it is liable to die, and that we all need a certain ‘enchantment’ if we are to persevere in our dedication to it.

There is thus throughout the *Phaedo* a very clear tension between Socrates’ commitment to argumentation and the recognition that this commitment is not itself the result of an argument but must be encouraged and fostered through a different kind of enchantment capable of appealing to the emotions. The advantage of recognizing that the Minotaur is misology lies precisely in uncovering this tension and in showing that, behind the dialogue’s evident concern with mortality and the fear it occasions, lies the concern with the fragility of rational discourse and the fear and despair this can occasion. In both cases the concern cannot be dispelled by an argument, but can only be managed by a certain way of life and a certain way of relating to arguments. As already suggested, the dialogue offers a resolution to this tension between argumentation and emotional needs and thus a cure for misology: the limitations of rational argumentation are not a problem for those who have been persuaded, enchanted to take care of their souls and who see in rational

12 For a discussion of the problem of how to understand the participle ἐντείνας at 60d1, usually understood as ‘setting into verse’, see Zafiropoulos, p. 58.
13 Indeed, the topic of Socrates’ versification of Aesop’s fables comes up only because Socrates, reflecting on the strange connection between pain and pleasure, suggests a fable Aesop *should* have composed but did not: the fable of a god joining the heads of Pleasure and Pain after have failed to reconcile their opposition (60b-c).
argumentation simply a means of such ‘care’ rather than a means of providing irrefutable doctrines. As Socrates explicitly concludes, he would much rather have his followers care for their souls without agreeing with the dialogue’s arguments than to have them agree at the cost of stopping to care for their souls (115b5-c1). The goal of the discussion is therefore not to prove the immortality of the soul, but to ensure the immortality of the logos by fostering that care of the soul that responds to arguments neither with blind trust nor with complete distrust, but rather with that ‘trusting distrust’ we have seen Simmias exhibit. What Socrates asks of his followers is that they live following the tracks (ὡσπερ κατ᾽ ἱχνη, 115b9) of what has been said now and in the past, just as Socrates would himself if he were not about to die.

The dialogue emphasizes this point with the image of the sailing ship (τὸ πλοῖον) that plays such a central role in the Theseus myth and its commemoration. Not only must Socrates in his final argument for the soul’s immortality resort to a ‘second sailing’ (δεύτερος πλοῦς, 99d1) because he has failed either to discover for himself or learn from another the cause he was looking for (καὶ οὔτε ἀυτὸς εὑρεῖν οὔτε παρ’ ἄλλου μαθεῖν οἶός τε ἐγενόμην, 99c9), but in doing so he is pursuing a suggestion Simmias made earlier: that failing to discover for oneself or learn from another (ἡ μαθεῖν ὅπῃ ἢ εὑρεῖν, 85c8) a divine doctrine (λόγου θείου τινός, 85d4) that is stable and safe, since it is either impossible or very difficult to know anything clear in this life (τὸ μὲν σαφές εἰδέναι ἐν τῷ νῦν βιω ή ἀδύνατον εἶναι ή παγκάλεπόν τι, 85c4-3), one must risk sailing through life on the least refutable (δυσεξελεγκτότατον) of human logoi one can find (ἐπὶ τούτου ὄχῳμενον ὄσπερ ἐπὶ σχεδίας κινδυνεύοντα διαπλεῦσαι τὸν βίον, 85d1-2). It is this second sailing that the dialogue achieves, putting together an argument for the soul’s immortality that, while not easy to refute, inspires doubts and requires further examination, and risking the belief that we will be better off if we sail through life taking care of our souls by following the traces of this and other arguments. The greatest evil that is confronted and conquered in such a sailing is nothing other than misology. The dialogue thus indeed reenacts the sailing of Theseus and the Fourteen, and in parallel to the debt that Theseus owed to Apollo for their salvation, a debt the Athenians have paid once again during Socrates’ time in prison by sending a ship to Delos, Socrates concludes his final conversation with his followers by claiming that they all owe a sacrifice to Asclepius, son of Apollo.

Résumé

Contre ceux qui maintiennent que la mention du mythe du Thésée au commencement du Phédon n’a d’autre fonction que d’expliquer le retard entre le procès et la mort de Socrate, d’autres commentateurs lui ont donné l’autre fonction de suggérer que Socrate est un nouveau Thésée et qu’il a la tâche de sauver les quatorze compagnons nommés dans le dialogue d’un grand péril comme Thésée a sauvé les « deux fois sept » garçons et filles du Minotaure. Je défends ici cette lecture, mais en soutenant que le Minotaure duquel Socrate sauve ces compagnons doit être identifié non à la peur de la mort, mais à la misologie. Dans la crise centrale du dialogue, Socrate nous dit sans ambiguïté « qu’il n’existe pas du plus grand mal que l’on peut souffrir que de hâter les raisonnements » (89d2-3). En effet, quand Socrate s’aperçoit que ses compagnons se trouvent dans ce grand péril après que Simmias et Cebes avaient démoli avec leurs objections ce qui semblait être une preuve convaincante pour l’immortalité de l’âme, il dit, en prenant les beaux cheveux de Phédon dans sa main, qu’il ne doit pas couper ses cheveux demain à cause de la mort de Socrate, mais qu’ils doivent tous couper leurs cheveux aujourd’hui s’ils laissent le logos mourir et se trouvent incapables de le faire revivre (89b10-c1). C’est à ce moment-là qu’apparaît le vrai monstre à combattre. C’est parce qu’ils ont été sauvés de ce
monstre de la misologie que Socrate dit, dans ses derniers mots, qu’ils doivent tous un coq à Escalpe, dieu de la guérison (118a7-8). Juste avant de raconter comment Socrate a diagnostiqué la misologie et décrit le remède, Phédon en effet observe que Socrate avait réussi à guérir ces compagnons (εὖ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο, 89a5-6).

Mais cette lecture est vulnérable à une objection évidente. Si Socrate dit que « nous devons un coq à Escalpe, » il doit croire qu’il a lui-même été guéri d’une maladie avec ces compagnons. C’est ce que suggère aussi le mythe de Thésée parce que, comme insiste Phédon en racontant l’histoire, Thésée a sauvé lui-même avec ces compagnons du Minotaure (καὶ αὐτὸς ἐσώθη, 58b1). Mais comment est-ce que Socrate pourrait être lui-même vulnérable au danger de la misologie ? En fait, Socrate non seulement parle de ‘nous’ quand il parle de ceux qui peuvent souffrir de la misologie et ne se trouvent pas en santé en vue des raisonnements (ἡμεῖς οὔπω ὑγιῶς ἔχομεν, 90e2-3)—ce qu’on pourrait croire être rien d’autre qu’une forme de politesse—mais il avoue que dans les circonstances il est en danger de devenir contentieux (φιλονικῶς, 91a1-3) et qu’il pourrait, dans son ardeur (προθυμία), tromper tant lui-même que ses amis (91c4-5). En plus, nous apprenons au commencement du dialogue que Socrate ne croit plus que, pour répondre à ce rêve qui lui a commandé plusieurs fois de pratiquer la musique, il suffit de composer logoi : il a donc utilisé son temps en prison pour versifier quelques mutthoi d’Esope (60e7-61b7). C’est peut-être pour la même raison qu’après tous ses arguments pour l’immortalité de l’âme Socrate sent le besoin de composer un mythe (110b1, 114d8) que ces compagnons pourront utiliser comme une incantation (114d6-7).

Socrate reconnaît donc la tension entre les limites du logos et la certitude dont nous avons besoin : une tension qui fait de la misologie un vrai danger autant pour lui que pour les autres. Mais le dialogue nous propose un remède : au lieu de chercher de la certitude dans le discours philosophique et de le haïr quand il ne répond pas à nos besoins, nous devons ne voir dans ce discours rien d’autre qu’un moyen de prendre souci de soi. Socrate ne veut pas que ces compagnons soient seulement d’accord avec ce qui a été argumenté, mais il veut qu’ils aient soin d’eux-mêmes en suivant les traces de toutes leurs discussions (115b5-c1). Étant donné le parallèle avec le voyage du Thésée et ces quatorze compagnons, il n’est pas une coincidence que le dialogue utilise l’image d’une navigation pour exprimer cette solution. Quand Socrate fait recours à une ‘seconde navigation’ (δεύτερος πλοῦς, 99d1) parce qu’il n’a réussi ni à découvrir la cause cherchée par lui-même ni à l’apprendre d’un autre, il ne fait que suivre une suggestion de Simmias : qu’en ne pouvant ni découvrir par soi-même ni apprendre d’un autre (85c8) une doctrine divine (λόγου θείου τινός, 85d4) qui soit sans risques, on doit risquer de naviguer à travers la vie (διαπλεῦσαι τὸν βίον, 85d1-2) sur le moins réfutable (δυσεξελεγκτότατον) de raisonnements (logoi) humains. Si après son voyage qui avait sauvé du Minotaure ses quatorze compagnons Thésée contractait une obligation envers le dieu Apollon, Socrate à la toute fin de son voyage nous informe que nous tous qui continuons de suivre ses traces devons un sacriﬁce au fils d’Apollon pour notre guérison de la pire maladie : la misologie.
Plato’s Scientific Manifesto

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Plato’s first public statement about scientific matters appears suddenly and unexpectedly in the *Phaedo*. In the midst of a series of arguments for immortality, Plato has Socrates reflect on philosophical explanations. Turning his attention to explanation in the scientific philosophy of the Presocratics, Socrates subjects it to a withering criticism. Their science is not merely obscure but completely misconceived. They seek to explain phenomena by means that cannot provide the proper explanations. Plato’s attack is surprising both in its vehemence and in its uncompromising rejection of the scientific assumptions the Ionian Tradition (hereafter: IT). Yet Plato’s criticism has a positive side: he is not forsaking scientific inquiries—as Socrates did—much less condemning scientific pursuits out of hand. On the contrary, he is registering, for the first time in the Platonic Corpus, a lively interest in natural philosophy. His aim is not to banish science but to reform it. Plato’s first statement on science is, then, a recommendation setting forth a new perspective on scientific inquiry. It is, in fact, Plato’s Scientific Manifesto. But what philosophical principles allow Plato to attack the scientific establishment—indeed to call into question not merely its practice but even its very foundations?

1. The Manifesto

The passage we are concerned with begins at 96a5, where Socrates introduces a new *logos* recounting his experience. It dissolves into the hypothesis of the Forms and the final argument for immortality somewhere around 100b1. Plato’s statement about science may be divided into four parts. (I) Socrates is puzzled about physical explanations. (II) His *aporia* is replaced by hope as he hears Anaxagoras’ thesis that all things are ordered by Mind (*Nous*), and hence arranged for the best. (III) But later reading Anaxagoras’ exposition he is disappointed because the Presocratic fails to exploit his own insight; he continues to rely only on naturalistic explanations of phenomena. Anaxagoras cannot even explain why Socrates is in prison. (IV) Yet Socrates cannot see his own way clear to develop a scientific program on the lines suggested by the critique; consequently he employs a second-best method using the Forms as hypotheses.

The kind of disagreement Plato has with IT is not the sort we might expect in a modern critique of a given science. He does not complain about the lack of empirical predictions in the science, nor about a failure of observed correlations, nor even about the consistency of IT as a theoretical framework. Plato is not concerned with scientific method in a narrow sense. His complaint is that IT science does not ask the right questions or explain the right phenomena in the right way. Plato’s program differs in its ideological foundations. Yet the present passage seems like a digression, and an idiosyncratic one at that. Is there a coherent argument here, or a reasonable basis for one? As one commentator says, “We have . . . no reason for supposing that a full-blown theory incorporating teleological explanation along with the Theory of Forms stands in back of what Socrates is saying in the *Phaedo*” (Dancy 2004:293-94). The passage seems to raise more questions than it answers. But the quasi-autobiographical story Socrates tells embodies, I shall argue, a powerful argument that is generally overlooked.¹
2. Socratic Inspiration

Plato's manifesto makes strong and radical claims for a new kind of scientific program. Yet its philosophical foundations seem quite weak for such a sweeping declaration. The criticism he makes of Ionian philosophers is not an obvious one. One might imagine Plato pointing out their lack of agreement among themselves or their lack of a fixed method of adjudicating differences, or perhaps, more philosophically, their failure to provide a decisive reply to their Eleatic critics. Instead, Plato calls attention to a failing that no Presocratic would have thought was a failing: the lack of teleological explanation. Plato clearly endorses a teleological orientation in science. But the reasons Plato advances for supporting the teleological orientation against IT seem weak.

Plato seems to offer two arguments for his new program. The first is the argument from Mind to methodological teleology. This argument roughly coincides with Socrates' discovery of Anaxagoras, and his ensuing disappointment (part II of the manifesto). The second is Socrates' construction of an Ionian explanation of why he is in prison, and his criticism of that explanation, (part III). Both provide hints as to what is behind Plato's faith in a new style of science.

Let us call the first argument the 'Teleology Argument. It seems to go something like this: (1) Mind arranges all things (Anaxagoras' insight); (2) Mind acts for the best; hence, (3) all things are arranged for the best. But (4) science aims at the ultimate explanation of things; hence (5) science should explain how things are for the best. The argument is intriguing. But it seems to require a leap of faith, in the first place, to positing a cosmic Mind; and a kind of act of mind-reading in the second place, whereby the philosopher can decipher the inscrutable will of a putative cosmic creator. Major questions of metaphysics, epistemology, and even theology, loom. I shall not examine this argument.

The second argument, which I shall call the Prison Argument, seems more tractable but also more trivial. In part III of the Manifesto, Plato has Socrates challenge IT in its ability to explain his own actions. In keeping with the quasi-biographical setting of the manifesto the argument is highly personal.

Disappointed by Anaxagoras's failure to produce explanations which refer to the good, Socrates compares his project to that of a person trying to explain why Socrates is in prison. First, he states that Socrates does all that he does by intelligence; then he describes Socrates' bones and muscles, and shows how they are presently arranged. Having finished the exposition he declares that he has explained why Socrates is in prison. But he neglects the real reasons why Socrates is in prison, namely that it seemed best to the Athenians to condemn him, and it seemed best to Socrates to abide by their judgment.

Socrates' criticism of the naturalistic explanation is effective. The real question, however, is whether the comparison is a fair one. Would Anaxagoras or any other Presocratic really think that he could explain Socrates' present plight by appealing to such mechanistic principles? Surely, one might object, the Presocratics were not even attempting to explain why Socrates did what he did. They were interested in major natural phenomena, both ordinary and extraordinary, such as rain, earthquakes, and seasons. They did not pretend to explain particular actions of individual human beings such as why Socrates was in prison. Hence the whole attack is an ignoratio elenchi, a gross misunderstanding of what the Presocratics were about.

Yet Plato has a point. To defend the Presocratics by saying they do not aim at explaining particular actions is to miss the whole thrust of the Presocratic enterprise. The Presocratics attack the supernatural finding natural explanations for apparently portentous events. "They proceed," Gregory Vlastos (1975, 19-20) explains, "by indirectness. They so fill up the world with physis as to leave no room
for anything else.” The Ionian program aims to explain all events by reference to a small set of principles, principles which refer to natural substances or powers which behave according to their natures. The Ionians aim at accounting for all phenomena, whether above the earth or under the earth, whether primordial or contemporary, whether cosmic or meteorological, animal, vegetable, mineral-- or human. Parmenides’ cosmology already exemplifies a physiological explanation of human thought: “For the same it is/ which the nature of the members [the elements] thinks (phroneei) for men/ both all and each; for the excess is thought (noēma)” (B16).

Here the thought arises as a kind of product of mixture (presumably of light and night) in the bodily parts or organs. Prior causes determine mental events, and now human thought and behavior enter the domain of naturalistic explanations. Accordingly, human actions no less than earthquakes, thunder, and rainbows, yield to explanation by physis.

Thus it appears that inherent in the program of IT is the promise to explain all phenomena, human as well as non-human, by reference to natural substances and their natures. The very universality of the program makes it vulnerable to a counterexample. Plato's strategy is to find an event that does not yield to naturalistic explanation of the Ionian sort, and to throw down the gauntlet by exploring this event. The event that he chooses seems dictated by the dramatic context of the dialogue. Socrates is in prison, so his own plight is especially vivid to him. Socrates' plight is also a remarkable one—in just such a way as to make naturalistic explanation most difficult. Socrates, the man of principle, was charged with crimes precisely because of his principles; he defended himself in light of his principles rather than in light of techniques that were likely to get him acquitted; and he refused to escape from prison when an opportunity was presented to him. Socrates' actions are not obviously a case of natural instinct.

We do not need many examples to make Plato's point. A single counterexample can in principle bring down a complex and powerful theory. Thus we may see in Plato's apparently anecdotal reaction to IT a strong and genuine challenge. If IT is true, it can explain Socrates' trial, imprisonment, and death. But it cannot in fact explain them. Hence IT is false. The argument embodies a classical reductio ad absurdum.

There is an important hint in the prison argument about Plato's point of departure. The fact of moral behavior shows that there is a domain in which mechanical considerations of bones and sinews do not adequately explain. Plato's own early thought certainly included a great deal of meditation on ethical issues in the Socratic style, as is attested by Plato's early dialogues. It is plausible, and indeed inescapable, to infer that Socratic moral discourse is the inspiration for Plato's perspective on natural philosophy. Ethics—and specifically teleological ethics—is a central concern for Plato. Any adequate world theory will have to account for ethical behavior and for the fact of actions motivated by a view to the good.

3. A Socratic Program for Science

Plato has found what he thinks is a fatal flaw in the dominant Ionian scientific program. But Plato must not only criticize the program but improve on it. Can Plato indeed offer a better program?

IT makes an assumption that comes close to an assumption of modern scientific philosophy, namely, the principle of a unified science, or the unity of science (henceforth US). US is a guiding principle that directs us to try to attain a unified system of explanations which will account for all phenomena, leaving no event unexplained. The point of the modern assumption is to encourage
scientists or philosophers of science to aim at a grand synthesis which will bring all explanations together into a single system. For instance, while biology might explain plant nutrition in terms of photosynthesis, chemistry would explain photosynthesis as a chemical reaction, and physics would explain the chemical reaction as the transference of electrons between atoms. There would not, however, be three incompatible or irreducible explanations, but rather three descriptions of one ultimately physical process.

Modern science is incomparably more complex than early Greek science. But the goal of a unified system of explanations seems no less applicable to IT than to modern science. Although the Presocratics were perhaps more concerned with the completeness of explanation—i.e. with explaining everything—than with the unity of explanation, the overall aim of providing a single complete system of explanation is the same. Let us, then, attribute to IT a commitment to US.

The next premise is one I shall call naturalistic explanation (NE). According to NE, there is an adequate explanation of every fact in terms of the natures of its component materials. By 'adequate' I mean sufficient in principle to explain what is to be explained. Thus when I have adequately explained for instance a rainbow, there is nothing else that needs to be said about why there is a rainbow. As Plato notes, even those who recognize cosmic teleology revert to naturalistic accounts at the level of explanation. Hence it appears that even the most enlightened exponents of IT accept NE as a working principle of explanation.

Now one fact to be explained, according to Plato, is that Socrates is in prison. By US there will be some adequate scientific explanation of Socrates' being in prison. And by NE that explanation will be a naturalistic explanation. Schematically our argument will go as follows:

1. US
2. NE
3. Socrates is in prison.
   Hence:
4. There is some adequate naturalistic explanation of Socrates' being in prison.

But no naturalistic explanation can explain why Socrates is in prison in Athens rather than free in the neighborhood of Megara. And that is what really needs to be explained—his motive for acting as he does. Hence (4) is false. Thus the argument serves as a reductio ad absurdum revealing that there must be at least one false premise. Premise (3) of course merely expresses an evident fact and provides the explanandum. Hence something must be wrong with US or NE or both.

The most obvious move, especially for a non-scientist, is to reject US. Why should there be a single system of explanations encompassing both natural phenomena and human actions? As modern advocates of this approach we may include Descartes and Kant. Yet Plato goes on to posit a unified approach to scientific explanation of his own, just not a naturalistic one.

Plato identifies the guilty premise as NE. After giving a sample naturalistic explanation for his being in prison, involving the disposition of his bones and muscles, Plato's Socrates says: "But to call such things causes is quite strange" (99a4-5). He admits that such factors are necessary conditions for his being in prison, but he cannot grant that they provide an ultimate explanation of why he is there. Thus Plato supplies what the historical Socrates seems never to have attempted, a refutation of Ionian style physical explanations as applied to certain human events. Why does Plato reject NE? Here we must turn to the example in question.

There is a perfectly valid every-day account of why Socrates is in prison: "since
the Athenians thought it better to condemn me, I have thought it better for my part to remain here and juster to suffer the penalty they impose. For by the dog . . . these sinews and bones would have been in the neighborhood of Megara or Boeotia long ago, carried there by a judgment of what is best, unless I had thought it juster and nobler to suffer whatever penalty the state inflicted rather than to take to my heels!" (98e1-9a4). This explanation is full of value-terms, which supply the motivation for Socrates’ actions (as well as those of the jury). We cannot, in short, understand Socrates’ being in prison unless we understand his purpose, the good he aims at.

There is, then, at least one action in the universe that requires a teleological explanation. But, by induction, we may infer that many human actions are just like this. And, if Anaxagoras is right in his insight into the governance of the cosmos, even natural phenomena are to be understood in terms of the good that they fulfill. There is a chance, then, that all events in the world are to be understood by reference to teleological explanations. If now we substitute for NE the principle of Teleological Explanation, TE, we can deduce an adequate explanation of his actions—and perhaps of all events. Where a program of Naturalistic Explanation Fails, a program of Teleological Explanation may well succeed. And there we have a vision of a New Science.4

Plato is making an audacious advance on behalf of Socratic philosophy. Unlike Socrates or any of his other followers, he accepts that Ionians’ gambit—to recognize the possibility of a unified system of explanations of all phenomena. But he will challenge the Ionian methodological assumption—that all explanation is to be naturalistic in character. For non-naturalistic causes are not only present but are primary. The order of the universe stems from teleological motives rather than mechanical causes. Hence for Plato embracing the Socratic approach to philosophy no longer entails abandoning science. It entails reforming, or rather reconstructing, science.

4. Conclusion

We have seen that Plato’s manifesto embodies a radically new approach to science. That approach may have its seeds in Anaxagoras, but it goes far beyond him in a demand for teleological explanations. It is Socrates’ value theory that inspires the demand for teleology in science. Plato’s manifesto is largely a program without a paradigm, so far as one can see. In section IV of the manifesto Plato seems to turn away from a program of, in Aristotelian terms, final causes to program of formal causes. Yet later, in the Timaeus, Plato will undertake a project in which a cosmic engineer, Nous personified, will build the world; the engineer will act for the best, and the program of the Phaedo will be vindicated. This teleological approach will inspire Aristotle, and come to dominate science for almost two millennia.

Abstract

In the Phaedo (96-100), the character Socrates gives a quasi-autobiographical account of his studies of natural philosophy, stressing his failure to make sense of natural phenomena. He reports that he was inspired by Anaxagoras’ statement that Mind ordered all things; if this was so, then all things should be arranged for the best, and science could focus on expounding what the best arrangement of things was. But on reading Anaxagoras’ book, he found that the philosopher made no use of his own insight, but offered only naturalistic explanations of phenomena.

Socrates goes on to offer two arguments. Drawing on his Anaxagoras’ insight, he argues that, since Mind acts for the best, all things in the world are arranged
for the best; and since science explains all things, it must explain how all things
are arranged for the best (the Teleological Argument). Further, Presocratic science
cannot explain why Socrates is in prison: natural explanations in terms of elements
or organs or dispositions of body parts cannot account for the moral choices that led
him to be arrested and incarcerated (Prison Argument). While the latter argument
may seem trivial, it is important, for it offers a counterexample to naturalistic
explanations.

Plato uses a kind of Socratic perspective to criticize natural philosophy
as developed by the Presocratics. Natural explanations fail to account for moral
choices. Plato could use these arguments as grounds for rejecting a unified scientific
approach to explaining the world. Yet he goes on to accept the need for science
(unlike what Socrates himself did) and to develop a rival approach to science.
Naturalistic explanation cannot explain all events in the world, as indicated by the
counterexample. But perhaps teleological explanation, as suggested by Anaxagoras,
could explain everything. Plato suggests a program in which all events in the cosmos
are explained in terms of why they are for the best. This approach has not been
refuted and offers a new path to knowledge, one compatible with human values.
Plato draws back from pursuing this program in the *Phaedo,* but in the *Timaeus* he
does carry out the project, which offers a new paradigm of scientific explanation
that would be followed by Aristotle and others.

(Endnotes)

1. For considerations of the present passage, see Furley (1987:9-15); Sedley (2007:86-92);
   Gregory (2007:105-07). All of these bring out important facets of the discussion, and recognize its
   importance as a transition to Plato’s own theory, without seeing it as an argument. See also Gregory
   (2000:82-87, 266-268), on Plato’s teleology as a “proto-realist” strategy to explain cosmic order.

2. The postulation of a cosmic mind has echoes in the later dialogues. In the *Timaeus* we have
   the Demiurge; there are hints of such a being in *Philebus* 28e, 30d-e; *Sophist* 265c-e; *Statesman* 269c-
d; *Laws* 892c, 897c ff., 903b-c, 967d. Also in *Phaedrus* 25c-e the eternal self-moving nature of soul is
tied up with the eternal motion of the heavens.

3. In fact, there is one scholarly tradition that says the real source of teleology here is Diogenes
   of Apollonia. Xenophon (see esp. *Memorabilia* 1.4, 4.3) give a kind of argument from design for
   the existence of God. Dümmler (1889:96-165) saw Diogenes as a missing source for Xenophon’s
   arguments. Theiler (1925) went on to trace a history of teleological development from Diogenes
   to Plato and Aristotle. Although this approach gave Diogenes a prominent place in the history
   of philosophy (see Jaeger 1947:164-71; Kirk et al. 1983:440-41), it has come under fire: Hüffmeier
   64B3, B4, B5 can be read as an argument from good arrangement to intelligence to air as the source of
   intelligence, where the emphasis is on the last member of the series. The sequence Socrates is looking
   for in the *Phaedo* goes the opposite direction, from mind to intelligence to good arrangement.

4. The Teleological Argument, introduced at the beginning of section 2, starts to look like an
   expression of the new program.

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At 68c-69d, a brief passage with seemingly little bearing on the rest of the dialogue, Plato has Socrates contrast popular notions of courage and moderation with the “truth” about these virtues. On the popular notion, someone who overcomes his fear of death (e.g., in battle) through a greater fear (e.g., fear of disgrace) counts as courageous; and someone who overcomes a desire for one pleasure because gratifying it would deprive him of something he desires more counts as moderate. Socrates objects that such people are merely exchanging one pleasure for another and that they are motivated only by desire for pleasure. Thus, those who are popularly thought to be moderate are mastered by pleasure, whereas those who are truly moderate are masters of pleasure. Likewise, those who are popularly thought to be courageous only exchange one fear for another. They acquire what is called “courage” though fear and are, thus, mastered by fear. He infers that the proper currency of virtue is not fear, pleasure, or pain but knowledge; that is, it is through knowledge that one acquires virtue. The conclusion he draws is that a philosopher should not fear death.

The identification of true virtue as knowledge is familiar Platonic doctrine. Socrates argues it at length in the Protagoras (361b), though by the end of the dialogue he backtracks on it. Likewise, he proposes it as a hypothesis in the Meno (89c), though he goes on to show it to be contradictory. Nonetheless, most readers suppose that “virtue is knowledge” is, indeed, Socrates’ or Plato’s view. It is plausible to find a doctrine that has been argued and explored at length simply stated in a dialogue that, like the Phaedo, was written some time later. To be sure, it is often objected that the Protagoras cannot be asserting the same doctrine because it assumes that everyone aims to gratify desires for pleasure. Gallop, for example, claims that the Protagoras endorses what the Phaedo here disparages. However, the point of the Protagoras’s argument is that anyone who seeks pleasure is going to need to know how best to get it. Such knowledge is quite different from pleasure, and it brings virtue. Likewise, our Phaedo passage is claiming that it is through knowledge, rather than pleasure, that someone is virtuous: “With this [φρόνησις] we have real courage and moderation and justice and, in a word, true virtue, with wisdom, whether pleasures and fears and all such things be present or not” (69b Grube trans.).

I

What, though, does this doctrine have to do with the dialogue’s central question, whether or not the soul is immortal and whether we should fear death? Besides this question, there are at least four difficulties with this Phaedo passage: (1) If knowledge is the proper currency, just what is it being exchanged for and how is the exchange made? Burnet thinks that someone exchanges knowledge for pleasure and fear insofar as he gives up the pleasure of food and the fear of death because they stand in the way of knowledge. To judge by his comment, he understands ἀντί in 69a10 in its usual sense, “instead of,” as in “one pleasure instead of another.” However, he certainly knows that this preposition is regularly used in financial transactions as “at the price of” or “in return for.” The problem here is to understand how someone could imagine that he is exchanging one pleasure “at the price of” or “in return for” another and to understand how knowledge could be the price of “all these,” whatever
It seems difficult to apply Socrates’ currency metaphor. That must be why Burnet ignores it and supposes that Socrates is talking about a substitution of one thing instead of a transaction. I suggest that the key to making sense of the metaphor is to realize, first, that when someone exchanges one pleasure for another, the two pleasures are not unconnected. Someone deciding whether to eat a cream puff must weigh the immediate pleasure against consequent pains. If it restrains his desire, he pays for the pleasure of a healthier life with the immediate pain of not eating the pastry. The sacrifice of the cream puff is the cost of what seems to be a greater pleasure. This seems like using a little currency to purchase more, that is, a greater pleasure at the expense of experiencing a lesser pain. Moreover, foregoing immediate pleasures, he seems to be moderate. But this is not the way that currency transactions are made: one does not get more for less. Hence, Socrates declares, pleasure is not the currency of moderation. A moderate person restrains his desire; someone who gives up the cream puff for the sake of a stronger and better desire does not restrain his desire but merely acts from a different desire. Therefore, he cannot be moderate. Acting from desire could never be a way to restrain desire.

The point I want to make is that the currency metaphor demands that whatever “all these” are, they can be purchased, as it were, with knowledge. To understand the difference between a purchase and an exchange, compare giving up chocolate in order to lose weight with acquiring knowledge in order to gain health. There is no necessary causal connection between giving up chocolate and losing weight. One might more than make up for the chocolate by eating something else. However, it is assumed that someone with genuine knowledge of the body and of the importance of its health will certainly use it to acquire health and moderation. This is why knowledge can be a true coin and pleasure cannot. In a true “exchange” (καταλλάττεσθαι) one does not leave aside one thing and pick up another, as Burnet supposes. Rather, one uses the one thing to acquire the other. To be sure, knowledge is not used up in the acquisition; this is a point of disanalogy with currency, but it is not this point that Socrates stresses here but the possibility of using the currency to acquire something else.

With this understanding of the metaphor, we can see a new problem, the problem that I want to raise here: if knowledge is the currency through which one acquires virtue, then knowledge cannot be virtue. What, then, is the difference between knowledge and virtue? Is the Phaedo abandoning the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge?

The knowledge that brings virtue is, we presume, the knowledge of what virtue is or, of what courage is, of what moderation is, and so forth; for the assumption is that someone who really knows what these are and appreciates their value could not fail to be virtuous. The problem is that in the passage (66b-68b) immediately before ours, Socrates argues that even the true philosopher is prevented by his body from attaining pure knowledge of the forms in this world, though he hopes to attain it after death. Before his death, the philosopher lacks the knowledge that he wishes exchange for virtue, specifically, for the virtue of courage that he needs to face death calmly; whereas after death, when he might, perhaps, have the knowledge requisite
to make this exchange, he has no need of courage to face death. The denial that we can have pure knowledge as long as we have bodies would seem, therefore, to preclude the basis for the living philosopher's courage in the face of death that our passage proposes. Again, how can a philosopher face death courageously if what he needs to do so would be available only after his death, if at all?

(3) The third problem with the passage is, what is the role of desire, pain, and, fear in virtue? According to Burnet's view these are cast out for the sake of knowledge and virtue. It would follow that virtue is a mode of asceticism. I do not think this would be a problem: it is consonant with Socrates' claim that philosophers practice separating their souls from their bodies by despising pleasures (64a-65a). Rather, the problem is that even such a separation would not allay the soul's fear (before its death) that it will not survive nor mitigate the soul's desire for the pleasure of knowledge. Soul's fear and desire motivate Socrates and his interlocutors in their pursuit of knowledge in the Phaedo. If, then, fear and desire belong to the soul, seemingly independently of its attachment to the body, the soul cannot be purified of all its desires and fears by practicing detachment from the body. Lacking knowledge in this life, the soul would seem inevitably mired in those emotions that arise specifically from its lack of knowledge, namely, fear of the soul's destruction and the desire for knowledge.

(4) The fourth problem is Socrates' claim, at the end of our passage, that those who are virtuous and wise, that is, those who have (somehow) purged desire and fear and are, thus, likely to "dwell with the gods" after death. Cebes' objection to Socrates' assumption of immortality (70a) provokes a discussion of immortality. The claim that knowledge is the currency of virtue has no obvious connection with immortality. Just why is a purified soul more likely to dwell with the gods and, evidently, to dwell with them forever? What about virtue renders its possessor immortal?

II

These four issues make it clear that this passage cannot be read in the straightforward way it is presented; namely, as a simple claim that through knowledge one purchases virtue and, especially, courage in the face of death. The knowledge that a person would need to purchase virtue is knowledge of the form of virtue, just the sort of knowledge that we cannot attain as long as we exist in bodies. On the other hand, once the soul separates from the body, the obstruction is removed and both knowledge and virtue become possible. So understood, our passage puts virtue on all fours with knowledge: both are necessarily absent in this life but possible in an afterlife. Our passage, 68c-69d, serves, as it were, as a kind of ethical counterpart to the metaphysical/epistemic claim about the body's interfering with knowledge (66b-68b). If we cannot attain true knowledge in this life, then neither can we attain true virtue: the envisioned knowledge for virtue exchange simply cannot be made in this life. A life of philosophy might prepare a person for both knowledge and, thereby, virtue after death because it consists of practicing separating one's mind from one's body. But we cannot really know this as long as we have bodies. Indeed, it only makes sense to talk about knowledge and virtue after death if the soul continues to exist. Hence, it becomes crucial to consider the question whether the soul survives death—even if our being embodied makes it equally unlikely that we can satisfactorily answer this question.

Are virtue and knowledge really parallel? One important difference is that we can make do in this life without pure knowledge of the forms, but we cannot live without some notion of how to live, that is, without some notion of what virtue is. Just what notion of virtue should we have? There are an astounding number of
passages in the *Phaedo* that, in one way or another, propound an ethics: Socrates’ dream instructs him to “practice and cultivate the arts” (60e); he claims that it is wrong to commit suicide (61c); he defends his lack of fear of death by claiming that philosophy is practice for dying and death because the philosopher despises the body and its pleasures (64a-65a); and he derides the faintheartedness of someone who will not examine objections thoroughly, even until exhaustion (85c-d). It is abundantly clear that Socrates thinks the best way to live is to pursue knowledge: he lauds Cebes and Simmias for following our arguments and raising objections; he encourages them when the argument seems to have foundered and warns of the dangers of misology. Socrates repeatedly exhorts his interlocutors to be courageous *in inquiry*, and he concludes that if the soul is immortal, it requires our care in this life and the next (107c). In short, ethical themes pervade the dialogue. These passages are generally read as part of the drama of the dialogue, rather than its philosophical argumentation. I think that their prominence throughout the *Phaedo* must signal their importance. Just what is the “ethics” that these passages propound? The answer to this question is simple: whatever else we do in this life, it is essential to our embodied existence that we continue to pursue knowledge and remain *confident* of this path in the face of death and other obstacles.

In order to pursue knowledge, we must somehow overcome desire for pleasure from material objects and fear of death. Our passage counsels, in effect, against overcoming desire and fear by using more powerful desires and fears. (Indeed, what desires are greater than bodily desires?) The preceding passage (66b-68b) excludes the possibility of overcoming desires and fears through the knowledge that would allow us to have genuine moderation and courage.

Is there an alternative way to overcome desires and fears? If we cannot overcome the desires of the body and the fear of death through greater desires and fears and we cannot attain the knowledge (that is, knowledge of moderation and of courage—see 65d) that would allow us to have genuine moderation and courage, how can we have the virtue we need in this life to overcome the fear of death and the desire for bodily pleasure that impedes our pursuit of knowledge?

This, I propose, is the central question that emerges from our passage even though it is not stated there. Merely to raise this question is to recognize the necessity of an alternative type of virtue. To overcome fear with fear cannot count as virtue: fear cannot be the currency through which we acquire courage. Knowledge is the proper currency through which we could acquire virtue, but our bodily existence precludes our attaining it adequately. We need another “currency” to acquire virtue *in this life*.

### III

Whatever this currency is, it cannot bring us “true” virtue. The most we can hope for is some lesser type of virtue. The *Apology* famously distinguishes the wisdom of the god from “human wisdom” (23a, 21d). Our *Phaedo* passage mentions a true virtue that comes from a knowledge that can only be attained after death. Since such a virtue can do us no good, we need what we could call a “human virtue,” and indeed we have seen Plato sketching just such a virtue throughout the *Phaedo*: the virtue of philosophical inquiry. I think that this is the human virtue Plato would have us acquire. This is, I propose, why he speaks here of the “right currency” (τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθόν—69a) of virtue. Knowledge of the form of virtue is not the currency of virtue: it *is* virtue. A lesser, but attainable knowledge might perhaps be used to acquire some lesser virtue.
The question is: what is the knowledge through which we purchase this human virtue? There is an important passage later in the dialogue, in the interlude after the first three arguments for soul's immortality, that alludes to our passage while it helps answer this question:

Those who practice philosophy in the right way keep away from all bodily pleasures, master them and do not surrender themselves to them; it is not at all for fear of wasting their substance and of poverty, which the majority and the money lovers fear, nor for fear of dishonor and ill-repute, like the ambitious and lovers of honors, that they keep away from them. . . . Those who care for their own soul and do not live for the service of their body dismiss all these things. . . . believing nothing should be done contrary to philosophy . . . , they turn to this and follow wherever philosophy leads (82c-d).

In other words, it is practicing philosophy in the right way that pushes away our concerns with the body. It is not the fear of poverty or illness or dishonor that moderates their desire and fear of death, nor is it the knowledge of courage and moderation—the only options envisioned in our passage—that properly keep a person away from bodily pleasure. It is rather pursuing philosophy or, evidently the same here, caring for the soul that allows one to overcome bodily emotions.

We need to appreciate the subtle change in orientation here. Earlier, Socrates had said that being embodied is an obstacle to pursuing knowledge. Here he says that pursuing knowledge helps a person skirt the pull of the body. The emphasis here is on the pursuit of philosophy, not on the attainment of the philosophical knowledge that is sought. Since the practice of philosophy is clearly something Socrates does in this life, it cannot be the same as the knowledge that he expects to attain after death. There is another change in orientation in this section. In the passage immediately before the central passage in this paper, the soul is said to be enslaved to the body because of the body's needs, and it is the body that “fills us” with fears and desires (66c-d). In contrast, in the present passage, the soul imprisons itself by its own desires and fears (82e-83a), evidently, desires for bodily pleasure and fears of bodily pain:

Philosophy sees that the worst feature of this imprisonment is that it is due to desires, so that the prisoner himself is contributing to his own incarceration most of all (82e).

Earlier, it was the actual pain of not having the desired cream puff that was the price of gratifying the desire of health; here is the anticipated pain, that is the fear of illness, that is price to pay for gratifying the desire for health, and with both desires the soul attaches itself more firmly to the body. Importantly, an imprisonment caused by the body would be inescapable in this life. An imprisonment that the soul makes for itself can be surmounted.

Socrates’ claim is that practicing philosophy overcomes imprisonment because someone who pursues knowledge turns his attention to the care of his soul, rather than to the gratification of his body. Just how does philosophy help someone escape from his self-imposed prison? Not by arriving at positive knowledge of the good or of virtue. Instead, philosophy helps the soul see that pleasures and fears are not real:

Philosophy . . . persuades the soul to withdraw from the senses insofar as it is not compelled to use them and bids the soul to gather itself together by itself, to trust only itself and whatever reality, existing by itself, the soul understands, and to consider as true whatever it examines by other means, for this is different in
different circumstances and is sensible and visible, whereas what the soul itself sees is intelligible and invisible (83a-b).

What is true and real is always the same; the senses are not always the same; hence, they cannot be real. But, then, neither can the bodily pleasures soul seeks nor the bodily pains it fears. The assumption here is that if they are not real, neither can they be good. Again, it is not that philosophy teaches what is good, but that it teaches us what cannot be good, namely, whatever comes from the senses. If philosophy cannot reach the good in this life, it can at least help us avoid what is bad. Despite not being real, pleasures and pains affect us powerfully and subvert our reason. Because they affect us so, we cannot help supposing them to be real and true. Hence, Socrates counsels his interlocutors to avoid the pleasures and pains of the body (83b-c).

It is the philosopher's disdain for pleasure and fear that makes her courageous and moderate. As Socrates explains, having recognized through philosophy the need to free oneself from a prison of one's own making, that is, from desires and fears directed toward the bodily, the philosopher will not willingly imprison herself by fearing to lose the body or by desiring to continue to experience bodily pleasure (84a-b). It follows that philosophy prepares a person to face death without fear. That is to say, Socrates argues that philosophy makes a person courageous and moderate by stilling fear and desire:

This is why genuine lovers of learning are moderate and brave, or do you think it is for the reasons the majority says they are (83e).

What “the majority says” virtue is refers unmistakably to our passage and the view that one can become virtuous by exchanging one pleasure or fear for another. But there it was knowledge of what courage and moderation truly are that resulted in true courage and virtue. Here, it is not those who genuinely know, but those who are “genuine lovers of learning” who are virtuous. We have found in the Phaedo a way to attain virtue in this life even though the requirements for genuine virtue cannot be met as long as we are embodied. We have found a “human virtue,” as it were. Someone with knowledge of the forms would be genuinely virtuous. Someone who pursues this knowledge and, thereby, avoids gratifying the body has a lesser, but humanly attainable virtue.

IV

There is no doubt that the Phaedo propounds a lesser type of virtue that derives from the pursuit of knowledge rather than the attainment of knowledge. However, as it stands, this doctrine is at odds with our passage. There Socrates asserts that knowledge (phronësis) is the true currency of virtue. It seems now that virtue can be attained without any knowledge at all. One need only be a "genuine lover of learning," that is, a philosopher to purchase virtue. This is, I submit, a hasty inference. Let us ask instead, what type of knowledge is the currency with which one can acquire the virtue of the philosopher? In other words, what does the philosopher know and how does this knowledge make her virtuous?

There is no passage in the dialogue that explicitly answers this question, but the dialogue makes the answer clear. Indeed, I think it is designed to show us the answer. Let us notice, first, that the central question of the Phaedo, whether the soul is immortal, seems to be wrong-headed. Just as Socrates argues in the Meno that we cannot inquire into whether virtue can be taught unless we know what it is
(70b), we would expect Socrates to object that we cannot inquire into whether the soul is immortal until we know what it is. Why is Socrates not inquiring into the nature of the soul? The answer, I suggest, is that different aspects of the soul emerge in the course of the arguments for immortality, aspects that differ so much that it is unclear whether or not soul is one (cf. Phr. 230a). Insofar as soul is capable of knowing the forms, it must resemble them; but insofar as it is a principle of life it is a substrate that receives life (first argument) or the immanent form that brings it (fourth argument). In all these respects the soul is unchanging. But the soul is also what inquires into the forms and into itself. That is to say, the soul is at once an agent seeking knowledge and the object that it seeks to know. The reflexivity here—the soul’s inquiring into the soul—cannot be accidental. It signals just what it is most essential to know: the soul is itself some sort of entity. As an object of inquiry, soul is like the forms that it knows and, therefore, one; as the subject that inquires, soul uses its multiple faculties to explore multiple paths aiming to connect them into some sort of unity and is, therefore, a plurality of some sort. Even so, its ability to inquire into its own nature shows that it has a nature, a nature that is distinct from the body to which it is somehow tied, for matter is not capable of reflecting on its own nature. Indeed, the nature of the soul is to inquire into itself: this is the philosophical inquiry that Socrates identifies with the care of the soul.

What does it mean for the soul to care for itself? Again, the arguments for immortality aim to show the soul as something static, but the process of making those arguments, proposing counter arguments, and responding to them show the soul to be actively engaged in the process of inquiry. To care for the soul is, then, to preserve its capacity to inquire. What we see on display is Socrates and his interlocutors engaging in inquiry and, thus, engaging in the very activity that makes the embodied soul a distinctive entity.

Near the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates’ interlocutors grant him the existence of forms, such as the Just itself, the Beautiful and the Good (65d). This is an important assumption because the nature ascribed to the soul depends on these forms. To grant that forms exist is not to claim that the soul properly knows what they are. We have some inkling of them, for Plato relies on their existence to account for the possibility of recognizing truths that we have not encountered in our lifetimes. This reliance on the forms does not undermine his denial that we can know the forms because what we come to recognize is not the nature of the forms themselves but mathematical truths and, our subject here, the soul. If the soul can recognize that there are forms, then the soul is an entirely different entity than matter. It deserves an entirely different sort of care. Inasmuch as the soul knows only that there are forms, but has no adequate knowledge of their natures, at least in this life, soul must be distinct from the forms.

Hence, what the philosopher knows is just what is apparent throughout the Phaedo: the soul is a special sort of entity that is distinct from matter and from forms, and the soul inquires into its own nature. This much the soul can know, and through this knowledge the philosopher purchases, as it were, virtue, for he understands that the body is alien and neither desires to gratify it nor fears of losing it are worth paying attention to. It is, I propose, human knowledge of the soul that purchases human virtue.

If this is right, the immortality of the soul is not nearly as consequential for the dialogue as has seemed. If the soul is immortal, then its being purified of bodily influence will stand it in good stead in the next world. If it is not, then its being purified allows it to do just what soul’s nature is, to inquire without obstruction.

It might be objected that immediately after introducing the idea that a soul that disdains the body will have a type of moderation and courage and will not want
to enslave itself anew by indulging in pleasures (83e-84a), Socrates claims that a soul nurtured in this way would have no fear of being scattered after death (84a-b). The objection is that immortality of the soul seems to remain important even after Socrates introduces human virtue. In response, let me say that this puzzling passage occurs before the prolonged silence that is followed by the objections of Simmias and Cebes. It may well be intended to provoke such reflection by drawing a conclusion that does not follow. The tacit argument seems to be that since soul is an entity that is independent of the body, the destruction of the latter is not a ground to fear the destruction of the former. But Socrates adds that the soul should not fear being scattered; this does not follow. Hence, the objections of both Simmias and Cebes to the effect that this reasoning does not prove immortality (85e-88b). To be sure, a soul that is not concerned about its body can hardly be concerned with the body's destruction; but this does not answer the soul's concern for its own destruction.

In sum, knowledge of soul is an intermediate knowledge of an object intermediate between the forms and matter, and it produces a virtue that is intermediate between true virtue and vice. This is not the true virtue that would come from knowledge of the form of virtue, but the secondary virtue that comes from knowing the soul; that is, from knowing that the soul is an entity unto itself, even if it is present in a body and from knowing that the care of the soul consists of exercising it in inquiry, such as the inquiry into the immortality of the soul that is on display in the Phaedo. Unconcerned about whether the body's desires are gratified, someone who cares for his soul is moderate; unconcerned about whether his body is harmed in battle, he is courageous. In short, it is knowledge of soul, the knowledge that actually does emerge from the Phaedo, that is the currency of the virtue that the dialogue constantly recommends and itself displays.

V

It only remains to explain how the four questions have been answered. The first question was how knowledge could be the currency of virtue if knowledge is virtue. The currency metaphor is meant to encompass a variety of types of knowledge and of virtue. It applies loosely to knowledge of the forms and true virtue because they would seem to be identical. This loose application signals to the careful reader that there is another understanding of the exchange: someone with knowledge of the soul purchases a different kind of virtue. Unlike knowledge of the forms, knowledge of the soul does not necessarily engender acts of positive virtue. Instead, knowledge of the soul steers a person away from actions that address bodily concerns, and he thereby comes to have a lesser type of virtue. Knowledge of the soul is also the currency through which the true pleasures of the soul are acquired—not in Burnet's still widely accepted sense of setting aside the one and picking up the other, but in the sense in which one uses a currency to acquire something. Knowledge of the soul enables the soul to have the best pleasures, just as Socrates, in the Protagoras, had argued that it would. What are the best pleasures? Clearly, the ones that benefit the soul, but the desires and fears that stem from the body do not benefit the soul because, as we saw, they mislead the soul into thinking that their objects are real. It is because the desires and fears that stem from the body do not benefit the soul that Socrates declares that true virtue is a purgation of desires and fears (69b9-c3). This claim is not at odds with the Protagoras' contention that one needs knowledge in order to secure the best pleasure; for knowledge does indeed purchase the best pleasures, and it does so by purging the pleasures and fears of the body that interfere with what is best for the soul. A soul with true knowledge, that is, knowledge of the forms is entirely separate from a body and has no bodily pleasures or fears. A soul
that knows what it itself is and exists with a body purchases the best pleasures by disdaining the body and engaging in the sort of inquiry so prominently displayed in the *Phaedo*. So knowledge, specifically knowledge of what the soul is, purchases (a) pleasure and fear in the sense that through it, one comes not to take pleasure in bodily gratification or to fear bodily destruction—these are purged—but to take pleasure in the soul's inquiry and not to fear that the argument will flag and not be able to be revived. Likewise, this same knowledge of the soul purchases (b) the virtue that soul can possess while it is in the body, for it is just by the disdain of bodily pleasures and fears that one comes to have some sort of moderation, courage and justice. The same knowledge brings both virtue and pleasure.

It is clear that the doctrine that our passage prepares us to receive is not ascetic. Socrates is not is rejecting all pleasure and fears, only those of the body. The pleasures and fears that belong to the soul are different. On one hand, there is the pleasure of inquiry; on the other the fear that inquiry will founder, especially after Socrates' death. Initially, the fear of death is concern about the destruction of the body, but by 84a the issue concerns the destruction of soul alone. The life of inquiry is not without its joys and sorrows, but they are of the soul.

The answer to the third question is now abundantly clear: the knowledge and the virtue that the philosopher can only attain after death is of no good to him in this life, but just the recognition that there are forms that the soul could know about and, perhaps, even come to know, makes the soul something to be valued and worthy of care. Hence, there is a lesser knowledge, the knowledge of the soul, and a lesser virtue, that the philosopher can use in this life. Importantly, the philosopher can acquire the lesser knowledge by recognizing soul's possibility of acquiring the first.

Finally, what is it about a purified soul that makes it more likely to dwell with the gods forever? According to our passage's claim that knowledge is the currency of virtue, the soul could come to acquire knowledge. On the other hand, Socrates also speaks of the soul as having knowledge even before birth. Is the soul supposed to be intrinsically immortal or does it have the possibility of purifying itself and thereby attaining immortality? The nature of the soul lies in its connection with the forms; the virtue of the soul lies in its inquiring into the forms. Paradoxically, Socrates insists on their difference (93b-c). Yet, when the soul ignores the body and pursues knowledge of the forms, it is engaging in an activity that fully manifests its own nature. Soul is caring for itself. Soul acts reflexively and, thereby, avoids the self-imprisonment that is contrary to its nature. Such a soul encounters no obstacles to its continued existence. Being purified, it harbors nothing within itself that might undermine its existence. While we cannot say that it necessarily dwells with the gods, there is, at least, no obstacle to its doing so and, to the extent is focused on the forms, it does indeed dwell with the gods.

The *Phaedo* is generally read as an exposition of Platonic metaphysics. Our passage makes clear that metaphysics goes hand in hand with ethics. Insofar as knowledge is the currency of virtue, it is central to get knowledge. Hence, the soul that inquires does exactly what it should do. While the *Phaedo* expounds a metaphysics, it displays its ethics in the actions of Socrates and his interlocutors.
The Role of Perception in the Recollection in the *Phaedo*

Hua-Kuei Ho

The passage at *Phaedo* 72e-77a is usually labelled the Recollection Argument. It argues for the immortality of the soul on the presumption of the Recollection. By the Recollection (ἀνάμνησις), Plato claims that “learning is recollection,” that is, to recollect our knowledge of the forms which we once upon a time have seen before our birth. On the presumption, our experience of learning indirectly proves the pre-existence of the soul. Since the proper objects of our knowledge are the forms which we cannot perceive by perception, the passage gives us an impression that our perception has no importance in Plato’s epistemology.

But perception plays an important role in epistemology, even in Plato’s. If the pursuit of knowledge is a process of the recollection of things which are not perceptible, what a role does perception play in our recollection of knowledge? In the *Phaedo*, in spite of the heavy stress on the non-perceptual cognitive capacity of the soul, perception (αἴσθησις) is taken as a useful reminder, even when the reminder is dissimilar to the objects of recollection. (73c-74a) Etymologically, the Greek word “recollection” (ἀνάμνησις) is the cognate noun of the verb ἀναμιμνῄσκειν which is compounded of ἀνά- (up) and μιμνῄσκειν (to remind, to recall into memory). When we say “recollect,” it is in the passive voice in Greek. In Plato’s words, the person in learning “will be reminded” (ἀναμνησθήσεται) of what she knows at some previous time. (*Phaedo* 73c1-3) Learning requires active exploration, while the passive voice “to be reminded” in Greek (*Phaedo* 73b7, c2, d11, e6, e7, 74a5, a7, 75e6-7, 76a7, b1, c4; cf. *Meno* 81c8-9, d2, 82b7, e12, e13, 84a4, 86b4) implies that the reminder cannot be dismissed easily in the process of learning. As a reminder, perception cannot be dismissed easily.

On the other hand, recollection is not “memory” (μνήμη), but presumes the existence of pieces of memory which have been collected into our storage of memory at some earlier time and are ready to be recalled via a certain kind of reminder. An interesting fact is that, compared with recollection, the word “memory” (μνήμη) in Plato often refers to the perceptual memory or memory related to perception, though this does not need to exclude its relation to thinking. (*Phaedo* 96b; cf. *Theaetetus* 163d-166b, 191c-196c; *Philebus* 20b ff., 34a ff., 39b, 60e; and the “perception” of the soul at *Phaedrus* 249c) Recollection means to recall our memories. Since memory is so highly involved with perception, perception cannot have no weight with the Recollection.

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2 On the frame of the recollection argument, the main trend of interpretations takes Plato’s forms as the premise of the argument. Dimas argues that the existence of the forms and the immortality of the soul are conclusions of the recollection argument in the *Phaedo*, rather than the premises. (Dimas 2003) No matter whether the existence of the forms is the premise or the conclusion, it is shown at the beginning of the argument that it argues for the immortality of the soul on the Recollection. (*Phaedo* 72e1-73a3)
3 For the relevant etymology, see Sorabji 2006: 35; King 2009: 13. Sorabji clarifies that the verb in Plato’s use is in passive rather than middle. (Sorabji 2006: 35 n.1)
4 King, following Freudenthal, attributes the distinction between ἀνάμνησις and μνήμη to Plato. But he thinks that the precise distinction of these two and a clear definition of μνήμη did not appear until in the *Philebus*. (King 2009: 12 and n.21)
These are the two roles of perception I am trying to explore in this paper—perception as the reminder of the recollection, and perception as the source of perceptual memory. My investigation into the former will lead to Plato’s caution that the reminder is not the reminded; as for the latter, I will uncover the close link between perception and belief. It explains Plato’s continuous concern of falsehood. I will argue further that the falsehood is not inherent in perception, but comes from our wrong belief in perception and the perception wrongly mixed with beliefs.

I. Perception as the reminder of memory
The recollection paragraph at Phaedo 72e-77a tells us that,5

(1) learning as recollection is to be reminded of what the soul have learnt before; (72e-73a)
(2) “to be reminded” is when one has already grasped a perception (αἴσθησιν) of a thing, not only recognizes that thing, but also thinks of some other thing; (73c)
(3) for examples, when
   (a) one has grasped a perception of his beloved boy’s lyre or cloak, but also thinks of the boy; (73d)
   (b) one has grasped a perception of Simmias, but also thinks of Cebes; (73d)
   (c) one has grasped a perception of a depicted horse or lyre, and is reminded of a person; (73e)
   (d) one has grasped a perception of the depicted Simmias, and is reminded of Cebes; (73e)
   (e) one has grasped a perception of the depicted Simmias, and is reminded of Simmias himself; (73e)
(4) recollection can be from similar things, but also from dissimilar things;
   (74a, inferred from (d) and (e))
   (5) for examples (of the recollection from dissimilar things),
      (f) one has grasped a perception of equal stones or logs which “sometimes appear equal to one but not to another,” but also thinks of the equal itself; (74b-c)

5 For the sake of my own argument, the analysis of text below will focus on the examples concerning perception and its connection to memory and recollection. This means, for now, I needs to put aside some significant material on the immortality of the soul, separation of the forms, or the identity of the self in cognition (as noticed by Gerson 1999), and so on. It is also the reason why the paragraph adopted here is from 72e to 77a, not to 78b as in Gallop’s edition. (Gallop 1975: 113) The page of 77a-78b furnishes the argument for immortality, but says little on perception and its epistemic meaning.

6 The Greek may refer to sense or perception, since the distinction between these two is drawn much later after Plato. To formulate the examples, all these sense-perception terms including seeing, hearing or touching, are replaced by “perception” in the analysis.

7 Controversial reading: This clause can be read as (a) they appear equal to one observer, but not to another observer; (b) they appear equal to one stone or log, but not to another stone or log. The former is the disagreement among observers, while the later emphasizes the “contrasted predicates in different relations.” Both are “grammatically acceptable.” (Gallop 1975: 122; cf. Bostock 1986: 74-78, where he adopts (b)) Here I follow Svavarsson’s adoption of reading (a) on the reason that it explains better that the perceptible things are dissimilar to the forms by their conflicting appearances. (Svavarsson 2009: 65–66) I also agree with Svavarsson to interpret the issue from an epistemological standpoint, not an ontological one. (73-74)
(f') we have grasped perceptions of equal things, but also thinks of the equal itself which we must have known before we first perceive the equal things and think of that all the perceptible equal things fall short of the equal itself; (75a-b)

(6) we obtained perceptions as soon as we were born, and thus we must have known the equal itself, and the larger, the smaller, the beautiful, the good, the just and the pious themselves [the forms], before birth; (75c-d)

(7) “forgetting” (λήθην) is loss of knowledge; (75d)

(8) we lost knowledge at birth, and regain knowledge by being reminded; (75e)

(9) (f") from perceptions, we think of something to which they are dissimilar but related, or something else to which they are similar; (76a)

(10) knowledge requires the ability to give an account (ἔχειν διδόναι λόγον); since no one is able to give an account of the things-themselves [the forms], no one holds knowledge of them; we are merely reminded of the knowledge which we obtained before but lost at birth; (76c-d)

(11) if we refer (ἀναφέρομεν) all the things from perceptions to the things-themselves [the forms] which exist and have been known by us before our birth, then must our souls exist before our birth. (76d-77a)

Around 73d-74c, Socrates provides six examples of recollection, (a) to (f). The example (f) (supplied with (f') and (f'')) is the most crucial to exhibit the process of recollection of the forms. Frede asserts, “recollection is now triggered by sense-perception and concerns single objects, the objects’ intelligible concepts or forms” in the Phaedo, and makes a comparison with the perception in the Republic where “conflicting impressions act as incentives to the higher learning....” (Frede 2012: 240-241) Perception plays a role of reminder or an incentive without which we can hardly start for knowledge. Indeed, “perception cannot itself provide the knowledge.” (Bostock 1986: 61) But even the forms cannot provide knowledge by themselves only. The (7) and (8) shows that our knowledge of the forms could be lost. At (9), it appeals to perception. At (10), Plato declares that knowledge requires the ability to give an account. At (11), the existence of the forms is proclaimed on the basis that we refer (ἀναφέρομεν) things from perceptions to them. The forms are learnt in the reference of perceptible things to them. In a sense, we cannot arrive at the knowledge of the forms without the aid of what we learn from perceptions.

Perceptible things are surely dissimilar to the forms. But Plato accentuates that recollection can be also from dissimilar things (at (4) in the analysis above). Trace back the examples given at (3). Plato’s examples start from a case that the reminder is obviously dissimilar to the reminded (the example (a): to think of the beloved boy via his lyre or cloak). Then comes another case that the reminder is dissimilar to the reminded (the example (b): to be reminded of Cebes by a perception of Simmias). Actually almost all the examples in the paragraph are via dissimilar reminders. The only exception is example (e). It is via a reminder (Simmias’ portrait) which is similar to the reminded (Simmias himself).

There is no doubt that the dissimilarity tells us that the perceptible things are different from their corresponding forms (see (f’) at (5) above). Thus Bostock thinks that “there is no resemblance at all” in Plato’s proposal on the relation between particulars and forms in the Phaedo; by contrast, the Republic is “in favour of the idea that particulars resemble forms” and applies “the relation between a picture and what it is a picture of” as “a relation of resembling” to the relation between particulars and forms. (Bostock 1986: 90-91; cf. Republic 509d-511e, 595a-605b) “Perhaps in the Phaedo he was not yet prepared to commit himself to the view that

8 In addition to “refer to,” “appeal to,” “ascribe to,” the word has a meaning of “recall a likeness” later in Plutarch. (Liddle and Scott 1995: 64)
particulars were resemblances of forms, while by the time of the *Republic* he had made up his mind that they were.” Bostock comments on Plato so. (Bostock 1986: 92)

I see the story in the *Phaedo* from a different point of view. Among the six examples, three are reminded by pictures. Plato seems to guide the readers to see the relation between the perceptible reminders and the forms through the relation between a picture and what it is a picture of. It is a relation of resembling, in the case when the perceptible reminders are similar to their corresponding forms, just as the relation between the portrait of Simmias and Simmias himself. And this is perfectly coherent with Plato’s well-known attacks on μιμησις (representation or imitation) in the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, the 595a-605b which Bostock appeals to, Plato highlights the difference between a picture and what it is a picture of, by his attacks on μιμησις. A picture appears similar to what it is a picture of, but actually they are dissimilar. Exactly due to the resemblance, one may be fooled by a painting of a carpenter when she looks at the painting from a distance. (*Republic* 598c) The relation of resembling in appearance may disguise the dissimilarity in other aspects. Read the *Phaedo* with this. Compare the examples (d) and (e). In (d), the reminder (Simmias’ portrait) is apparently not what is reminded (Cebes). If I apply the same caution to a case of the relation of resembling, the example (e), I will clearly notice that the reminder (Simmias’ portrait) is not what is reminded (Simmias himself), though the perception as the reminder is similar to the perceptual memory reminded in some aspect.

Plato is always cautious about the relation of resembling. This is because that the relation of resembling has a double effect. On the one hand, there are some similar features in the two things; but on the other hand, there must be also some dissimilar features. The relation between perceptible things and the forms is of resembling, and at the same time is of dissimilarity. Plato emphasizes the dissimilarity. This does not only suggest that perceptible things are different from the forms, but also to remind us that perception as the reminder, standing in the relation of resembling, like that of a picture and what it is a picture of, is not what is reminded.

II. Perception as the source of perceptual memory

As for what is reminded, shown by the examples (a) ~ (e) in the analysis above, seems to be the perceptual memory, say, one particular visual image which was perceived in some previous time.9

But perception is not the only source of perceptual memory.

Take the example (a). When one sees a boy’s lyre or cloak but thinks of the beloved boy, though we may regard one particular perceptual memory as our target memory, what is reminded is actually not a sheer piece of perception in our memory, but many multifaceted memories woven with thoughts concerning the boy, including the connection of the lyre or cloak to him.10 A boy is a perceptible object. The memory of a boy, however, is not a perception-like object. There is no memory without context; otherwise, the particular episode of memory is impossible to be reminded. The context is needed to establish the link(s) between the reminder and

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9 The term “perceptual memory” is ambiguous. It may refer to a piece of memory of a previous perception, or an episode of memory partially or indirectly related to perception. The latter is not necessary to be based on the actual experience of perception, and is more intertwined with thoughts and beliefs.

10 “Any evident connection” linking the reminding item to the proper object will suffice. This explains why Socrates in the dialogue “repeatedly remark that” “it makes no difference whether the reminding is from similar or dissimilar.” (Sedley 2006: 320; italics in original)
the reminded. Keeping this in mind, when we turn our eyes onto Plato’s example (f), the recollection of the equal itself, although it may be understood metaphorically as the recollection of our “perception” of the form of the equal before our birth, the memory of the prenatal “perception” cannot be a sheer psychic vision. Furthermore, what constitutes the perception as the source of perceptual memory?

The word “memory” (μνήμη) in Plato (and in normal Greek uses) often refers to the perceptual memory. But the questions whether memory and belief (μνήμη καὶ δόξα) come from perceptions (τὰς αἰσθήσεις) and whether they result in knowledge are dismissed in the *Phaedo*. (96b) Here I turn to the wax block in the *Theaetetus* which Plato submits as a model of the perceptual memory, but soon rejects. (*Theaetetus* 191c-196c)\(^\text{11}\)

I suggest that the rejection of the wax block model shows one unusual feature of Plato’s thoughts on perception. That is, for Plato, perception and belief-forming are connected as a seamless continuity. There is not perception pure of belief, nor is the perceptual memory.

This would be revealed more visibly when we compare Plato’s rejection of the model with Aristotle’s adoption. (Aristotle, *Memoria et Reminiscentia* 450a26-b12; *De Anima* III.435a2-10 and II.423b7-26) Lang explains that the wax block as the model of memory in the *Theaetetus* fails because Plato associates memory and intelligence. Aristotle locates memory in the faculty of sense-perception. This makes the model of wax block available to him. (Lang 1980: 385, 390) King suggests that Aristotle “can make positive use” of the model while Plato cannot, because Aristotle “is talking about the essentially embodied soul” on the assumption of hylomorphism. (King 2009: 14) Plato needs to reject the model as long as he does not confine memory to the perceptual memory, nor confine perception to the bodily perception. Sorabji says, Aristotle “would have been horrified at the Platonist tendency, based on Plato *Theaetetus* 184-7, to allow the higher faculty of reason in humans to permeate lower ones.” (Sorabji 2006: xxi) From the Aristotelian way of thinking, Plato cannot adopt the model because he confuses two distinct epistemic faculties, perception and belief-forming (or whatever related to thoughts) in the discussion on memory. So Aristotle “adapts” or “corrects” it.\(^\text{12}\)

But, from Plato’s way of thinking, surely he is aware that perception and belief-forming are distinct faculties, shown by the clear distinction of Theaetetus’ first and second definitions in the *Theaetetus*. It is impossible for Plato to confuse them. However, an issue more crucial for him is that, is perception pure of belief? The issue is crucial because it is concerning falsehood. Plato’s concern of falsehood goes throughout his philosophy. It is hard to say the instantaneous perception to be false by its own as the measure, as discussed in the part before 184 in the *Theaetetus*. If perception is absolutely independent from belief-forming, where the falsehood is smuggled in?

The topic of discussion in the *Theaetetus* turns from perception to belief at 184b-187a. The pages, on the one hand, distinguish the cognitive faculty of belief-forming from that of perception, and on the other hand, show the close connection

\(^{11}\) One may argue that Plato does not need to reject the model of wax block if we find a proper definition of knowledge. Explained from this angle, “there is no indication that Socrates finds this account of belief and error to be flawed.” (Schiebler 2012: 268 n.31) However, Socrates’ rejection in the dialogue is a textual fact. Besides, there is no proper definition of knowledge at the end of *Theaetetus*. No evidence shows that Plato accepts it.

\(^{12}\) The wording “adapt” is from King (2009: 14), “correct” from Lang (1980). Aristotle’s attempt to exclude the faculty of thinking or at least to reduce it as “involved incidentally” in memory, see De Memoria et Reminiscentia 449b30-450a25.
between the content of these two. Actually, Plato's discussion has never tried to separate thinking from perception. At *Theaetetus* 152b, Socrates says, "Is 'to appear' namely 'to perceive'?" Theaetetus answers, "It is." This identifies perception as the perception of things' "appearings."\(^1\) Then they say they are examining "the appearings" (how things appear to each person, τὰ φανόμενα ἑκάστῳ, 158a6), but soon on the same Stephanus page, they are discussing how to tell the true from the false among beliefs (δοξαματών, 158e3). At 167a, the discussion has been clearly on the forming of true belief and that of false belief (ψευδῆ δοξάζοντά at a6; ἀληθῆ … δοξάζειν at a7). Naturally, then the appearing-verb (φαίνομαι) is replaced by the seeming-verb (δοκεῖν) in the continuous explanation.\(^2\)

The unusual feature in Plato's epistemology, the continuity of perception and belief-forming, can find its contemporary counterpart. Lycos associates D. M. Armstrong's view of sense-impressions with Plato's. Though Lycos' aim is to refute Armstrong's view and thus Plato's, he excellently exhibits the Platonic feature that "appearing" is immediately "seeming" and belief (δοκεῖν and δόξα). (Lycos 1964: 495, 503-508) One thing he ignores is that, Aristotle's objection of Plato's identifying perception and belief is misleading. For Plato, perception is never identified with belief, as clarified above. What Plato does is to raise our caution for perception, because beliefs from without may have been mingled with the appearings of things. We may receive beliefs from what we perceive, without perceiving that it has impacted on our belief-forming and the possible connections in the context of what we perceive.

Then, perception as the source of memory does not simply impress the appearing into our wax block of mind. How things appear to me becomes the beliefs inbuilt in my perception and thus in my perceptual memory.

Compare this to the Recollection in the *Phaedo*.\(^3\) In Scott's famous "interpretation D" of Plato's Recollection, he follows an ancient analogy adopted from Herodotus. During the Persian war, a Spartan named Demaratus tried to send a letter to the Greeks. He inscribed the real message on a wooden tablet, with wax melted on top. Only when the wax surface is scraped away, the real message can be read. (Scott 1995: 18; cf. Herodotus History VII.239) Wax is not a secure medium. It can be melted. It can be scraped away. In the Demaratus analogy, it prevents us from reading the real message. According to Scott's own analysis, due to the deception and falsehood in the information from senses, the Demaratus analogy fits the *Phaedo* particularly well. (Scott 1995: 71-72) The *Theaetetus* takes wax block instead of a more solid stuff, as the model of memory. This hints at the fallibility of memory.

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13 For a detailed analysis on the pages, see Kanayama 1987. He notes that Plato's wording around 185 is moving to "considering." (35-37) "The introduction of koina enables him [Plato] to bring the act of considering to the fore." (80) Kanayama insists that the considering is "totally independent of one's experiences and perception." (81) I say, as a cognitive faculty, it is distinct from perception, but its content cannot be independent from perception.

14 Following Lycos' terminology. (Lycos 1964: 495-497)

15 See the occurrences δοκεῖν at 167c4, c7 and its cognates everywhere in the paragraph. The distinction of the "appearing" and "seeming" verbs is borrowed from Harte 2010: 80.

16 This is not to say Plato's thoughts on memory in the *Theaetetus* have grown in the *Phaedo*, only to try to find a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of relevant texts.

17 Here I only adopt Scott's interpretation D for the part concerning falsehood and deception. The main point of his interpretation D that only limited number of philosophers can recollect knowledge. I have not had sufficient studies on the issue.
One may say “the danger” is “posed by memory’s inherent fallibility.”\textsuperscript{18} However, the fallibility in memory is inherited from perception which is inherited from the deception and falsehood in the beliefs smuggled in perception. Take the example (a) again. I see a lyre. The memory of having seen the boy is reminded by my present perception of the lyre. But both perceptions, the previous and the present, are permeated to beliefs. Besides, the recollection is not only concerning a single particular perception in my memory. It depends on various connections which link my present perception of the lyre and my previous perception of the boy. All these may bring beliefs from different sources, and permeate my seeing at the present moment. The perception of seeing the lyre right now may change my belief related to the boy, and the belief may change my perception in turn when I see the boy next time. It becomes a circuit of perception and belief.

As argued in the section I, the relation between the perceptible things as the reminder and the forms is of resembling, standing in the relation of a picture and what it is a picture of. The reminder is in a sense the representation of the reminded. Apply the result of the section II to it, our perception of representation (the reminder) is mingled with beliefs, so is the perceptual memory (the reminded). Both have influence on our perception in the making. As in the example (e) at \textit{Phaedo} 73e, Simmias’ portrait represents the appearing of Simmias. But the appearing represented is seen from a certain point of view from which the painter saws Simmias. When one looks at the portrait, one is looking at the “Simmias” from the painter’s point of view, and is reminded of Simmias in the context of the observer’s thoughts concerning Simmias. These constitute the circuit of perception and belief.

The circuit of perception and belief may become a serious hindrance on our way toward knowledge, if we fall into a close circuit without being reminded of what are to be reminded, not to mention the false beliefs smuggled in perception and in the perceptual memory. However, perception, in its role as the reminder, can be a positive aid for our recollection of the true knowledge—only if we are aware that the reminder is not the reminded. In the two roles of perception in Plato’s Recollection, perception is both an aid and a disturbance. Hopefully it will be an aid, when we grasp its double effects better.

\textbf{Abstract in German}

Trotz der Bedeutung, die die nicht auf Wahrnehmung beruhende kognitive Tätigkeit der Seele für die Wiedererinnerung (ἀνάμνησις) im Dialog \textit{Phaidon} (72e-77a) einnimmt, ist Wahrnehmung (αἴσθησις) der Erinnerung in vielerlei Hinsicht nützlich, selbst wenn die Gegenstände der Wiedererinnerung sich von dem, was die Erinnerung wachruft, unterscheiden (73c-74a).

Lernen erfordert Aktivität; das Passiv in dem Ausdruck „erinnert werden“ (ἀναμνησθῆναι, 73b7, c2, d11, e6, e7, 74a5, a7, 75e6-7, 76a7, b1, c4) impliziert dagegen, dass auch im Vorgang des Lernens das Wachrufen der Erinnerung nicht einfach abgewiesen werden kann.

Interessanterweise verweist, im Vergleich zu Wiedererinnerung, das Wort „Gedächtnis“ (μνήμη) unmittelbar auf das Wahrnehmungsgedächtnis oder auf ein Gedächtnis, das in Verbindung zur Wahrnehmung steht, auch wenn dies eine Beziehung zum Denken nicht ausschließt. (\textit{Phaidon} 96b; vgl. \textit{Theaitetos} 163d-166b, 191c-196c; \textit{Philebos} 20b ff., 34a ff., 39b, 60e; sowie die Passage „Erinnerung an jenes, was einst unsere Seele erblickte“ in \textit{Phaidros} 249c) Wiedererinnerung bedeutet

\textsuperscript{18} Phillips 2010: 209; but Phillips’ focus is the memory related to the public and political identity, not perception and its epistemological role.

I. Die Beziehung zwischen der die Erinnerung wachrufende Wahrnehmung und der Wiedererinnerung

In dem Dialog Phaidon 72e-77a werden sechs Beispiele für die Erfahrung „an etwas erinnert zu werden“ aufgeführt. Das letzte und wichtigste Beispiel veranschaulicht den Erinnerungsvorgang bei der Wiedererinnerung der Formen. Mit der Vorstellung von gleichen Steinen oder Hölzern, die „bissiehen als gleich dann wieder nicht“ erscheinen, geht die Vorstellung des Gleichen selbst einher. (74b-c) Hier bringt die Wahrnehmung gleicher Gegenstände die Wiedererinnerung des Gleichen hervor.


II. Wahrnehmung als Quelle des Wahrnehmungsgedächtnisses

Wiedererinnerung vermag Bilder des Wahrnehmungsgedächtnisses hervorrufen, wie die ersten fünf Beispiele zeigen. Dass der Anblick der Dinge, die der geliebte Knabe zu gebrauchen pflegt, den Liebhaber an den Geliebten sich erinnern lässt, (73d) zeigt, dass Erinnerung sich nicht außerhalb des Kontextes der Wahrnehmung vollzieht. Dieser Kontext bringt erst die Verbindung zwischen dem, woran man sich erinnert, und dem, was die Erinnerung wahrzunehmen lässt, hervor.


In Beziehung dazu lässt sich auch die Betrachtung der Wiedererinnerung im Phaidon verstehen. Das die Erinnerung Wachrufende stellt in einem bestimmten

Wahrnehmung ist nützlich für die Erinnerung von Wissen. Aber Platon warnt davor, dass die Erinnerung wachruftende Wahrnehmung nicht der Erinnerung gleichzusetzen ist. Selbst wenn eine enge Ähnlichkeitsbeziehung zwischen beiden besteht, kann der enge Bezug zwischen Wahrnehmung und Dafürhalten uns zu Unwahrheit statt zu Erkenntnis führen. So ist Wahrnehmung für die Wiedererinnerung gleichermaßen ein Segen wie ein Fluch. Doch dürfen wir ersteres hoffen, wenn wir erkennen, wie letzteres geschehen kann.19

References

[Greek quotations are from Oxford Classical Texts.]


19* I wish to thank Professor Dennis Schilling for his kind help and translation.
The *Phaedo* presents us with an image of the ultimate goal of human life as involving the separation and purification of our rational soul through the practice of philosophy. This portrayal conflicts, at first glance, with the definition of human happiness as justice in the *Republic* and justice as an equilibrium between the soul's three constituent parts — the λογιστικόν, the θυμός, and the ἐπιθυμητικόν — which implies the existence of a correct measure of affections such as pleasure, pain, anger, and fear. If the *Phaedo* acknowledges the existence of drives for pre-eminence and material wealth, alongside the desire for knowledge, it does not portray them as originating in “parts” or “kinds” of the soul, much less suggest that they should be accommodated or balanced against the interests of the rational soul. Instead they are taken to reflect an unhealthy orientation towards the body that binds the soul to the material realm.

Those inclined to emphasize the continuities in Plato's thought are likely to gravitate towards Books V-VII and X of the *Republic*, where the vocabulary and imagery employed by Socrates is much closer to that of the *Phaedo*. In Books V-VII, it is a question of trainee philosophers who liberate themselves from the metaphysical cave in which they are imprisoned through the progressive purification of their cognitive powers, until they are able to ascend to a higher plane of reality. Along similar lines, in Book X the soul is compared to the god Glaucus, mutilated and encrusted through prolonged immersion in the sea, whose true form is difficult to grasp.

If we latch on to these passages and connect them to the *Phaedo*, with the idea of presenting a unified account of the philosophical life in terms of the purification of the intellect, we need to explain the insistence on the importance of an equilibrium within the tripartite soul in the earlier books of the *Republic*. One solution to this problem, proposed by Plotinus, is to distinguish between two different kinds or levels of virtue.1 In the *Phaedo*, mention is made of “demotic” or “political” virtues that stand in contrast to the true virtues cultivated by the philosopher. Plotinus takes these political virtues to have the function of imposing a measure of limit on the affections associated with the body, while the true virtues are the virtues of the purified rational soul. The fact that the vocabulary of political virtue is taken up in the *Republic* lends support to this view, which has found some measure of acceptance among contemporary commentators, even if they do not share Plotinus’ broader philosophical commitments.2

However, while the distinction between political virtue and true virtue is explicitly made by Plato and while the Plotinian reading has a certain plausibility in the case of the *Phaedo*, I am less convinced that it maps onto the distinction between the virtue of the tripartite embodied soul and the virtue of the purified rational soul that plays a central role from the *Republic* onwards.

1 *Enn.* I.2
The key passage on political virtue from the *Phaedo*, at 68-69, has generated substantial confusion. The first part of the passage, which defines political virtue in terms the exchange of pleasures against pleasures, pains against pains, and fears against fears, calls to mind the account of virtue proposed in the *Protagoras*, where Socrates suggests that it consists in the correct calculation of the magnitudes of pleasure and pain resulting from any particular course of action such that we maximize our share of the former and minimize our share of the latter. The reason that this leads to a form of moderation — even if, from the point of view of the *Phaedo* it is false or demotic moderation — is that we tend to judge pleasures or pains in the near future to be greater than equivalent pleasure or pains in the more distant future. The result of this nearsightedness is a reduction in the overall share of pleasure and an increase in the overall share of pain in our lives, as we indulge in pleasures that destroy our health and avoid beneficial pains, such as those of exercise. The life in which pleasures genuinely predominate over pains is therefore one of moderation rather than indulgence, even if its ultimate foundation is the pursuit of pleasure.

Already in the *Protagoras*, this view of virtue is connected to οἱ πολλοί, as Socrates repeatedly emphasizes, although he does not directly state that it is a lower form of virtue. In the *Phaedo*, by contrast, this “demotic” conception of virtue is critiqued on the grounds that it is incoherent. Those who are moderate in this sense do not take the good to be something fundamentally different from those who are immoderate, since both set up the experience of pleasure as the highest goal in life. The difference between them lies in the fact that the moderate are more clear-headed than the immoderate and are better able to avoid falling into the trap of short-sighted gratification. Crucially, this form of moderation does not derive from a critical attitude towards pleasure, but from an embrace of it. The demotically moderate abstain from certain pleasures not because they are bad, but “out of fear of being deprived of other pleasures” (φοβούμενοι γὰρ ἑτέρων ἡδονῶν στερηθῆναι - 68d5-6). In a reversal of the claim in the *Protagoras* that we are never “overcome” (ἡττωμένους) or “conquered” (κρατουμένους) by pleasure, Socrates states of those who possess false moderation “it happens that, while being conquered by pleasures, they conquer other pleasures” (συμβαίνει αὐτοῖς κρατουμένοι ὑφ' ἡδονῶν κρατεῖν ἄλλων ἡδονῶν).

The situation is similar in the case of demotic courage. The bravery of the warrior in the face of death is fundamentally different in kind and not merely in degree from that of the philosopher. For while Socrates believes that death is ultimately a good thing, the warrior is driven to confront death even though he fears it because he is even more afraid of dishonour. Just as the demotically moderate are moderate through their susceptibility rather than their indifference to pleasure, so too are the demotically courageous courageous through their susceptibility rather than their indifference to fear.

At 68-69, the emphasis is squarely on the opposition between this form of virtue and properly philosophical virtue. In the absence of φρόνησις (wisdom), this juggling of pleasures, pains, and fears appears to be “an image… and truly slavish, containing nothing sound or true” (μὴ σκιαγραφία τις ᾖ ἡ τοιαύτη ἀρετή καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἀνδραποδώδης τε καὶ οὐδὲν ὑγίες οὔδ' ἀληθὲς ἔχῃ). Yet, when lower forms

3 Prot. 356c-357e
4 Prot. 353c-356c
5 Prot. 352e1-2; Phaed. 69a1-2
6 Phaed. 69b5-8. I am inclined to render ὑγίες as “sound” rather than “healthy”, since one of the characteristics of this form of virtue is its lability. For instance, in the eschatology of Republic X, the practitioner of political virtue chooses to
of virtue are mentioned again in the context of a description of the fate of the souls after death, they are presented in a more positive light:

Οὐκοῦν εὐδαιμονέστατοι, ἔφη, καὶ τούτων εἰσὶ καὶ εἰς βέλτιστον τόπον ἰόντες οί τὴν δημοτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπιτετηδευκότες, ἢν δὴ καλοῦσι σωφροσύνην τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην, ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονύσαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ;

Therefore, he said, those who have practiced demotic and political virtue, which they call moderation and justice, originating from habit and exercise without philosophy and nous, are the happiest of these people and go to the best place?7

Socrates goes on to explain that they are the happiest because they will be reincarnated as bees, ants, or some other social animal, and then again as “moderate humans” (ἀνδρας μετρίους).8 If gluttons, robbers, and tyrants lead bestial, subhuman lives — a fact that is colourfully reflected in the animal forms they assume — those who possess political virtue appear to live a quintessentially human, or at least social, life. While this life does not measure up to the properly philosophical life, the way it is described here seems to give lie to the earlier hyperbolic assertion that political virtue contains “nothing sound or true”.

In opposition to this exchange of pleasures against pleasures and pains against pains, Socrates expresses the essence of true virtue in a rather cryptic formula: “But perhaps this alone is the correct currency, against which it is necessary to exchange all of these other things, wisdom” (ἀλλ’ ᾗ ἐκεῖνο μόνον τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθόν, ἀντὶ οὗ δεί πάντα ταύτα καταλλάττεσθαι).9 The wording of this passage, and particularly the use “exchange for” suggests that what is at issue is “exchanging” pleasures, pains, and fears for φρόνησις in the sense of purifying ourselves of the former in order to obtain as much as possible of the latter.10 Yet what renders this passage so problematic is the use of money in the analogy, particularly since Socrates goes on to say that true virtue consists in buying and selling with this currency. Instead of selecting something unambiguously valuable in and of itself, Plato appears to muddy the waters by choosing the example of something that normally serves as a measure of the value of other things and indeed a means of acquiring them. Of course, it could be argued — albeit somewhat awkwardly — that phronesis provides the ultimate measure of value and that, according to this measure, phronesis is the only truly valuable thing, such that the dominant idea would be that of selling all we have in order to stock up on phronesis.

Nonetheless, this is not the only possible interpretation, even if it fits best with the immediate context. When Socrates criticizes “what they call temperance or justice” he does so on the grounds they “come about through habit and exercise without philosophy and nous”.11 The question is whether their demotic character is due to their origin “in habit and exercise” or rather to the absence of “philosophy and nous”. In other words, are the political virtues fundamentally defective and in need of replacement or do they merely lack an essential ingredient, phronesis or

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be reincarnated as a tyrant. This reflects the fact that he does not understand the intrinsic undesirability of injustice, but has been merely trained to shun it. When the social constraints under which he lived are removed, the life of the tyrant takes on a certain appeal.

7 Phaed. 82a10-b3
8 Phaed. 82b8
9 Phaed. 69a9-10
10 On this point, see T. Ebert, Platon. Phaidon (Göttingen, 2004) 148, fn.
11 Phaed. 82a10-b3
nous, which would transform them into genuine virtues? In the latter case, wisdom would be conceived as a measure of value, if not as a unit of exchange.

These themes are taken up in Republic IV in the context of a discussion of the courage of the auxiliaries. Courage is initially defined as a sort of preservation (σωτηρία), specifically the preservation "of the opinion produced by law through education, concerning things that are to be feared, both what they are and of what kind" (τὴν τῆς δόξης τῆς ὑπὸ νόμου διὰ τῆς παιδείας γεγονούσας περὶ τῶν δεινῶν ἃ τὲ ἔστι καὶ οἶα). This result is brought about through the education of the auxiliaries in music (including poetry) and gymnastics described in Books II-III, which, on the analogy Socrates draws, so comprehensively dies their souls that not even the powerful detergent of pleasure can wash it out.

Socrates hastens to clarify that what is at issue is political courage (πολιτικήν γε). What makes this form of courage merely political? No explanation is forthcoming, but the subsequent discussion of moderation provides a clue. While no explicit mention is made of "political" moderation, a contrast is drawn between "the many and variegated desires, pleasures, and pains" (τὰς γε πολλὰς καὶ παντοδαπὰς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ ἡδονὰς τε καὶ λύπας) found in the unwashed masses (ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς τε καὶ φαύλοις) and the "simple and moderate ones, which are guided by calculation along with nous and true belief" (τὰς δὲ γε ἁπλὰς τε καὶ μετρίας, αἱ δὴ μετὰ νοῦ τε καὶ δόξης ὄρθης λογισμῷ ἄγονται) found in "those with the best nature and the best education" (τοῖς βέλτιστα μὲν φύσιν, βέλτιστα δὲ παιδευθεῖσιν). The city as a whole is moderate, because the desires of the many are vanquished (κρατουμένας) by the "desires and phronesis found in the better few" (ὕπο τε τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τῆς φρονήσεως τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἐλάττοσί τε καὶ ἐπιεικεστέροις).

Thus, whereas the moderation of the philosophers is a product of their possession of nous and phronesis, which limits them to simple and moderate pleasures, pains, and desires, the moderation of the many is imposed by force through the political institutions of the city. If the citizens internalize this moderation through their civic education (propaganda and habituation), this is not the same as possessing genuine understanding of why they ought to behave in a certain way. Similarly, in the case of "political" courage, what is missing is any reference to nous or phronesis. While the philosophers possess nous and true opinion, the auxiliaries possess only an engrained opinion concerning what is right or wrong derived from the law and their education. But, of course, the great defect of the law in Plato's eyes, is that it provides only general rules that cannot give the correct result in all cases because it cannot take into account particular circumstances. It is always to some extent rigid and imprecise.

What, then, would the true courage of the philosopher be? Would it consist in a properly-calibrated thumos guided by nous and true belief, instead of by the imperfect beliefs drilled into the auxiliaries, or would it consist in a purification of

12 Rep. 429c7-8
13 Rep. 429e7-430b5
14 Rep. 430c2-5
15 Rep. 431b9-c7
16 Rep. 431c9-d2
17 I take this to be the sense of the claim at 500d that the philosopher is an artisan of "moderation, justice, and the whole of political virtue". To me this does not suggest that the whole account of the virtues in Book IV is reduced to the level of the demotic and political, but merely that the virtues as they are instilled in the lower classes necessarily assume a political form. The expression "political courage" is used with reference to the courage of the auxiliaries in Book IV, not with reference to the condition of the thumos in the properly-ordered soul.
the rational soul from *thumos* itself? One passage that could be adduced in favour of the latter view is found in Book VII, where Socrates says that “the other virtues that are said to be of the soul appear to be close to those of the body” (*Ai μὲν τοῖνοι ἀλλαὶ ἄρεται καλοῦμεναι ψυχῆς κινδυνεύουσιν ἐγγύς τι εἶναι τῶν τοῦ σώματος*), on the grounds that they are acquired through habituation and practice, in opposition to the virtue of the soul in the proper sense, which possesses a uniform power that can be beneficial or harmful depending on whether it is directed “upwards” or “downwards”.18

If the language used in this passage recalls the *Phaedo*, with talk of reorienting the (rational) soul towards the truth and shedding the weights hung on the soul from Becoming, it also defines the excellence of the rational soul not in and of itself but in terms of its usefulness.19 So, for instance, when it is a question of turning the eye of the soul towards the truth, this is framed in terms of making it “useful and beneficial” (χρήσιμόν τε καὶ ὧφελιμόν) rather than pure or happy *per se*, much as in the *Timaeus* the education of the rational part is said to be undertaken in order for it to be able to fulfill its function of governing well.20 Moreover, there is no suggestion that the other virtues stand in opposition to the virtue of the rational soul, as political virtue stood in opposition to true virtue in the *Phaedo* or indeed in the earlier books of the *Republic*. The point is rather that wisdom has greater intrinsic value than the other virtues and belongs to the soul in a more proper sense. While courage, moderation, and the like are first acquired through habituation and training, they only become true virtues when the soul as a whole is governed by philosophical reason and in the absence of further philosophical education, they will remain on the level of political virtue. Nonetheless, they appear to constitute an indispensable foundation to true virtue. The philosophers do, after all, go through the same curriculum as the auxiliaries.21

Such a reading preserves the continuity between Books V-VII and X and the other books of the *Republic*, as well as with later dialogues such as the *Timaeus*, especially since Plato does not explicitly retract or qualify the thesis that happiness results from justice and that justice is an equilibrium between the three parts of the soul. It also avoids one of the most problematic aspects of an account of political virtue that identifies it with the virtues of the tripartite soul. As Plotinus recognizes, Plato does not contrast moderation, courage, and justice as political virtues with wisdom as true virtue, but rather contrasts two forms of moderation, courage, and justice. If we say that political courage is the courage of the tripartite soul, then we must say that the rational soul possesses, for instance, its own distinctive courage when it is separated from the body. This strikes me as highly improbable, at least in the context of the *Republic*, since it would undermine the brilliance of the solution to the problem of the unity and multiplicity of virtue that Plato presents here.

What then are we to make of political virtue in the *Phaedo*? If we take the reference to love of honour and love of money to indicate that tripartition is lurking in the background, then it would make sense to emphasize the continuities with the *Republic* and stress that we can talk about purification in terms of the purification of our reason in its hegemonic function, such that the good rather than the pleasant or the fearful becomes our motivating principle. If, however, we take the *Phaedo* to be operating with a unitary model of the soul, as I am inclined to believe, then it is possible to attribute all of the true virtues to the (rational) soul, in line with the

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18 *Rep.* 518d9-10
19 *Rep.* 518e-519b
20 *Rep.* 518e4-519a1; *Tim.* 89d2-7 In the *Timaeus* passage the function of the rational soul is defined as παιδαγωγία.
21 *Rep.* 521-522
earlier Socratic dialogues, with the consequent problem of explaining why there is a multiplicity of them.

It need not surprise us if there is in fact a divergence between the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* on this point. Plato exhibits great ingenuity in repurposing old concepts to serve new ends. If political virtue appears to be introduced in the *Phaedo* primarily in order to emphasize the contrast between those who are normally seen to be virtuous and the genuine virtue of the philosopher, in the *Republic* it gains substance as a theory of habituation underpinning not only the education of the auxiliaries, but also of the future philosopher-kings. At the same time, it points ahead to the vast political project of the *Laws* and to the surprising portrayal of vice as mental illness in the *Timaeus* that is to be cured by training and habituation. If explicit references to political virtue in the dialogues are few and far between, its subsequent theoretical importance is far greater than its humble origins would suggest.

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**Resumen**

Existe una tensión en los diálogos de Platón entre, por un lado, un modelo del bienestar del alma, proveniente sobre todo del Fedón, concebido en términos de la purificación de la razón de todo afecto y, por otro lado, un modelo propuesto en la República, basado en la teoría de tripartición del alma, según el cual nuestra meta como seres humanos es instaurar un equilibrio entre las tres partes del alma. Plotino, seguido de algunos interpretantes modernos, intenta demostrar que las virtudes del alma tripartita son, en realidad, solo virtudes "políticas" que son inferiores a las verdaderas virtudes intelectuales del alma purificada y que por lo tanto no existe ninguna verdadera contradicción entre el Fedón y la República.

En oposición a esta teoría, yo argumento que el concepto de virtud política en la República se refiere a la manera en que los no filósofos adquieren y ejercen de forma imperfecta las virtudes del alma tripartita y no a estas virtudes en sí. Si el Fedón es más compatible con la interpretación plotiniana, también contiene rasgos de una concepción más positiva de la virtud política. La pregunta es si la virtud política es “falsa” solo por el echo de haber side adquirida a través de la practica y del ejercicio o si es más bien la ausencia de la sabiduría que es responsable de su imperfección. Hay cierta ambigüedad en la metáfora de la sabiduría como la única verdadera moneda. De un lado, el texto sugiere que hay que cambiar todo por esta moneda, es decir que la sabiduría es el único elemento que tiene valor. Del otro lado, el hecho de que Sócrates concibe la sabiduría como moneda indica que tiene la función de medir el valor de otras cosas. Si el primer aspecto de la metáfora parece ser el más importante en el Fedón, esto no quiere decir que esa concepción de la virtud política valga de igual manera para los otros diálogos.

En la República, pero también en diálogos más tardíos como el Timéo y el Filebo, Platón insiste más bien en la capacidad de la razón de servir de medida, es decir de principio de orden en el mundo sensible. En relación con el alma tripartita, Platón insiste con la idea sobre la capacidad de la parte racional del alma de gobernar el alma entera. En vez de reemplazar las virtudes políticas, la razón las perfecciona, añadiendo el ingrediente necesario para que se vuelvan virtudes verdaderas. Sin embargo, este modelo no representa un rechazo comprensivo de la concepción de la virtud política del Fedón, sino el desarrollo de ciertos aspectos que ya estaban presentes en este último, pero que no tenían un papel central, dado los compromisos filosóficos bastante radicales del diálogo.
Socrates' Last Words

Kanayama, Yasuhira Yahei

1. Questions and Interpretations

Already the cold had come nearly as far as the abdomen, when Socrates uncovered himself … and said, the last words he uttered, “Crito”, he spoke, “we owe a cock to Asclepius; please you (in plural) pay, don’t fail to take care” (Phaedo 118A5-8).

What did Socrates mean by these enigmatic words? To help solve this problem, we can ask the following questions:

[A] Are Socrates' last words his real words or Plato's invention?
[B] Is the offering to Asclepius one of gratitude or of petition?
[C] Why did Socrates ask Crito after drinking hemlock?
[D] Could Crito understand the sudden request by Socrates?
[E] Why did Socrates ask Crito and none other?
[F] Why did he ask for the offering not to Apollo, whose servant he was throughout his life, but to Asclepius?
[G] Why was it our debt (“we owe”), including Crito?
[H] Why did Socrates ask for the offering by “you” in plural?

Question [B] can be fairly easily answered: “owe” in “we owe” (118A8) suggests gratitude. As the object of gratitude we can think of the following possibilities:

1. Something enigmatic, reflecting Socrates' ironic character.
2. Healing of his friends from misology.  
3. Healing of Socrates himself from this life seen as a disease.

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1 The seed of this paper is the paper I read at the annual meeting of Classical Society of Japan in 2013 at Tokyo University, later to be published in Japanese as 'Sokurates no Saigono Kotoba' (meaning 'Socrates' Last Words') in Journal of Classical Studies, 62 (2014), 24-38. After that I developed it for my talks at University of Sydney (6 March 2014), at Waseda University (16 May 2014), and at UC, Berkeley (2 September 2014), each time with revisions and additions. This talk in IPS Brasilia is a very much curtailed version of the final version I read in Berkeley, and consists mostly of parts not included in the first Japanese version.


3 For the sake of convenience, I deal with them as types, neglecting small differences that have not to do with their weaknesses.

4 One of the extreme versions of this interpretation is that of Keuls (1993) 79 and 82, to which Gordon (2012) 191-2 seems to be sympathetic. More moderate versions are presented by Nock (1950) 49; Dirlmeier (1949) 285; Gill (1973) 27; Mitscherling (1985) 162-3; Crooks (1998) 120.


6 This interpretation, which goes back to Damascius, is very popular, adopted by Nietzsche (cf. Damascius, In Phaedonem (versio 1), Section 561 (Edelstein and Edelstein (1945) T.526) (probably, Damascius, In Phaedonem (versio 2), Section 157, too); Nietzsche (1887) Book 4, section 340 (p.271)). Also Church (1886) 212, n.1 as one of two possibilities he proposes; Archer-Hind (1883) 180; Robin (1926) 102 n.3; Wohlrab (1879) 152; Burnet (1911) 147 ad loc.; Edelstein and Edelstein (1945) II. 131; Bluck (1955) 143 n.1; Tredennick (1959) 199 n.61; De
[4] His success in giving birth to his own death, which is regarded as childbirth rather than a cure.
[6] Calm and peaceful death he is just experiencing.
[8] Healing of Athens from the plague.
[10] Some concrete healing of somebody to do with Socrates:
    [10a] Socrates himself;
    [10b] someone from his family;
    [10c] Plato.

2. Historicity

I adopt [10c]. However, in spite of Phaedo's remark, “Plato, I think, was ill” (59B10), some interpreters take the illness to be Plato's invention, claiming (1) that because his presence as a witness might restrict his literary freedom, he created the world where he was absent from the prison, or (2) that Plato feigned illness, because he was too much disturbed by his master's unjust death to be present in the prison.

However, first, against claim (2), when someone we love is going to die, it is a matter of most vital concern to us to stay nearby. Plato himself tried to be of support to Socrates, standing surety for the fine of thirty minas (Apology 38B). Did he change his mind after the trial? Why are there no names of Plato's brothers among the people who were present at Socrates' death, which took place about one month later after the trial, where Adeimantus was present (Apology 34A)? The most likely reason is that they were together with Plato, who was in danger of his life and unable to be near Socrates.

What about claim (1)? Let us see here the overall structure of the Phaedo, in the form of ring-composition.

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8 Nock (1950) 49; Calder (1999) 562; Minadeo (1971) 296; Mikalson (2010) 154. Some interpreters take the object of gratitude to be Socrates' moral health (Gilead (1994) 48, 74-75) or his virtuous conduct (Peterson (2003) 39-40, 47) at this last moment, as well as, or rather than, physical health.


12 Socrates is a pharmakos (scapegoat), with the playing of the word with pharmakon (cure). Cf. Waterfield (2009) 204.


14 Wilamowitz (1920), i. 178 n.1, ii. 57-9 (some of Socrates' family members); Hackforth (1955) 190 n.2 and Gallop (1975) 225 (in some unknown connection). And Church 212 n.1 (the omission of a trifling religious, as one of two possibilities he proposes)

15 Most (1993) 106. Clark (1952) 146, Rouse (1956) 521 n.1, and Baron (1975) 269, Burger (1984) 216 are inclined to this interpretation, although they don't present any positive argument for it. Although I support [10c], my argument is completely different from that of Most.


17 What Calder (1999) 562 shows as the suggestion made to him by the late Benedict Einarson in 1957; also Guthrie (1970) 169 n.2.

18 I would rather call the pattern in the Phaedo "return-composition".
Dialogue between Echecrates and Phaedo (57A-59C7).

Phaedo's description of what happened in the morning (59C8-61C1).

Phaedo's narration, which consists of philosophical arguments (61C2-115A5).

Phaedo's description of what happened in the evening (115A5-118A14).

Phaedo's final remark to Echecrates (118A15-17).

There will be nothing wrong about [a], [c] and [a'] being fictional, for those who were still alive around the publication of the Phaedo19 could have easily identified them as such, without finding anything wrong about the inclusion there of Plato's philosophical creation. However, the inclusion of falsities in [b] and [b'] is different. [b] is introduced after Echecrates' thrice request to Phaedo, to describe as accurately as possible both what was said and done and who were present (58C6-9, D2-3, 7-9). “Three” is a special number for Plato, as is represented in the proverbial expression “the third cup to the saviour (Zeus)”, with requests repeated three times being hard to resist20. Plato employs thrice repetition also when reporting Socrates' last words, repeating the verbs of saying three times: “he said (εἶπεν), … he uttered (ἐφθέγξατο), … he spoke (ἐφη)” (118A6-7)21. Phaedo's description of what took place in the prison both in the morning and in the evening as well as Socrates' last words must be historically true22.

3. Crito's Understanding of Socrates' Last Words

However, there are still some interpreters who want to relax the historicity. G. W. Most adopts [10c], but still admits the possibility of the last words being Plato's invention23. He starts from the assumption that even if the last words had been Socrates' actual words, his intention would be unrecoverable24. On the further supposition that only Plato's intention can be recovered, he concentrates on what Socrates' last words might have meant to Plato, not to Socrates, or rather on what Plato might have intended them to mean to us25. He sees thus in the last words the intention of regarding Plato as Socrates' philosophical heir26.

However, let us note that Crito's reply, “But that indeed shall be done”, begins with ἀλλά (118A9), which expresses, according to Denniston, “Practical consent, expression of willingness to act in a required way”27, sometimes with a nuance that “The speaker not only agrees, but repudiates the very idea that dissent is possible”28.

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21 Baron (1975) 269.
22 The historicity of the last words is sometimes doubted on the basis of Nicander’s description of such horrible effects of hemlock as the rolling of eyes and the crawling upon hands, which is taken to make it impossible for him to utter them calmly (Alexipharmaca 187-191) (Gill (1973) 26-28; Ober (1982) 120-21; Graves et al. (1991) 158, 165-7; Ebert (2004) 461. Cf. Gautier (1955) too.). But I think Bloch's elucidation of the effect of poison hemlock as different from that of water hemlock or aconite has made it clear and definite that Socrates died that calm death described in the Phaedo (Bloch (2002) 260-1).
23 Most (1993) 97-9 with n.11.
24 Most (1993) 98.
27 Denniston (1934) 17.
28 Denniston (1934) 16.

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Crito, who is so punctilious (115C), shows no sign of puzzlement, listening to Socrates’ request, and continues without faltering, “But see whether you have anything else to say”, which I think reflects his confidence that he is certainly able to perform Socrates’ request.

4. Plato’s Return from Hades

Because of a short space allowed here I cannot deal with each of the interpretations mentioned above. But I want to point out that when we admit that the last words are Socrates’ own ([A]), and that they were words of gratitude ([B]), there is no interpretation so far presented that can satisfactorily explain all of the conditions [C] to [H].

I choose [10c] (healing of Plato). Phaedo’s remark that “Plato, I think, was ill” (59B10) supports this interpretation. But so far almost nobody except Most has strongly argued for this interpretation. It is because if Plato was still ill, this interpretation does not agree with [B] (offering of gratitude), and if Plato had recovered, we cannot help wondering, first, how Socrates could know it, and second, why Plato did not come himself to convey the news of his healing.

In order to secure the news channel about Plato’s recovery, Most resorted to Socrates’ prophetic clairvoyance as a servant to Apollo. But Socrates’ prophecy concerning his felicity (Phaedo 84E-85B) and bad Athenians’ misery (Apology 39C-D), which comes from his philosophical consideration, is definitely different from the magical power that allows one to predict someone’s recovery from a disease. Besides, the recourse to prophecy does not go along with Crito’s understanding ([D]).

However, this does not mean that we should give up [10c]. If it is a complete healing, it is something in the future. But as we saw above, the absence of Plato and his brothers suggests that he was so seriously ill as to be on the verge of death. Then, even the news of his escaping death would be a thing to be thankful for. Asclepius was the god who could save people from death. Socrates must have heard this good news at some time before drinking hemlock.

But when and from whom did Socrates hear the news? There are two possibilities: (P1) in the morning, from Crito; (P2) after bathing, from Xanthippe, who returned home and came back again (116A-B). (P2) is more likely; for if he had heard it in the morning, others too would have heard it, with Plato’s illness thus having become a matter of common knowledge. Then Phaedo would have said to Echecrates, “Plato was ill”, without inserting “I think” (“Plato, I think, was ill”, 59B10). The fact that there is no report of Plato’s illness except in the Phaedo also suggests that only a limited number of people had definite information about his illness. If we adopt (P2), on the other hand, we can then easily explain why the time of Socrates’ request to Crito was between the bathing and death ([C]), and why Crito didn’t feel any difficulty in grasping what Socrates meant ([D]): Socrates was talking

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29 Clark (1952) 146; Most (1993) 106.
30 Most (1993) 106. Clark (1952) 146, Rouse (1956) 521 n.1, and Baron (1975) 269, Burger (1984) 216 are inclined to this interpretation, although they don’t present any positive argument for it.
31 Cf. Wilson (2007) 116. From the viewpoint of Most, who admits the possibility of the last words not being true to reality, it may not matter at all for Plato in his literary creation to attribute to Socrates the supernatural power of prophecy that has nothing to do with reason. However, as we have seen above, we cannot accept the position that the last words are Plato’s creation.
33 Libanius, Orationes, XX, 8 (Edelstein and Edelstein (1945) T. 68); Scholia in Pindarum, Ad Pythias, III.96 (Edelstein and Edelstein (1945) T. 72).
with Xanthippe in Crito's hearing (116B3-4).

But why did Socrates not ask Crito immediately after hearing the news from Xanthippe? For one thing, he had to tell many things to her concerning his family affairs. He may also have been so overwhelmed with joy by the news that he did not hit upon the idea of thanks-offering. But after drinking hemlock the idea of the offering occurred to him. How?

After Socrates drank hemlock, Crito got up and went away, being unable to restrain his tears. Then, Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, wailed aloud in his grief (117D1-6). They were the only people whose names are mentioned in Plato's description of Socrates dying. At the beginning of the dialogue (59B-C) Phaedo named people who were in the prison, dividing them into several groups. The first group consisted of three people, Apollodorus, Critobulus and his father (Crito). If we leave aside Critobulus, who diligently follows his father, we find then that this first group appears again at the end of the Phaedo. However, one person is missing. It is Plato, for Socrates said in the Apology (38B), “Plato here … and Crito and Critobulus, and Apollodorus tell me to propose a fine of thirty minas”.

Before Socrates bathed, Crito asked Socrates how to bury him, and Socrates in his reply referred to Crito's previous pledge to the jury (115D6-8). Whatever this pledge may be, the recall of Crito's pledge is supposed to have made Socrates think about Plato, who was the initiator of the pledge at the court. Then, Crito went out and Apollodorus wailed. Their sorrow naturally leads Socrates to Plato's sorrow, and then to his illness and to the worry Socrates shared with his close friends, and finally to his delight in the news of Plato's escape from death, and their shared gratitude. Thus, “we”, who owe the collective debt, are this group, who prayed to Asclepius for Plato's recovery ([G]), and “you”, who are asked to offer the sacrifice, are the members of this group minus Socrates and Plato ([H]), and it was because Crito was the oldest and was near to him that Socrates asked Crito ([E]). The most important message Plato received from the last words was that Socrates thought about him at the last moment of his life.

5. Socrates as Psychagogic Heracles

The Phaedo is characterized by ring-composition, or rather by what may be called “return-composition” and the motif of returning, as is indicated by the overall plan of the Phaedo shown above as [a]-[b]-[c]-[b']-[a']. Plato himself whose name appeared at the beginning returns at the end in Socrates' mind. Although I don't enumerate here many “returns” appearing in the Phaedo because of the shortage of space, the number of returns I could count has amounted to twenty five, among which one of the most important returns is certainly Plato's return from his approach to Hades.

Returns need the turning point, and the turning point in the Phaedo is its middle, where Phaedo's narration is broken by the resurfacing of the frame dialogue between Echecrates and Phaedo, occasioned by the depression into which Socrates' friends were thrown by the arguments of Simmias and Cebes (88C-89A). Here we meet a most impressive scene in the Phaedo: when Socrates encourages them, he plays with the hair on the back of Phaedo's neck, as was his habit of doing so (89B), and compares himself and Phaedo to Iolaus and Heracles (although the truth was that Socrates was Heracles and Phaedo Iolaus, 89C). "My hair" in Phaedo's remark

34 This may be the pledge of thirty minas (Archer-Hind (1883) 175, or some other pledge made by Crito to spare Socrates the indignity of imprisonment (Burnet (1911) 143 ad loc.; Hackforth (1955) 187 n.3; Rowe (1993) 292).
(89B) suggests, on the surface, that Socrates liked to play with his hair, but it suggests also the hair of the author, Plato. Phaedo happened (ἔτυχον) to be sitting at Socrates’ right hand on that day (89A10-B1). The expression “happened” indicates that it is the usual seat of someone else, in all likelihood Plato’s.

Heracles and Iolaus were the lover and the paidika, and when the paidika Iolaus became old and was attacked by Eurystheus, he was given a new life of youth by Hebe at the request of Heracles (Euripides Heracleidae 849-63; Ovid Metamorphoses 9.399-401)⁎. The lover, Heracles, on the other hand, was capable of bringing back Alcestis from the dead (Euripides, Alcestis). The Greek word for “bring back from the dead” is ψυχαγωγεῖν, and Aristophanes, using the same verb, described Socrates as an unwashed person summoning up souls (ψυχαγωγεῖ) by a swamp of the Shade-foots (Birds 1553-55). Apart from its literal meaning of “to lead the soul”, the verb had a derogatory meaning of “conjuring up the dead” and ψυχαγωγός as a noun had that of “necromancer”. This is why when king Admetus saw Alcestis and thought that she might be a ghost, Heracles said that he was not a ψυχαγωγός, taking offense to the king’s response (Euripides, Alcestis 1127-28)⁎. However, their literal meaning is “leading the soul”, and Hermes is in this sense ψυχαγωγός, the god who has the office of “leading departed souls to the nether world”.

In clear contrast to Aristophanes’ description of Socrates as an unwashed person mocked as doing the work of ψυχαγωγεῖν, Socrates in the Phaedo had a bath before dying, from his loving care for Xanthippe (115A), and his ψυχαγωγεῖ was the genuine leading of the souls of his friends. Phaedo said, “Socrates healed us, called us back in flight and defeat, and turned us around to go forward” (89A5-7). Just as Heracles as a ψυχαγωγός hero in its proper sense was able both to turn around Iolaus in flight under the threat of Eurystheus and to bring back Alcestis from the dead, so was Socrates as a ψυχαγωγός philosopher able to heal, call back and turn his friends around when they were under the threat of the arguments of Simmias and Cebes. People designated here by “us” in Phaedo’s remark, “Socrates healed us”, are, on the surface level, Phaedo and those present in the prison. But Plato as the author could include himself among “us”, suggesting that he himself was healed and called back by Socrates at that very same moment. The time when this mid-point event took place seems to have been intended to coincide with the time when the crisis of Plato’s disease was past. In fact, the arguments of Simmias and Cebes concerned the soul’s destruction when the body (lyre and clothes) was broken. Plato, whose body was in the danger of being broken, may have heard Socrates calling in his dream, which was then followed by his soul returning to the body, Plato belonging to this world again.

Socrates’ last words end with μὴ ἀμελήσῃ (don’t fail to take care, 118A8). The verb here lacks the direct object, though usually accompanied by it in Plato⁎, and it is possible to separate this request from the preceding request of thanksgiving. “Don’t fail to take care” represents for Plato both Socrates’ gratitude to Asclepius for Plato’s recovery and the address to his friends, including Plato, not to stop the care (ἐπιμέλεια) of the soul⁎.

36 Old Iolaus’ power is described as being weak (ἀσθενῆ Heracleidae 23), with the use of the adjective, cognate with the verb Plato employed to express his own illness (ἠσθένει Phaedo 59B10).
39 Cf. Foucault (2009) 104 = (2011) 112-113; White (1989) 281; Madison (2002) 431, 434; Jansen (2013) 345. They seem to be superfluous as far as the discharging of Socrates’ request is concerned; therefore, Brickhouse and Smith (2004) 272 n.17 took it to be a formulaic way to make the single injunction, “pay it”. But there is no textual evidence to that effect, and it is unlikely for Socrates to have ended his last words with such a cliché.
6. Plato’s Illness

When Socrates uttered his last words, not only Crito but also Phaedo and other friends must have heard them (118A). From whom among them did Plato learn about Socrates’ words? The fact that Plato’s report of them in the Phaedo was followed by Crito’s reply suggests that it was from Crito that Plato learnt the exact phrasing of Socrates’ request.

As to Plato’s escape from death, on the other hand, it was Crito alone that could guess that the last words might represent Socrates’ gratitude for it, listening to Socrates’ conversation with Xanthippe (116B). Phaedo’s remark to Echecrates, “Plato, I think, was ill” (59B10), softened by “I think”, suggests concerning the information-sharing of Plato’s illness either (1) that Crito tried to keep Plato’s illness secret even to Phaedo, or (2) (if Phaedo was in such friendly terms with Plato as to be naturally informed of the latter’s illness) that Plato depicted Phaedo as trying to prevent Echecrates from asking further for the exact information of Plato’s illness. In either case, Plato’s friends who were informed of his illness seem to have tried to keep it secret. What was then the problem with Plato?

The Delia for which the ship was sent to Delos, resulting in the postponement of Socrates’ execution, was closely related with the plague that attacked Athens in 430 BCE and later again. One of its main symptoms was the high fever (Thucydides 2.49.2), which is the very feature that appears in the proof of the soul’s immortality as the subtler cause for a person whom it occupies becoming ill (105C2-4). Plato’s recovery without any further spread of the disease may suggest that it was not after all the plague. However, what mattered to the people concerned was not its identity, but the reaction of Athenians.

In Sophocles, Philoctetes, which was played in 409 BCE in the theatre of Dionysus, next to the Asclepieion, the illness of Philoctetes was attributed to divine punishment incurred by his approach to Chryse’s serpent (1326-8). In Aristophanes, Heroes the chorus of heroes, which must have included Heracles, sang, “We are dispensers of evil and good; we watch out for the unjust, … and send them diseases --- spleen, coughs, … fever (πυρετόν)”43. It was natural for Plato’s family and friends to keep Plato’s feverish disease secret not only when Plato was ill but also even after he recovered, especially because Plato’s suffering took place when the city must be

40 As I argued above, I take it that Plato wanted to record and make explicit the facts about his illness and absence in the Phaedo, by making Phaedo referring to his own illness, even without any request of information from Echecrates concerning Plato. But then, a question arises. Why did Plato not make Phaedo say, “Plato was ill” without the addition of “I think”, if he wanted to report the facts? Rick Benitez drew my attention to this problem at The Classics and Ancient History Department Seminar in Sydney. After that Nick Smith and Yutaka Maruhashi raised respectively in a correspondence the question of whether Plato’s readers could understand the meaning of Socrates’ words, pointing out that Plato’s illness itself doesn’t seem to have been an opinion shared by the Athenians. Further, John Ferrari pointed out the problem of the information sharing between Plato and Phaedo, who seem to have been known to each other. Their questions helped me to explore the question surrounding this mystery and to reach the solution that finds a clue in the character of Plato’s illness.

41 Thucydides 2.47-54, 58; 3.87; Diodorus Siculus 12.58; Xenophon, Memorabilia 4.8.2. Cf. Smith (1859) 389; Constantinou (1996) 165-6 n.37; Parker (1996) 150-1. McPherran (2003) 86 and Brickhouse and Smith (2004) 269 further suppose that Athenians must have given sacrificial thanks to Asclepius after the safe return of the ship to Delos, whose duty they argue Socrates must have asked Crito to perform.

42 Plato is taken to have intended to leave in the final proof a hint concerning his illness. On the status of the subtler cause, cf. Kanayama (2000).

43 Aristophanes, fr.58 (Austin 1973); fr.322 (Kassell and Austin 1984).
kept unpolluted, after the ship had been sent for the Delia. If people knew about it, they might connect it with Plato's attempt to help Socrates, and suspect religious pollution and divine punishment (Thucydides 3.104; Diodorus Siculus 12.58).

7. Plato’s Secret

It was about fifteen years later that Plato made public the fact of his illness and the exact phrasing of Socrates' last words in the Phaedo. But why did he suddenly decide to do so? In Konigsburg's From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, Claudia Kincaid, aged twelve, wonders why Mrs. Frankweiler sold a marble statue made by Michelangelo, "Angel", which had been kept at her home for a long time and now is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, only for $225. Her answer is, "Because after a time having a secret and nobody knowing you have a secret is no fun. And although you don't want others to know what the secret is, you want them to at least know you have one." Socrates' last words were "Angel" for Plato. To leave them buried was no fun, but neither did he want others easily to know what they meant to him.

In the prison Socrates first composed a hymn to Apollo, and then after that he turned the myths of Aesop into verse (61B). Aesop is said to have been killed by the Delphians. Socrates was killed by the Athenians. Gaining inspiration from Aesop Socrates made poems, which appears at the beginning of the Phaedo, and gaining inspiration from Socrates Plato completed the Phaedo, which naturally comes at the dialogue's end. Here again we can observe one of the many returns in the Phaedo. But what Plato turned into a hymn to Apollo was not a literary work, but the essence of Socrates' words and deeds. This hymn to Apollo, the Phaedo, was for Plato the testimony of his final recovery from the disease, and as such the thanks-offering to Apollo’s son, Asclepius. But it was also the hymn to Socrates, proclaiming that his death was not meaningless, on the basis of the theory of Forms, which gives meaning to Socrates' life of inquiry, and also on the proof of the soul's immortality, which gives meaning to his death remotely caused by his mission of inquiry enjoined by Apollo. It was also the thanks-offering to Socrates, who left this world on the very day of Plato's returning to this world, as if giving his physical life to Plato, and continued to work as Heracles, even after death, giving a spiritual life to Plato as Iolaus in their profound relationship of love.

It is natural then for Plato to keep making Socrates the protagonist in his dialogues, for his philosophical journey is the journey of Iolaus, encouraged by Socrates' last words, and accompanied and led by Socrates living as Heracles inside Plato himself. This I think is the very secret Plato hid in Socrates' last words, his "Angel" revealed about fifteen years later in the Phaedo.

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45 Konigsburg (1972) 158.


47 It is only in this spiritual sense that we can relate the cock of Socrates’ offering with the homosexual love to which Keuls (1993) 82 referred.


A.D. Nock (1950), 'Review of Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the

W.B. Ober (1978), 'Did Socrates Die of Hemlock Poisoning?', *Ancient Philosophy*, 2, 115-121.


It cannot, unfortunately, be established with certainty whether Augustine knew Plato’s dialogue Phaedo, and if he did, to what extent and through whose mediation. It is usually no longer maintained that he read the now-lost translation by Apuleius, as Prosper Alfaric argued at the beginning of the 20th century.1 Apparently, Augustine became familiar with the arguments from some of Plato’s dialogues through Cicero’s paraphrases.2 For example, in his late work De Trinitate, Augustine summarised the content of Socrates’ dialogue with Meno’s slave about anamnesis along the lines of Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations.3 It is very probable that Augustine was familiar with Cicero’s formulation of the proof of the immortality of the soul that paraphrased the cosmological argumentation from Plato’s Phaedrus, although Augustine did not make direct use of this proof.4 On the other hand, the characteristics of Plato’s ideas as given by Cicero seem to be reflected in Augustine’s exposition of the topic in his collection of Eighty-Three Questions.5 And we might continue in the same vein.

One of the Platonic allusions which does not seem to have a clear equivalent in Cicero’s work6 is Augustine’s account of aesthetic delectation based on the symmetry of parts and its adequacy with respect to the human spirit; this delectation, in Augustine’s opinion, reveals our knowledge of the sameness which is not accessible to the senses. In this context, Augustine speaks about the “sameness” (aequalitas) very much like Phaedo’s Socrates did in the proof based on anamnesis, in which “sameness” (ἰσότης or αὐτὸ τὸ ἰσόν) is given as an example of an idea we recollect when we observe the same things.7

2 See P. Courcelle, Les lettres grecques, p. 158.
4 According to this proof, the soul which moves itself is the origin of motion; if it ceased to exist, the cosmic motion would stop without its resource; (however, this does not happen; therefore, the soul is without beginning and it is eternal (neque nata certe est et aeterna); see Cicero, De re publ. VI,25(27)–26(28) (Ziegler 135f. = Somnium Scipionis); Tusc. I,23,53–54 (Pohlenz 244f.); similarly also Plato, Phdr. 245c–246a. This proof is also referred to by Plotinus (see Enn. IV,7[2],9,6–13; 12,1–2) and quoted by Calcidius, In Tim. 57 (Bakhouché I, 272). Augustine partially touches on this proof in De immort. 3,3 – 4,5; however, in this passage, he does not try to prove the immortality of the soul from its self-motion, but from the fact that it moves the body without being changed.
6 See H. Merguet, Lexikon zu den philosophischen Schriften Cicero’s mit Angabe sämtlicher Stellen (Lexikon zu den Schriften Cicero’s, Teil II), Bd. 1, Jena 1887, p. 99.
7 See De vera rel. 30,55 – 31,57 (CCL 32, 223f.); De mus. VI,12,34 (BA 7, 432). The similarity between this passage and Plato’s Phaedo (74a ff.), in which anamnesis is exemplified, among others, by the knowledge of “sameness”, is justly pointed out by J. V. Lowe, Platonic Recollection and Augustinian Memory, Madison 1986, p. 104.
Another clear borrowing from the *Phaedo* which probably does not draw on Cicero⁸ is Augustine's polemic against the final proof of the immortality of the soul from this dialogue, which I would like to discuss in greater detail here.

The soul as the bearer of life
(*Augustine's polemic in the Soliloquies*)

According to Plato⁹ (his argumentation is limited here to the motifs which are relevant for Augustine's account), the soul is inseparably linked with life and thus it does not accept death in the same way as fire is defined by the form of heat (ἔχει δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου μορφὴν ἀεί),¹⁰ which is why it does not accept cold. If something contains an idea, it can never accept its opposite; instead, it ceases to exist or goes away (ἡτοὶ ἀπολλύμενα ἢ ὑπεκχωροῦντα).¹¹ That is why the soul, being linked with life, does not accept death,¹² but either perishes or withdraws. If, however, the soul does not accept death, then it is immortal (ἀθάνατος), and thus imperishable (ἀνώλεθρος): it cannot perish when death approaches, but goes away instead.

In the *Soliloquies*, one of his earliest works from the Cassiciacum period, Augustine comments on this proof, stating that perhaps the soul does not accept death while it lasts, but it may eventually perish in the same way as the light does not admit darkness into itself while it lasts, but it may still go out. This objection (it was probably first formulated by Strato of Lampsacus, a Peripatetic philosopher)¹³

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⁸ In his *Tusculan Disputations*, however, Cicero makes several allusions to the *Phaedo*, characterising the dialogue as the “book which relates Socrates’ death” (see e.g. *Tusc*. I,43,102). It also seems that the epigram by Callimachus which Cicero mentions, namely the one concerning a reader of Plato who, having read his book (*lecto Platonis libro*), committed suicide, also refers to the *Phaedo* (*Tusc*. I,84). The paraphrase by means of which Cicero characterises the argumentation of the *Phaedo* in his *Cato de senectute*, 21,78 is not precise; a clear allusion (though probably drawing on the *Meno*) is made to the proof from anamnesis and also to the proof from the origin of motion in the *Phaedrus*: *Demonstrabantur mihi praeterea, quae Socrates supr...* Text omitted for brevity.


¹⁰ *Phd.* 103e4–5.

¹¹ *Phd.* 104b9–c1: ... οὐδὲ ταύτα ἑσθε δεχομένοις ἐκείνην τὴν ἰδέαν ἢ ἂν τῇ ἐν αὐτῶι ὀνθη ἐναντίαν ἢ, ἀλλ’ ἐπιούσις αὐτῆς ἦτοι ἀπολλύμενα ἢ ὑπεκχωροῦντα.

¹² *Phd.* 105d10–11: ... γεγένητο τὸ ἐναντίον τῷ αὐτῷ ἢ διδύιτε ἠνανθεῖ ἢς ὑπὲκχωροῦσατε.

does not seem to be aimed at the immortality of the soul itself (a short time later, Augustine dedicated the whole treatise *De immortalitate animae* to its proof), but against the cogency of the Platonic argumentation. As Augustine puts it:

“[I] say rather that the soul can cease to exist by the very fact of dying. And I am not dissuaded from believing this by the statement of great philosophers that the reality which gives life wherever it goes cannot admit death into itself. For even though the light creates brightness wherever it goes and cannot admit darkness because of the remarkable force of opposites, nevertheless it can be put out and the place is darkened when the light is extinguished. And so that which resisted the darkness and did not admit darkness into itself made place for the darkness by perishing, just as it could make place for it by departing. So I am afraid that death might happen to the body in the same way as darkness comes to a place, that is either by the soul going away as light might move away, or by being extinguished . . .”

Augustine thus argues that the death of the body does not make it possible to establish whether the soul which animated it “departed” (*discedente animo*) without perishing (as Plato would have it) or was “extinguished” (*exstincto*), just as the light might be, although it does not admit darkness while it shines. Plato’s metaphor of a fire which is linked with heat and thus does not accept cold is transposed by Augustine into an analogy of light which does not accept darkness while shining. The soul’s resistance to death, states Augustine, definitely lasts while the soul lasts, but it does not guarantee that the soul will not exhaust itself in the same way as the light (i.e. fire) goes out.

In his proof, Plato makes a clear distinction between the two cases: the fire bearing the form of heat does not admit cold as its opposite; its end, however, is not the opposite of heat. On the contrary, the soul as the bearer of life does not admit death as the opposite of life, and as such is immortal and thus imperishable. Moreover, Plato would perhaps have faced the objection by arguing that fire, as one of the elements, does not perish in the cosmic order; by the same token, he seems to have tacitly presupposed in the proof in his *Phaedo* that motion in the universe cannot be stopped, which is why the soul, being the source of the motion, is immortal.

What Augustine has in mind, however, is a specific light, i.e. a specific fire

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14 *Solil. II,13,23* (CSEL 89, 77): . . . *sed eo ipso, quo interit, fieri ut animus non sit, dico. Nec me ab hac sententia revocat, quod a magnis philosophis dictum est, eam rem, quae, quocumque venerit, vitam praestat, mortem in se admittere non posse. Quamvis enim lumen quocumque intrare potuerit, faciat id lucere, tenebrasque in se propter memorabiliem illam vim contrariorum non possit admittere, tamen extinguitur locusque ille extincto lumine tenebratur. Ita illud, quod tenebris resistebat, neque ullo modo in se tenebras admisit et sic eis ire intereundo locum fecit, ut poterat etiam discendendo. Itaque timeo ne mors ita contingat corpori ut tenebrae loco, aliando discedente animo ut lumine, aliando autem ibidem extincito . . .* English translation by G. Watson, pp. 103–105 (modified).

15 *Phd.* 106b7–d1. Here Plato explains that although the number three will not be even (since it does not accept the nature of the even), the odd is not imperishable – unlike the soul, which does not admit death, and as such is imperishable. As for the fire, it is said explicitly that it is the same case as the number three.
(probably not the light of the stars), which can obviously be put out or goes out by itself after it has consumed its fuel. The clear distinction which Plato saw between this case and the soul, which is linked with life, i.e. with the idea of life (αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἶδος), and as such does not admit its opposite in the sense of dying or perishing, was disregarded by Augustine. Perhaps he considered it a mere logical trick, or he thought it unconvincing for another reason, or maybe he was not familiar with the details.

Whichever the case was, Augustine did not link the proof with Plato, but with the authority of “great philosophers”; that, however, did not stop him from challenging the whole argument. The reference to “great philosophers” in the plural, who are said to maintain the same teaching (quod a magnis philosophis dictum est), very probably suggests the Neo-Platonic origin of the idea as Augustine knew it.

The soul as life which lives of itself
(Plotinus and Porphyry)

In his treatise On the immortality of the soul, i.e. Ennead IV,7(2), Plotinus does indeed make use of Plato’s proof. Like Augustine after him, Plotinus recognises the danger that the fire, to which the soul is compared here, may go out. However, he does not go on to reach such a pessimistic conclusion as Augustine; on the contrary, he shows the limitations of Plato’s analogy. According to Plotinus, the soul does not underlie as a bearer (ὑποκεῖσθαι) in the sense of matter into which life comes from the outside, in the same way as the fire sets alight the underlying matter:

“I do not mean, of course, that heat in relation to fire is something brought in from outside (ὡς ἐπακτὸν), but that, even if it is not so for fire, it is for the matter which underlies fire (τῇ ὑποκειμένῃ τῷ πυρί ὕλῃ); for it is by this that fire comes to an end. But soul does not have life in this way, as if it was underlying matter and life came upon it and made it soul. For life is rather a substance (οὐσία); and substance of this kind is living of itself (παρ’ αὐτῆς ζῶσα) – which is the thing we are looking for, the soul . . .”

In his detachment from Plato’s analogy, Plotinus in fact identifies the soul with life, though not with life borrowed from another (in the way the body is animated by the soul), but with life as a substance (οὐσία), which “lives of itself” (παρ’ αὐτῆς ζῶσα).

This motif does not appear in Plato himself. According to his account in the Phaedo, the soul bears life; we can also assume that it is linked with the idea of life and bears its form (just as fire is linked with the idea of heat and bears its form), but it is not stated here that the soul has life of itself or that it is identical with life or its

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16 See Plato, Phd. 106d5–6.
18 See Plotinus, Enn. IV,7(2),9,7f.
Plotinus' interpretation does not draw solely on the *Phaedo*, but also on the notion of the soul as the origin of motion from Plato's *Phaedrus*:

“For soul is ‘origin of motion’ and is responsible for the motion of other things, and it is moved by itself (ἐξ ἑαυτῆς), and gives life to the ensouled body, but has it of itself (παρ’ ἑαυτῆς), and never loses it because it has it of itself. For certainly all things cannot have a borrowed life: or it will go on to infinity; but there must be some nature which is primarily alive, which must be indestructible and immortal of necessity since it is also the origin of life to the others.”

According to Plotinus, being the origin of motion and being the source of life are two similar, if not identical, things, although he would probably not have claimed that motion was also a kind of substance identical with the soul, as was the case with life. What he means here is clearly motion and life in the spheres of nature and the soul; as for the Intellect, Plotinus also posits that life is identical with motion there. However, its source does not lie in the soul; instead, the soul has its life of itself only because it is the image of the Intellect. It seems that rooting the soul in the life of the Intellect played the same role for Plotinus as the inseparable link between the soul and the idea of life did for Plato. Plotinus' soul, then, both has and has not life "of itself": its life is derived from the Intellect, as the soul is its image; for the corporeal sphere, nevertheless, the soul is the source of life, which it does not draw from this sphere, but has it “of itself”.

Like Plotinus, Porphyry is also familiar with the idea of the soul as “living of itself” (παρ’ ἑαυτῆς), as we can read in one of his *Sentences*:

“The soul is an essence without magnitude, immaterial, and indestructible, which has come to exist in a state of life which holds its living from itself.”

In another passage, Porphyry makes it clear that the life in question is not adopted from the outside (ἔξωθεν), but originates in the souls themselves (παρ’ ἑαυτῶν); for this reason, souls do not succumb to living and non-living, but live by necessity. Only things composed of matter and form can perish, but not the soul. This, according to Porphyry, is what Plato meant by his teaching on the soul as self-motion:

20 Plotinus, *Enn.* IV,7(2),9,6–16: 'Ἀρχή γὰρ κινήσεως ἦδε χορηγοῦσα τοῖς ἄλλοις κίνησιν, αὐτὴ δὲ ἐξ ἑαυτῆς κινούμενη, καὶ ζωὴν τῷ ἐμψυχῷ σώματι διδόσα, αὐτὴ δὲ παρ’ ἑαυτῆς ἔχουσα, ἢν οὔποτε ἀπόλλυσιν, ἢτε παρ’ ἑαυτῆς ἔχουσα. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ πάντα ἐπακτῷ ζωῇ χρῆται· ἢ εἰς ἄπειρον εἶσιν· ἄλλα δὲ ταῖς φύσιν πρώτως ἴσοι· ἢν ἀνάλθησαν καὶ αὐθάνατον εἶναι δὲ ἐξ ἀνάγκης, ἢτε ἀρχὴν ζωῆς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως. English translation by A. H. Armstrong.
22 See e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* III,7(45),3,9f.
23 Plotinus, *Enn.* V,3(49),8,46f.: . . . εἰκόνα θεμέλησεν ἑαυτὴν εἶναι ἐκεῖνον, ὡς τὴν αὐτῆς ζωῆς ἱνδαλμα καὶ ὁμοίωμα εἶναι ἐκεῖνον . . . See also e.g. *Enn.* V,3(49),6,3f.; 7,25–34.
24 See e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV,3(27),12,30–35; *Enn.* IV,7(2),13.
"For this reason those things which have their life from outside and not from themselves are subject to experiencing both the possession and the privation of life. Those [entities], on the other hand, whose being consists in life free from any experience necessarily remain in life . . . So, even as the process of change and experience are proper to that which is a composite of matter and form, i.e. the body . . ., so also life and death and the sensory experiences arising from those are to be seen as residing in the composite of soul and body. They do not relate to the soul, because it is not a thing composed of lifelessness and life, but it is life alone; and this is what it means for Plato to say that self-motion is the essence and rationale of the soul."

Porphyry thus explicitly replaces the link between the soul and the idea of life by defining it as self-motion (τὸ αὐτοκίνητον). He regards the soul as a being which has its life from itself; in other words, the soul is life which has its source in itself ("holds its living from itself").

This motif does not appear in Augustine's formulation of the proof. Similarly to Plato, Augustine merely posits the soul as a bearer of life: it is not identical with it and neither does it have it "from itself". Nor does Augustine make the link to the idea of the soul as the origin of motion from Plato's Phaedrus. The only thing which connects his argumentation with the Neo-Platonic one is Plotinus' remark concerning the fact that a fire might go out when it runs out of fuel. However, the ways in which this motif is employed by both authors are quite different: Augustine uses it to show that even the soul may come to an end, while Plotinus builds on it his idea of the soul as hypostasised life, not one which was borrowed from another. In this respect, neither Plotinus nor Porphyry makes use of the analogy of light which resists darkness as long as it shines. As this analogy has no parallel in Plato's account either, it may remind the reader of the prologue to the fourth gospel, in which "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Augustine, however, does not refer to this passage, but to the "remarkable force of the opposites" (propter memorabilem illam vim contrarium), which, again, is a motif which links him with Plato himself rather than with his Neo-Platonic interpreters. Prosper Alfaric's assumption that Augustine knew the Phaedo thus does not seem so absurd, although it remains undocumented. We are, unfortunately, unable to specify the contents of the "books of the Platonists" which Augustine recalls in his Confessions and therefore do not know exactly which of Plotinus' and Porphyry's works he had at his disposal; this especially applies to those of Porphyry's treatises

26 Porphyry, Sent. 21,13–24 (Brisson I, 320–322): διὸ καὶ οἷς τὸ ζῆν ἔξωθεν καὶ οὐ παρ' ἑαυτῶν, ταῦτα τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ μὴ ζῆν παθεῖν οἷά τε δὲ τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ μὴ ζῆν παθεῖν · οἷς δὲ τὸ εἶναι ἐν ζωῇ ἀπαθεῖ, κατὰ ζωὴν μένειν ἀνάγκη . . . ὡς οὖν τὸ τρέπεσθαι καὶ πάσχειν ἐν τῷ συνθέτῳ τῷ ὑποπλάσθῳ καθ' ἐξ ὑλῆς τε καὶ έδώκει, ὡς οὖν τῇ ψυχῇ κατὰ τοῦτο συμβαίνει, ὥστε οὖν τῇ φυσικῇ κατὰ τοῦτο συμβαίνει, ὥστε δὲ τῇ νομικῇ κατὰ τοῦτο συμβαίνει, ὥστε δὲ τῇ νομικῇ συμβαίνει. οὕτω καὶ οἷς δὲ τὸ ζῆν καὶ τὸ μὴ ζῆν παθεῖν κατὰ τοῦτο συμβαίνει, διὸ οὖν τῇ φυσικῇ κατὰ τοῦτο συμβαίνει, ὥστε δὲ τῇ νομικῇ κατὰ τοῦτο συμβαίνει. English translation by J. Dillon, p. 802 (modified). The identification of the soul and life can also be found in Porphyry's treatise Quaestiones commixtæ, frag. 259F, 109F. (Smith); καὶ ἡ φυσικὴ ψυχή οὕσα . . .

27 John 1:5, according to the Vulgate: lux in tenebris lucet et tenebrae eam non comprehendunt.

28 Phd. 103a–105b.

29 See Conf. VII,9,13 (CCL 27, 101). In his early treatise De beata vita 1,4 (CCL 29, 67), Augustine mentions the "books of Plotinus" in a similar context.
which are lost now (apart from De regressu animae, which Augustine himself mentions,30 another relevant book could be Porphyry's unpreserved commentary on the Phaedo31). On the other hand, as far as the fourth proof from Plato's Phaedo is concerned, a certain variant of this argument can also be found in Augustine's Christian teacher, Ambrose of Milan.

The soul identical with life
(Ambrose of Milan)

Truth be told, the version of Plato's proof as it appears in Ambrose's sermon De bono mortis does not bear a very close resemblance either to that of Plato or his Neo-Platonic interpreters. Unlike Plato, the bishop of Milan does not regard the soul as a mere bearer of life, but as identical with life; in other words, he considers the soul (not the idea of life) to be the opposite of death.32 Unlike the Neo-Platonic philosophers, however, Ambrose does not say that the soul has its life of itself, although he is convinced that it "produces life" (vitam creat):

“How can its substance die, since it is, in fact, the soul that infuses life? Into what the soul is infused, life is infused, and from what the soul departs, life departs. The soul then, is life. How can it receive death, since death is contrary to it? Just as snow does not admit heat for it is thereby immediately melted, and light does not admit darkness for it immediately disperses darkness – for when light is infused the horror of darkness is destroyed, just as the hardness of snow ceases when fire is brought in – so also the soul, which produces life, does not admit death, does not die. The soul does not admit death; therefore, it does not die.”33

Perhaps it is the case that Ambrose tacitly presupposes the Neo-Platonic concept of the soul as hypostasised life without mentioning it explicitly.34 Otherwise he probably could not maintain that the soul itself is contrary to death and disperses it in the same way as the fire disperses cold. In this context, it is also interesting to note the analogy of light as something that does not admit darkness: it appeared in Augustine, but not in the Neo-Platonic authors or Plato. Is it possible, then, that Augustine borrowed the New Testament parallel from Ambrose? This conclusion would appear logical if it were not for the fact that Ambrose's sermon is traditionally dated to 387–389, while the Soliloquies, beyond any doubt, come from Augustine's

30 See De civ. Dei X,29 (CCL 47, 305).
31 A. Smith only mentions two references to the commentary; cf. Porphyry, Fragmenta, 179F–180F.
34 P. Hadot (Platon et Plotin, p. 220) maintained that Ambrose had used a kind of digest of Plato's and Plotinus' works or that he could have used Porphyry's lost treatise De regressu animae, from which Augustine had quoted as well.
holiday in Cassiciacum in 386. Nevertheless, even if Augustine had known Ambrose's sermon while writing his *Soliloquies* and borrowed the New Testament analogy of darkness from it, the sermon *De bono mortis* could not have been the only source of his knowledge of Plato's proof: first, Augustine's version of Plato is much more faithful to the original than that of Ambrose, and second, Augustine would hardly have referred to the bishop of Milan as "great philosophers" if he had been his only source.

The soul as life which does not desert itself
(Augustine’s proof in De immortalitate animae)

As we have seen, the issue of Augustine's sources is complicated even in this case, and its resolution is beyond the scope of this study. Let us now focus on Augustine's formulation of Plato's proof and the reasons why he felt obliged to reject it. Even this task, however, is made difficult by the fact that the *Soliloquies* is not Augustine's final word concerning Plato's proof. In the work which immediately followed the *Soliloquies* and was meant as a kind of sequel, i.e. in the outline *De immortalitate animae*, Augustine himself gives a proof which is very similar to the one he rejected in the *Soliloquies*. The version in which he quotes it now, however, resembles Ambrose's account much more than that of Plato, even though the analogy of light and darkness is missing.

Similarly to his Neo-Platonic predecessors and Ambrose of Milan, Augustine now (unlike in his *Soliloquies*) identifies the soul and life. Life could only leave the soul if it were animate, i.e. if the soul were not life itself. If the soul and life are one, then the soul does not die:

“...The soul is a life and so everything which is animate (animatum) is living, and which could be animate but actually is not (inanime) is dead, that is, it is known to be deprived of life. So the soul cannot die. For if it can be without life it is not the soul but something which has soul, something animate.”


36 *De immort.* 9,16 (CSEL 89, 117): *Est autem animus vita quaedam, unde omne, quod animatum est, vivere, omne autem inanime, quod animari potest, mortuum, id est vita privatum intellegitur. Non ergo potest animus mori. Nam si carere po-
Here Augustine makes a distinction between life itself and what is endowed with life, i.e. living, or, literally, “animate” (*animatum*). This distinction does not appear in Ambrose, but it can be found, in a version very similar to that of Augustine, in another Latin Platonist, Calcidius.

Although Calcidius’ commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus* does not contain any paraphrase of Plato’s proof or the Neo-Platonic identification of the soul and life which lives “of”, it still formulates a clear distinction between what is animated by the soul (*animatum*) and the soul itself as the origin of life:

“We do not say about the soul that it is animated (*animatam*) or soulless (*exanimem*). It is not animated because the soul does not need to be governed by the soul, and it is not soulless because the soul itself is the cause of life for other animated beings (animals).”

Both of the alternatives of the soul excluded as animated or lacking animation draw on the account in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, in which a distinction is made between the body which accepts motion from the outside, i.e. the “inanimate” (ἄψυχον) body, and the “animated” (ἔμψυχον) body, which has its motion from the inside, i.e. from the soul. Unlike Plotinus and Porphyry, however, Calcidius does not directly identify the soul with life; he merely calls it the “cause” of life; nor does he claim that the soul is life which lives “from itself”.

Augustine, on the other hand, makes an explicit identification of the soul and life so that he could draw his conclusion regarding the immortality of the soul. But as we already observed in Ambrose’s text, this conclusion only follows from the identification of the soul and life if one also presupposes (as Plotinus and Porphyry did) that the life which the soul is originates in itself, and, therefore, cannot cease.

Augustine, nevertheless, justifies his conclusion in a different way, namely by arguing that this life “does not desert itself”:

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37 Calcidius, *In Tim.* 338 (Bakhouche I, 564): . . . *animam neque animatam dicianus nec examinem – animatam quidem ideo quia anima animae praesidio non eget, examinem vero quia ipsis causa est ceteris animalibus vitae . . .* It is often argued that Calcidius was influenced by Porphyry; see P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, I, Paris 1968, p. 282 with n. 2.

38 See Plato, *Phdr.* 245e4–6: πᾶν γὰρ σῶμα, ὃ μὲν ἔξωθεν τὸ κινεῖσθαι, ἄψυχον, ὃ δὲ ἐνδοθεὶς αὐτῷ ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ἔμψυχον, ὡς ταύτῃς ὀστής φύσεως ψυχῆς. In Cicero’s paraphrase, *De re publ.* VI,26(28) = *Tusc.* I,23,54: *inanimum est enim omne quod pulsus agitatur externo; quod autem est animal, id motu cietur interiore et suo; nam haec est propria natura animi atque vis.* Cicero thus translates “inanimate” (ἄψυχον) as *inanimum*, while Calcidius uses the term *exanime*; Cicero renders “animated” (ἔμψυχον) as *animal*, while Calcidius as *animatum*. As we can see, Augustine does not adopt the unique terminology of either author: like Calcidius, he uses the term *animatum* for “animated”, while *inanime* is his equivalent of “inanimate”, which is closer to Cicero’s *inanimum*; at the same time, however, Augustine narrows its meaning to “what could be animated”, i.e. “what is dead, i.e. deprived of life”. See *De immort.* 9,16 (CSEL 89, 117), quoted above, n. 36!!.
“For if the soul dies when life deserts it, it is much better to understand the life which goes away as soul, so that the soul is not that which is deserted by life, but the life itself which goes away. For anything which is deserted by life and called dead is understood to have been deserted by the soul. And so the life which deserts the things which die is itself the soul and it does not desert itself. Consequently, the soul does not die.”

Similarly to Ambrose, Augustine also avoids the Neo-Platonic formulation about the soul as life which “lives of itself”. In his treatise *De immortalitate animae*, he does mention the possibility that the soul exists “of itself” (*per seipsum*), which is why it is immortal; however, this conclusion is quite hypothetical because the premise, in Augustine’s opinion, does not hold:

“And so the soul is proved to be immortal in the shortest possible way, if it can exist of itself. For whatever is of that sort must of necessity be incorruptible and for that reason cannot perish, because nothing abandons itself.”

In the ensuing exposition, Augustine also characterises this possibility as “being the cause of one’s own existence”. In other passages, this idea is explicitly rejected as far as the soul is concerned: the soul is what it is because of the truth, i.e. God, and therefore not “by itself” (*a se ipsa*). As Augustine will put it later in his *Confessions*, it is God who is the “life of the souls” or the “life of lives” (*vita es animarum, vita vitarum*).

Nevertheless, this conviction about the ontological dependence of the soul on God does not necessarily set Augustine apart from his Platonic predecessors, as it was already the case with Plotinus. Whether or not they claim that the soul has its life “of itself”, these authors do not refer to the ontological independence of the soul, but to the spontaneity of its life, or motion, as it is mentioned in the *Phaedrus*.

Not even after these clarifications is it clear whether, and, if so, why Augustine changed his mind in *De immortalitate animae* regarding the plausibility of the fourth proof from Plato’s *Phaedo*. It might seem that it was facilitated by the identification of the soul with life as it appears in the Neo-Platonic authors as well as Ambrose. It is true that what makes both of Augustine’s paraphrases different, among others, is the lack of this motif in the first one, i.e. in the *Soliloquies*. On the other hand, the objection raised by Augustine in the *Soliloquies* is still valid: here Augustine

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39 *De immort. 9,16* (CSEL 89, 118): *Nam prorsus, si tunc moritur animus, cum eum deserit vita, illa ipsa vita, quae hunc deserit, multo melius intellegitur animus, ut iam non sit animus, quicquid a vita deseritur, sed ea ipsa vita, quae deserit. Quicquid enim <a> vita desertum mortuum dicitur, id ab anima desertum intellegitur; haec autem vita, quae deserit ea, quae moriuntur, quia ipsa est animus et seipsam non deserit, non moritur animus. English translation by G. Watson, p. 149.

40 *De immort. 8,15* (CSEL 89, 116): *Atque ita de proximo immortalis probatur, si potest esse per seipsum. Quicquid enim tale est, incorruptibile sit necesse est ac per hoc interire non possit, quia nihil se deserit. English translation by G. Watson, p. 147.

41 *De immort. 11,18* (CSEL 89, 120): *ipse sibi causa existendī.

42 *De div. quest. LXXXIII, 1* (CCL 44A, 11): *Omnisigitur anima a veritate habet, ut omnino anima sit. . . . Non igitur, cum a veritate anima est, a se ipsa est. Est autem veritas deus. Deum igitur habet auctorem ut sit anima.

43 See Confess. III,6,10 (CCL 27, 32).
was considering both possibilities derived from Plato's exposition: either the soul goes "away as light might move away" or it is "extinguished". But even if the soul is identified with the life which goes away, it one cannot be certain whether it actually just goes away (as the Platonic proof would have it) and is not extinguished after all.

Thus in De immortalitate animae, as we have seen, Augustine does not argue against the soul's being extinguished by identifying it with life, but by claiming that this life "does not desert itself" (seipsam non deserit); this line of argument is missing not only in his Soliloquies, but also in Plato's Phaedo, and it is not to be found in the Neo-Platonic interpreters in this context either. On the other hand, it appears in Plato's Phaedrus, as well as Cicero's paraphrase of this cosmological proof of the immortality of the soul as the beginning of motion. Here, too, the soul "does not leave itself" (οὐκ ἀπολεῖπον εαυτῷ, numquam desertitur a se); similarly, though in a different context, Plotinus states that "the soul never abandons itself".

Unfortunately, in none of these authors is it clear what the phrase actually means. For this reason, I turn to a paraphrase which appeared much later, in the tenth book of Augustine's De Trinitate, in which he summarised again the Platonic notion of the soul and the Platonic attempt at proving its immortality:

"Others however found the substance of mind to be life and not in the least bodily, seeing that it is life that animates and vivifies every living body. These tried, as best as each of them could, to prove that mind is immortal, since life cannot lack life."

Presumably, the phrase "life cannot lack life" (vita carere vita non potest) is the equivalent of Augustine's wording from his account in De immortalitate animae: "this life does not desert itself" (seipsam non deserit). As is also quite evident from this late paraphrase as it appears in De Trinitate, it is this argument which Augustine regards as crucial in the Platonic proof.

What Augustine might mean here is that life does not abandon the soul because it is identical with the soul in its very substance (as he put it in De immortalitate, "nothing abandons itself", nihil se desert). In order for this argument to escape his objection from the Soliloquies, Augustine would also have to tacitly maintain the Neo-Platonic concept of the soul as life which lives "of itself"; in other words, he would have to maintain that the soul does not merely borrow its life from another because it would be bound to lose it again – and thus lack or abandon itself.

Another option is that although Augustine mentions this proof – his version from De immortalitate is a combination of elements from Ambrose, Calcidius and Cicero – he does not regard it as quite convincing. In my opinion, this alternative is the most probable one.

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44 See Plato, Phdr. 245c8; Cicero, De re publ. VI,25(27) (Ziegler 135); Tusc. I,23,53 (Pohlenz 244).
47 De immort. 8,15 (CSEL 89, 116).
As is clear in the context of the passage from *De Trinitate* quoted above, Augustine does not attach much weight to the Platonic proof; instead, he is trying to show that the rational soul (*mens*) consists, above all, in the knowledge of itself: “[the rational soul] is to be certain that it is only that which it is certain of to be”,\(^{48}\) i.e. self-knowledge, though it may take the form of doubt.\(^{49}\) This is the only thing of which the mind is certain: therefore, this is the only thing it is, and it is such in its substance (*substantia*).\(^{50}\) Instead of describing it as a life which does not abandon itself, Augustine presents the soul as a mind which is related to itself through its self-knowledge, and is thus certain of itself.

One may arrive at a similar conclusion after reading the account in *De immortalitate animae* from Augustine's youth, even though self-knowing plays no important role there. Not even in his early account does Augustine attribute any crucial role to the Platonic proof about the soul as life which does not abandon itself. His own arguments are somewhat different: they are concerned with the rationality of the soul as the basis of its immortality. In my opinion, there are essentially two proofs in *De immortalitate animae*, following two possible relationships between the soul and *ratio*: (1) if the eternal *ratio* is in the soul, which is its bearer, then the soul cannot perish;\(^{51}\) (2) if the *ratio* and the soul are two substances, the soul cannot be separated from the eternal *ratio*, which is why the soul cannot perish.\(^{52}\)

What is important here is the overall purport of Augustine's argumentation: he tries to show that the soul is not immortal as the principle which animates the body, but mainly because of its relationship to the immortal *ratio*. Similarly, in the *Soliloquies*, the immortality of the soul was eventually derived from the immortality of the truth which can be found in the soul.\(^{53}\)

To my mind, the various degrees of scepticism towards the fourth proof from the *Phaedo* which Augustine expresses in his works (from utter rejection in the *Soliloquies* and a limited use in *De immortalitate* to a more or less indifferent mention in *De Trinitate*) are mainly motivated by his aim of proving the immortality of the soul in another way, i.e. not through its relationship to life, but through its relationship to the *ratio*. This effort receives more support from the third proof from Plato's *Phaedo*, according to which the soul is more like (ὁμοίότατον) the invisible, immutable and divine, and that is why the soul does not have to fear perishing and death as far as it turns to this reality rather than to the body.\(^{54}\) Augustine presents a very similar argument in *De immortalitate* (in the chapter which immediately follows the proof in favour of the soul as life): the soul does not depend on the body, and hence is not mortal because it is capable of turning away from the body and seeing intelligible objects to which it is akin.\(^{55}\) This motivation of Augustine's is often

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48 *De Trin.* X,10,16 (CCL 50, 329,70f.): *idque solum esse se certa sit, quod solum esse se certa est*!!
49 *De Trin.* X,10,14 (CCL 50, 327,39 – 328,45).
50 *De Trin.* X,10,16 (CCL 50, 328,63ff.).
51 *De imm.* 1,1 – 5,9 (CSEL 89, 101–110).
52 *De imm.* 6,10 – 12,19 (CSEL 89, 110–122).
54 *Phd.* 78b–84b.
55 *De immort.* 10,17 (CSEL 89, 118ff.).
attributed to Porphyry’s influence, although the same argumentation can be found not only in Plato himself, but also in Plotinus (moreover, unlike De Trinitate, Augustine’s early treatise does not contain the motif of the soul’s self-knowledge, which is typical of Porphyry).

Nevertheless, it is obvious that what matters to Augustine in his proofs is the immortality of the rational soul, not the indestructibility of the principle of cosmic life. As long as we can trust Augustine’s account and some other reports from late Antiquity, it seems to be this factor which links Augustine with Porphyry and which also makes him approach with caution the Platonic proof of the immortality of the soul as the bearer of life.


In seiner Abhandlung De immortalitae animae, die auf seine Soliloquien anknüpft, versucht Augustin eine Reihe anderer Unsterlichkeitssbeweise zu bringen, deren einer dem letzten Argument aus Phaedo nahe kommt (De immort. 9,16).


57 See Plotinus, Enn. IV,7(2),8,14–22.


59 See De immort. 16,25 (CSEL 89, 127).

Unterschiedlich von Plato setzt jedoch Augustin keine Idee des Lebens voraus, mit der die Seele verbunden wäre, sondern die Seele mit dem Leben identifiziert.

Diese Identifizierung, durch die neuplatonische Vorstellung der Seele als Leben, das aus sich selbst lebt, inspiriert und der Argumentation des Ambrosius von Mailand (De bono mortis, 9,42) verwandt, scheint jedoch den platonischen Unsterblichkeitsbeweis in Augustins Augen nicht definitiv zu retten, wie seine spätere Anmerkung in De Trinitate X,7,9 zeigt. In diesem Werk versucht Augustin die Seele vor allem als eine Selbstkenntnis darzustellen, wie schon in seiner Abhandlung De immortalitate animae die Unsterblichkeit der Seele auf ihrem Verhältnis zur Ratio aufbaut, nicht so sehr auf der Vorstellung der Seele als Leben.

One puzzling feature of the theory of forms (henceforth TOF) in Plato’s *Phaedo* is that it is not presented as a continuous argument, as for example the theory of the immortality of the soul. Plato’s account of the forms falls into four distinct passages: 65b1-68b7, 74a9-76e4, 78c10-79e7, 99d4-107a2. I suggest here that through this piecemeal presentation Plato is conveying a methodological lesson about how to use the TOF, and more generally how to practise philosophy. Plato shows (1) that the TOF should be primarily used as an argumentative tool and (2) that it can immunize us against the risk of becoming a haters of arguments (μισόλογοι). In this respect, I will try to show that the whole argument of the dialogue, with its ups and down, can be conceived as a drama about the threat of misology. To argue for each point I have resorted to two passages in particular: (1) Socrates’ presentation of the method of hypothesis (99d-102a) and (2) his warnings against misology (89c-91b). Each text, as it were, provides some methodological rules that Socrates implements through his discontinuous presentation of the TOF.

I. The TOF as an explanatory tool

Four accounts
Te begin with, we shall examine how Socrates articulates his overall argument in the dialogue, and how each of the four accounts of the forms fits in this plan (see below the synopsis of the argument). What appears at first sight is that Socrates’s overall agenda is not to argue for the existence of the forms. The TOF is rather used at various points of the discussion as an argumentative tool designed to argue for Socrates’s initial thesis: as a philosopher he has good reasons to hope that he will find a better life after his death. To support this claim, Socrates will first have to explain it: to show what kind of blessings (ἀγαθὰ) the philosopher’s soul may expect after his death (Argument 1). Second he will need to show that the soul can achieve this hope, that it will survive bodily death (Argument 2). For both arguments Socrates will use the theory of forms as a key explanatory tool: the first account of the forms (TOF1 in the synopsis) shows that truth is a non bodily entity that can be correctly grasped by the soul when it uses its reason alone (αὐτῇ τῇ διανοίᾳ, T1a) independently from the bodily senses (T1a). On this basis, Socrates demonstrates that death, which is the complete separation between soul and body, will enable him to fulfil his dearest wish: contemplating the truth without hindrance (T1b).

Yet Socrates has still to prove that his soul will not vanish after death (Argument 2). To support this claim, he will provide no less than five proofs, three of which will use the TOF as their keystone: the recollection argument (arg. 2b) starts by showing that forms are not only different from (ἕτερον) but essentially superior to sensible objects (T2a). Therefore any notion of the forms we can hold or acquire during our bodily life cannot be directly derived from our sensible experience, and our soul must have perceived the forms before being linked to the body (T2b). In the affinity argument (arg. 2c) it is after showing that forms are non-composed, and thus changeless entities (T3a) that Socrates can suggest that, in virtue of its contact with the forms, the soul belongs to this class of changeless things (T3b).
Finally (arg. 2e), by depicting the causal relationship between forms (conceived as αἰτίαι) and particular things, Socrates can coin the notion of essential property and essential bearer (T4a). He can thus demonstrate that life is an essential property of soul — a form that always (ἀεὶ) accompanies soul — and that soul is necessarily immortal (ἀθάνατον, T4b). Thus, Socrates proves to make use of the TOF to support most of the major points of his demonstration.

Two exceptions?

In two places, however, Socrates seems to do without the TOF: in the cyclical argument (arg. 2a) and in his reply to Simmias's objection (arg. 2d). Yet at a closer examination those passages are not real exceptions. The fact is, although Socrates does not make use of the TOF as the centre of his cyclical argument, he does go back to this argument in the frame of his final account of the forms (forms as an αἰτίαι, TOF4). After showing that an opposite property cannot become its opposite (τοὐναντίον γίγνεσθαί, T5), he is interrupted by an anonymous member of the audience who reproaches him for contradicting a claim made in the cyclical argument: opposites like the larger and the smaller necessarily come to be from their opposite (ἐκ τοῦ ἐλάττονος τὸ μεῖζον γίγνεσθαι, T5). Socrates then makes clear that, in the cyclical argument, he was talking of an opposite thing (τὸ ἐναντίον πρᾶγμα) whereas now he is talking of the opposite by itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον), which certainly cannot come from its opposite. Although Socrates has, in the cyclical argument, taken care of talking about opposite things (τὰ ἐναντία πρᾶγματα, T6) and not opposites themselves, he could not make explicit this distinction between forms and particulars things because his argument did not resort to the TOF. The distinction only appears clearly when Socrates, in his final account of the form (TOF4), distinguishes the property (e. g. tallness or smallness) and the property bearer (e. g. Simmias, T7). In other words, it is only to the credit of the TOF that the cyclical argument becomes fully intelligible in the Phaedo. This, I suggest, is the point Plato makes in this unexpected resurgence of the cyclical argument at the end of the dialogue: Plato shows that although this argument has not explicitly resorted to the TOF, it is still logically based on it as well as the other steps of the demonstration.

Another part of the argument which apparently does not rely on the TOF is Socrates’ reply to Simmias’s objection (arg. 2d). In nuce Simmias objected to Socrates that being incorporeal and akin to the form does not necessarily entail being changeless, as Socrates implies: the soul can be incorporeal yet perishable, like the harmony of a lyre. Socrates replies to this objection by recalling a point that Simmias has just agreed with: the conclusion of the recollection argument, namely the claim that the soul pre-exists the body (T2b). This claim, as Socrates says in jest, cannot be “in harmony” (οὐ συνῳδός) with the claim that the soul is harmony, just as the harmony of a lyre cannot pre-exist the lyre (see T8). Simmias must then choose one of the two theories: the recollection argument or the theory of the soul-harmony. Simmias prefers to reject the latter since, as he puts it himself, he adopted it “without proof” (ἀνεύ ἀποδείξεως), on the grounds of “mere probability and plausibility” (μετὰ εἰκότος τινὸς καὶ εὔπρεπείας), whereas the theory of recollection “was established by a sound assumption” (δι› ὑποθέσεως ἀξίας ἀποδείξεως ἑιρήματι). This “sound assumption”, as Simmias recalls it, is nothing else than the existence of the form (ὡσπερ αὐτή ἐστιν ἡ οὐσία ἔχουσα τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τὴν τοῦ «δ ἐστιν», cf. TOF2). As well as in the discussion of the cyclical argument, Socrates’s reply to Simmias’s objection allows Plato to highlight the necessity of resorting to the forms in order to build an argument on sound bases. Hence, far from being exceptions to the rule “no argument without forms”,


the two passages indeed prove to strengthen the authority of this rule.

**The method of hypothesis**

This argumentative rule is clearly articulated by Socrates when he introduces his final demonstration of the immortality of the soul (arg. 2e). This is the famous passage where Socrates presents the TOF as the best argument (λόγον ἐρρωμενέστατον, T9) which he will posit (ὑποθέμενος) as a firm ground for all subsequent demonstrations. Socrates characterizes the status of the forms by a word (ὑποθέμενος) which directly echoes the “sound hypothesis” (ὑποθέσεως ἀξίας) that engaged Simmias to rely on the theory of recollection rather than on the theory of the soul harmony (T8). And as well as Simmias rejected the theory which was not “in harmony” (οὐ συνῳδός, T8) with the theory based on the TOF — Socrates now claims that he considers as untrue any logos which “does not harmonize with” (μή συμφωνεῖν, T9) the TOF. These word echoes confirm what has been described so far: the TOF is used all through the dialogue, and not merely used to bolster Socrates’s final demonstration of the immortality of the soul. As Socrates says when he presents the method of hypothesis, the hypothesis must be used to determine the truth of any argument, “about cause and everything else” (καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων).

We can thus provide a first answer to our initial question: Socrates’s account of forms in the *Phaedo* is fragmented because it plays an argumentative function at each step of the demonstration.

**II. Misology: its threat and its cure**

Yet this explanation begs a question: why is Socrates’s demonstration divided into so many steps?

**Socrates playing games**

If Socrates’s only aim in the dialogue was to demonstrate his initial claim — a philosopher’s should desire to die — he surely could have done that more straightforwardly! From the start (when he explains his desire, arg. 1) Socrates could have provided a full account of the nature of the forms. In so doing he would have explained the causal value of the forms, expounded the notion of essential property bearer, and proved the immortality of the soul (arg. 2e). Thanks to a full account of the forms, Socrates would have at the same time explained and justified his desire to die (arg. 1 and 2), without attempting the many arguments (2a, b, c, d) which all failed somewhat to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. With a continuous account of the forms, Socrates could have then provided a continuous demonstration for his case with a greater economy of arguments.

Instead, the dialectician seems to play games with the argument — and with his friends. At each step of the discussion, he provides just as much information about forms as needed to build a provisional answer — an answer which will soon prove to require further demonstration. When proving that the soul of the philosopher is bound to desire the form (stage 1), he does not say anything about the form that would help demonstrate at the same time that the soul is immortal. He is waiting for his friends to notice what is lacking in the argument (T10), and then repeats the experience through a series of shaky arguments (2a to d) which drives his audience to a state of distress. At that point of the discussion, Phaedo and his companions are about to throw in the sponge and abandon the hope of finding a valid demonstration of the immortality of the soul (cf. T11: ὥσπερ πεφευγότας καὶ ἠττημένους).
The threat of misology

By throwing his companions into disarray, Socrates can make an important methodological point: he then warns against the danger of becoming a hater of argument (μισόλογος, T12). Such people, he says, assume that no argument is fundamentally sound: all can be refuted in some way, therefore none of them should be trusted. This assumption, Socrates claims, is not due to the dearth of any true argument; it rather comes from the lack of skill (ἀτεχνίαν) on the part of those who argue: they are unable to recognize in the argument what is true and what is not. Such people therefore could embrace once a true argument, but being unable to recognize why this argument is sound, they will not be able to defend it correctly against the quibbles of a contradictor skillful enough to make the true logos appear wrong (δόξῃ ψευδὴς εἶναι). Lacking any “skill in argument” (ἀνευ τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης) those people are led to believe that they would never come across a true logos.

What is important in Socrates’s point here is that the skill in argument (τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης) is not merely what enables us philosophers to reject a wrong argument, nor even what allows to acquiesce to a true one: the μισόλογοι have done both things many times before distrusting arguments in general. The τέχνη is rather what enables us to approve a true argument for the good reason, to know precisely why this argument is true. The greatest danger from which the τέχνη can save us is not to support a wrong thesis so naively; it is in fact better to support naively a true one, as this may finally lead us to miss the truth forever.

What is however this serendipitous τέχνη περὶ τοὺς λόγους which enables us to identify with certitude a true logos, and to escape from the danger of misology (T13)?

The TOF as an antidote

If we are to relate the scenario depicted in the passage on misology to the discussion Socrates is currently leading with his friends, the true argument (λόγος) he engages them not to abandon is the thesis that the soul is immortal (arg. 2). On this view, the τέχνη περὶ τοὺς λόγους should be the TOF which Socrates produces shortly afterwards, in order to provide a final proof of this argument.

This assumption is confirmed when we notice later on that Socrates presents the hypothesis of the forms as a device whose particularity is to focus on arguments (εἰς τοὺς λόγους, T9) and whose efficiency was to save him (καταφυγόντα) from a danger very similar to the one his companions are currently facing. Indeed, Socrates says that when he was relying on the views provided by the natural sciences (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν, 96a) his perception was confused (ἔτυφλώθην, 96c). He was then led to believe in contradictory claims about the nature of αἰτία (cause, or reason), e. g. the view that two opposites processes, like division and addition, could be the cause of the same thing — the number two (ἐναντία γὰρ γίγνεται ἢ τότε αἰτία τοῦ δύο γίγνεσθαι, 97a-b). Therefore what Socrates reports in the first part of his philosophical autobiography in the Phaedo (96a-99e) is actually how he was himself in a situation likely to turn him into a hater of arguments.

Yet, what the passage adds to Socrates’s previous account about misology is the primary reason why someone comes to hate arguments, and the reason why one may be puzzled by contradictory statements. Socrates was blinded (τυφλωθείην, T9) because he was looking at things with his bodily senses (βλέπων ... τοὺς ὀμματικοὺς καὶ ἐκάστη τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπιχειρῶν) instead of resorting to the hypothesis of the
This description of Socrates's blindness directly echoes the very first account of the TOF (TOF1), where perceiving things through bodily senses was described as a trouble (see T1a: τοῦ σώματος, ὡς ταράττοντος). We understand now that the trouble experienced by the budding haters of arguments, when confronted with contradictory statements (ἀναταράξαι, T11), is fundamentally due to their inability to resort to the TOF, thanks to which they could assess the truth of arguments that appears contradictory.

Therefore Socrates's warning against misology (88c-91c) and the first part of his philosophical autobiography (96a-99e) should be conceived as complementary texts which shed light on each other. Socrates's narration of his puzzlement about αἰτίαι enables us to understand what the origin of the trouble felt by μισόλογοι (i.e. a trouble about perception) is; the passage also shows what kind of device (τέχνη) could dispel this trouble (i.e. the TOF). Conversely the passage on misology enables us to understand that Socrates's autobiography describes how the philosopher himself could have become a μισόλογος, had he not found out the TOF. We therefore better understand what kind of games Socrates may be playing when he discusses with his companions in the Phaedo. Socrates's aim throughout the dialogue may not be merely to provide a good argument for his case — particularly a good account of the immortality of the soul. His aim is also to have his audience (and Plato's readership) understand the relevance of using the TOF in order to build such an argument. Socrates, at each step of his demonstration, leads his companions to re-perform his own experience of confusion when he was relying on the account of the natural philosophers: he has them accept a good argument on shaky bases; he prompts them to refute one argument with another one so that the good argument appears wrong for a while, or at least debatable; he leads them to realize that the argument was actually wrongly supported; he finally shows that it could be better supported thanks to a better understanding of the theory of forms. The repeated use - and the improvement - of the TOF in the Phaedo does not only show several times the explanatory force of the theory, but also shows that this explanatory force is characteristic of a τέχνη περὶ τοὺς λόγους designed to immunize against misology.

This is particularly clear in the two passages previously discussed, the two apparent exceptions to the rule “no argument without the TOF”: Socrates’ reply to Simmias and the cyclical argument. As we saw, Socrates replies to Simmias's objection (T8) by having him remember a λόγος he has just accepted: the soul exists prior to the body as it recollects the form. This argument proves incompatible with the objection Simmias has just made that the soul is harmony. Once Simmias has been exposed the recollection argument, he rejects his objection without hesitation on the grounds that the previous argument was better established, i.e. based on the TOF. Had Simmias approved the theory of recollection as superficially as he approved the theory of the soul harmony, “without proof, because of a certain probability and plausibility» (ἄνευ ἀποδείξεως μετὰ εἰκότος τινὸς καὶ εὐπρεπείας T8), he would have been unable to decide which of the two arguments was sound, and this could have led him to distrust as a whole the theory of the immortality of the soul. What is interesting is that, at the start of the discussion of the recollection argument, Simmias was precisely in the state of superficial agreement with this argument. He and Cebes had already heard Socrates discuss these matters, and after Cebes recalled the argument by a rough summary, Simmias said that he vaguely remembered it (ἀναμνησθῆναι, T12) but asked Socrates for a supplementary account (οὐδὲν μεντὰν ἥττον ἀκούοιμι νῦν πῃ σὺ ἐπεχείρησα λέγειν). What Socrates's subsequent explanation will adds to Cebes's summary is, as we know, 1 See also 66d: θόρυβον παρέχει καὶ ταραχήν καὶ ἐκπλήττει, ὅπερ μὴ δύνασθαι ύπ’ αὐτοῦ καθοράν τάληθές.
the TOF which will provide the full demonstration of the theory of recollection. Without this account, Simmias would have been unable to assess the truth value of this theory, and to prefer it to an argument equally seemingly just as true, like the theory of the soul-harmony. Socrates’s anonymous contradictor was apparently in a similar state of superficial agreement with a true argument when he heard the cyclical argument for the first time (2a). At that time, he visibly accepted it, since he did not interrupt Socrates. Yet, as appears when he raises his objection (T5), he accepted the argument on a wrong basis, without understanding the distinction between forms and property bearers — a distinction on which was, as we saw, the truth of the argument was based. Therefore, both Simmias and the anonymous interlocutor are led to experience and to escape the state of confusion which is described by Socrates as the primary condition for becoming a hater of argument (T12). Both interlocutors are led to understand that their confusion stemmed from the fact that, although they agreed with true arguments, they did not do so with the appropriate τέχνη — the skill that enables them to understand why an argument is true or not. Both interlocutors, finally, are led to understand that this skill is nothing other than the TOF.

Conclusion
If we take into account the piecemeal presentation of the TOF in the *Phaedo*, we may understand that Plato, when presenting this theory, does not only provide his reader with a doctrinal account of the nature of the forms. He also delivers a methodological lesson, indicating how this theory is meant to be used. He shows (1) that the function of the TOF is an explanatory one - the theory is an argument that must help provide sufficient proofs for other theories. (2) He also indicates that this explanatory function should be identified with the τέχνη περὶ τοὺς λόγους which helps escape the risk of becoming a hater of argument.
I have also tried to show that these two methodological lessons provided by the piecemeal presentation of the TOF are the implementation of two methodological excursus of the dialogue: (1) Socrates’s presentation of the method of hypothesis and (2) his warnings against misology.

**TEXTS**

**Synopsis of Socrates’s overall argument (TOF = theory of forms)**

**Thesis:** A true philosopher is right to be be hopeful (εὔελπις) that after death he/she will attain the greatest blessings (ἀγαθὰ) [63e-64a]

**Arguments:**
1. because the philosopher’s final goal it to free his/her soul from his/her body (TOF1) [64c-69e]
2. ... and because his/her soul will survive his/her body [69e-107b]
   a. the cyclical argument
   b. the reminiscence argument (TOF2)
   c. the affinity argument (TOF3)
   > Simmias’s objection
   > Cebes’s objection
   [*method 1: misology]*
   d. the soul is no harmony (reply to Simmias)
e. the final argument (reply to Cebes)

["method 2: hypothesis"] (TOF4)

THE FOUR ACCOUNTS OF THE FORMS

T1. Forms as non bodily entities

1a. — Φαμὲν τι εἶναι δίκαιον αὐτῦ ἢ οὐδὲν; Φαμὲν μέντοι νῆ Δίας. — Καὶ αὐτὸ καλὸν γε τι καὶ ἅγαθὸν. — Πίσς δ᾽ οὖ; — Ἡδὴ οὖν πάσποτὲ τι τῶν τοιούτων τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς εἶδες; — Οὐδαμῶς, δὲ δ᾽ ὡς:

— Αλλ᾽ ἀλλὴ τινὶ αἰσθήσεωι νῦν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔφησα αὐτῶν; λέγω δὲ περὶ πάντων, οἷον μεγέθους πέρι, ὕψεις, ἵσχυς, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐνι λόγῳ ἀπάντων τῆς υἱόσιας δ [65e] τυχανεί ἐκαστὸν ὄν· ἀρὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν τὸ ἀληθέστατον 

θεωρεῖται, ἢ ὡδὲ ἔχει· ὃς ἂν ἔραστα ημῶν καὶ ἀκριβέστατα παρασκευάζεται αὐτὸ ἐκαστὸν διανοηθῆναι περὶ οὕς σκοπεῖ, οὕς τοῦ ἀγγύτατα τοῦ γνῶναι ἐκαστὸν;

— Πάνο μὲν ωὸν.

— Ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλῃ τινὶ αἰσθήσει τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐφήψω αὐτῶν; λέγω δὲ περὶ πάντων, οἷον μεγέθους περὶ, ὑγιείας, ἰσχύος, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἑνὶ λόγῳ ἁπάντων τῆς οὐσίας ὃ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὃς ἂν μάλιστα ἡμῶν καὶ ἀκριβέστατα παρασκευάζεται αὐτὸ ἐκαστὸν 

διανοηθῆναι περὶ ο المختلف σκοπεῖ, ο المختلف τοῦ γνῶναι ἐκαστὸν;

1b. — Οὐκοῦν ἀνάγκη, ἔφη, ἐκ πάντων τούτων παρίσταται δόξαν τοῖς γνησίως συντήρηται, ὥστε καὶ πρὸς ἄλλους τοιοῦτα ἄττα λέγειν, ὅτι "Κινδύνουμεν τοι ὡς ὄρθος ἀγαθῷ τῆς ἐκφέρειν ἡμᾶς [μετὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐν τῇ σκέψει], ὃς ἐκ ἀλλὸ σῶμα ἐχθροῦ τοῖς ἡμῶν ἡμῶν ἡμῶν Ῥωμαῖος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀληθίας κακοῦ, οὐ μή ποτε 

κτισμέναι ἰκανῶς τὸ ποτὶ οὕς ἀνθρώποις φαμέν δὲ τοῦ ἀληθίας. οὐτὸς ἂν τῶν ὁμός. οὗτος ἂν τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ἀληθίας.

All these things will necessarily make the true philosophers believe and say to each other something like this: "There is likely to be something such as a short cut to guide us out of our confusion, because as long as we have a body and our soul is fused with such an evil we shall never adequately attain what we desire, which we affirm to be the truth.

66b
2a. — We say there exists something equal. I do not mean a stick which is equal to a stick, or a stone to a stone, or anything else of that sort, but some different thing beyond that — the equal by itself. Are we to say that there is such a thing, or not? — We shall say that there is, said Simmias, most decidedly.

— And do we know what it is? — Certainly

— Whence did we derive the knowledge of it? Is it not from the things we were just speaking of? Did we not, by seeing equal pieces of wood or stones or other things, derive from them a knowledge of abstract equality, which is something different? Do not equal stones and pieces of wood, though they remain the same, sometimes appear equal to one, but not to another? — Necessarily.

— Do we agree, then, that when anyone on seeing a thing thinks, 'This thing that I see aims at being like some other thing that exists, but falls short and is unable to be like that thing, but is inferior to it,' he who thinks thus must of necessity have previous knowledge of the thing which he says the other resembles but falls short of? — Necessarily.

2b. — Therefore, if we had acquired this knowledge, we knew before birth and immediately after not only the equal, but the greater and the smaller and all such things, for our present argument is no more about the equal than about the beautiful itself, the good itself, the just, the pious and, as I say, about all those things which we mark with the seal of "what it is," both when we are putting questions and answering them. So we must have acquired knowledge of them all before we were born.

T3. Forms as changeless entities

3a. — Certain is this, that once and for all we say that things exist, that we do not mean a stick, for instance, which is equal to a stick; or a stone to a stone; or anything else of that sort, but some different thing. Therefore, if we had acquired this knowledge, we knew before birth and immediately after not only the equal, but the greater and the smaller and all such things, for our present argument is no more about the equal than about the beautiful itself, the good itself, the just, the pious and, as I say, about all those things which we mark with the seal of “what it is,” both when we are putting questions and answering them. So we must have acquired knowledge of them all before we were born.
“Is the being itself, whose essence we give an account of in asking and answering questions is always identically in the same state, or does it vary? The equal itself, the beautiful itself, what each thing is itself, that which is — do they ever admit of any change whatever? Or does what each of them is, since it is uniform in and by itself, remain unvarying and constant, and never admit of any kind of alteration in any way or respect whatever? — It must, said Cebeus, necessarily remain the same, Socrates. [...] Do you then want us to assume two kinds of existences, the visible and the invisible? — Let us assume this. And the invisible always remains the same, whereas the visible never does? — Let us assume that too”

78d-79a

3b. — Σκόπει δή, ἐφη, ὦ Κέβης, εἰ ἐκ πάντων τῶν εἰρημένων [80b] τάδε ἢμῖν συμβαίνει, τὸ μὲν θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῷ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ καὶ ἀεὶ ὁμοιότατον ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον εἶναι ψυχή, τῷ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῳ καὶ θνητῷ καὶ πολυειδεῖ καὶ ἀνοήτῳ καὶ διαλυτῷ καὶ μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτά ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον αὖ εἶναι σῶμα. ἔχομεν τι παρὰ ταῦτα ἄλλο λέγειν, ὦ φίλε Κέβης, ἣ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει; — Οὐκ ἔχομεν.

Τ4. Forms as “causes”

4a. — Ἀρα οὐ δοκεῖ σοι τῷ τε αὐτῆς ὀνόματι ἀεὶ προσαγορευτέα εἶναι καὶ τῷ τοῦ περιττοῦ, ὅντος οὐχ ὄπερ τῆς τριάδος; Ἀλλ᾽ ὁμοίως οὕτως πέφυκε καὶ ἢ τρίας καὶ ἢ πεμπτῆς καὶ ἡ τριὰς καὶ ἡ τριάδος καὶ ἡ τριάς καὶ ἡ τριάς καὶ ἡ ἕτερος αὐτῆς ἄρτισ τὸ περιττὸν ἄρτιος ἀεί· συγχωρεῖς ἢ οὔ; — Πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἔφη.

— Τότινος, ἐφη, βούλομαι δηλώσαι, ἄθρει. ἔστιν δὲ τὸ τάδε, ὅτι φαίνεται οὐ μόνον ἐκείνα τὰ ἐναντία ἄλληλα οὐ δεχόμενα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ ἔξις ὃν ὄπερ τῷ τερτῖῳ ἄλλου τούτων ἄρτιος ἀεί· συγχωρεῖς ἢ οὔ; — Πῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἔφη.
which is in them; when it approaches them, they either perish or give way (ἤτοι ἀπολλύμενα ἢ ὑπεκχωροῦντα).

4b. — ὃ ἄν τί ἐγγέγηται σώματι ζῶν ἔσται; — Ὡμ ἄν ψυχῆ, ἔφη.
— [105d] Οὐκόν ᾧ ἄν τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει; — Πῶς γὰρ οὕχι ἢ δ’ ὄς.
— Ψυχή ᾧ ἄν τί ἐγγέγηται κατάσχη, ἄει ἥκει ἐπ’ ἔκεινο φέρουσα ζωήν; — Ἡκει μέντοι, ἔφη.
— Πότερον δ’ ἔστι τι ζωῆ ἐναντίον ή οὐδέν; — Ἑστιν, ἔφη.
— Τί; — Θάνατος.
— Οὐκόν ψυχή τὸ ἐναντίον ᾧ ἄντη ἐπιφέρει ἄει οὐ μή ποτε δέξηται, ὡς ἐκ τῶν πρόσθεν ὁμολόγηται; — Καὶ μάλα σφόδρα, ἔφη ὁ Κέβης. (...) [105e]
— δ’ ἄν θάνατον μὴ δέχηται τι καλούμεν; — Ἀθάνατον, ἔφη.
— οὐκόν ψυχή οὐ δέχεται θάνατον; — οὔ.
— ἄθανατον ἄρα ψυχή; — ἀθάνατον.
— what is it that, present in a body, makes it living? — A soul.
— And is that always so? — Of course.
— Whatever the soul occupies, it always brings life to it? — It does.
— Is there, or is there not, an opposite to life? — There is.
— What is it? — Death.
— So the soul will never admit the opposite of that which it brings along, as we agree from what has been said? — Most certainly, said Cebes. (…)
— What do we call that which does not admit death? — The deathless, he said.
— So the soul is deathless? — It is.

105c-e

**T5. Back to the cyclical argument**
— «τὸ σμικρὸν τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐθέλει ποτὲ μέγα γίγνεσθαι οὐδὲ εἶναι, οὐδ’ ἄλλο οὐδέν τῶν ἐναντίων, ἐτι ὅτι ψυχή εἶναι ταύτῃ καὶ εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ἥτοι ἄντη ἀπόλλυται εἰς τοῦτο ποτὲ μέγα γίγνεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἤτοι ἀποφεύγει οὐδέντως τὸν παθήματι. — Ἡμαντάσσωμεν, ἔφη ὁ Κέβης, ἄφθανται μοι.»
Καὶ τις εἶπε τῶν παρόντων ἀκούσαν — ὃς δ’ ἦν, οὐ σαφῶς μέμνημαι — «Πρὸς θεών, οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἡμῖν λόγοις αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν νυνὶ λεγομένων ὁμολόγητο, ἐκ τοῦ ἐλάττονος τὸ μεῖζον γίγνεσθαι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μείζονος τὸ ἐλάττον, καὶ ἦτοι ἔνεσις τοῖς ἐναντίοις, ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων; Νῦν δὲ μοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὅτι τοῦτο οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο.
Καὶ ὁ Ἐρράκτης παραβαλὼν τὴν κεφαλήν καὶ ἀκούσαν, «Ἀνδρικῶς, ἔφη, ἀπεμνημόνευκας, οὐ μέντοι ἔννοεῖς τὸ διαφέρον τοῦ τοῦτον λόγον ἀπὸ τοῦ τότον, τότε μὲν γὰρ ἐλέγετο ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου πρᾶγμα τὸ ἐναντίον πρᾶγμα γίγνεσθαι, νῦν δὲ, ὅτι τοῦτο τὸ ἐναντίον ἐπιφάνεια ἐπονήθη ὁμοίως ἄν ποτε γένοιτο, οὔτε τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν οὔτε τοῦ ἐν τῇ φύσει.»
“The short in us is unwilling to become or to be tall ever, nor does any other of the opposites become or be its opposite while still being what it was; either it goes away or is destroyed when that happens. — I altogether agree, said Cebes.”

When he heard this, someone of those present said: “By the gods, did we not agree earlier in our discussion to the very opposite of what is now being said, namely, that the larger came from the smaller and the smaller from the larger, and that this simply was how opposites came to be, from their opposites, but now I think we are saying that this would never happen?”
On hearing this, Socrates said: “you do not understand the difference between what is said now and what was said then, which was that an opposite thing came from an opposite thing; now we say that the opposite itself could never become opposite to itself, neither that in us nor that in nature.”
T6. The cyclical argument

— Τοῦτο οὖν σκεψόμεθα, ἀρα ἀναγκαῖον ὅσοι ἔστι τι ἐναντίοις, μηδαμόθεν ἄλλοθεν αὐτὸ γίγνεσθαι ἢ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτῷ ἐναντίοις. Οἱ οὖν μεῖζον τι γίγνηται, ἀνάγκῃ που ἐξ ἐλάττονος ὄντος πρότερον ἐπείτα μεῖον γίγνεσθαι — Ἕκι. (…)  

— Let us examine whether those that have an opposite must necessarily come to be from their opposite and from nowhere else, as for example when something comes to be larger it must necessarily become larger from having been smaller before. […] So we have sufficiently established that all things come to be in this way, opposites from opposites? — Certainly.

T7. Properties and property bearers

— ἆρ᾽ οὐχ, ὅταν Σιμμίαν Σωκράτους βῇς μείζω εἶναι, Φαίδωνος δὲ ἔλαττω, λέγεις τότε εἶναι ἐν τῷ Σιμμίᾳ ἁμόρφετα, καὶ μέγεθος καὶ σμικρότητα; — Ἐγώγη.

— If you say these things are so, when you then say that Simmias is taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo, do you not mean that there is in Simmias both tallness and shortness? — I do.

T8. Socrates's reply to Simmias

— οὐ γάρ που ἀποδέξῃ γε [92b] σαυτοῦ λέγοντος ὡς πρότερον ἦν ἁρμονία συγκειμένη, πρὶν ἐκεῖνα εἶναι ἐξ ἀντίθετος ὀντοῦ μείζον γίγνεσθαι ἢ ἀποδέξῃ; — Οὔδαμος, ἔφη, ὃς Σωκράτες.

— Aischáνης ὁμιλεῖς, ἂς ὁ δῆς, ὅτι ταῦτα σοι συμβαίνει λέγειν, ὅταν φῇς μὲν εἶναι τὴν ψυχήν πρὶν καὶ σωμάτω άφθασθαι, εἶναι δὲ αὐτὴν συγκειμένην ἐκ τῶν οὐδέποτε ὄντων; (…) Ὁ δῆς [ὁ λόγος] τοινύς, ἔφη, σοὶ ὁ συννομός- ἀλλ᾽ ὧρα πότερον αἱρῇ τῶν λόγων, τὴν μάθησιν ἀνάμνησιν εἶναι ἢ ψυχήν ἁρμονίαν; — Πολύ μάλλον, ἔφη, ἔκεινος, ὃς Σωκράτες. ὅδε μὲν γὰρ [92d] μοί γέγονεν ἄνευ ἀποδείξεως μετὰ εἰκότος τινὸς καὶ εὐπρεπείας, ὅθεν καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς δοκεῖ ανθρώποις, ἐγὼ δὲ τοῖς διὰ τῶν εἰκότων τὰς ἀποδείξεις ποιουμένοις λόγους σύνοιδα σοῦν ἀλλαξάσθαι, καὶ ἂν τις αὐτοῦς μὴ φυλάττῃ, καὶ ἄν τις ἀποδεικτεῖ, καὶ ἐν γεωμετρίᾳ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀπαντήσω. Ὁ δὲ περὶ τῆς ἀναμνήσεως καὶ μαθήσεως λόγος δ᾽ ὑποθέσεως ἂν ἀποκέφαλωσαι εἴρηται. Ἐφηκ οὖρ γὰρ που ὁποῖος ἡμῶν εἶναι ἢ ψυχήν καὶ πρὶν εἰς σώμα ἀφίκεσθαι, ὥσπερ αὐτὴ ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τοῦ «ὁ ἔστιν» [92e] ἐγὼ ὡς ταύτην, ἡ εἰμάντων πείθω, ἵκανός τε καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδείχθωμαι. Ανάγκη οὖρ μοι, ὡς ἑσκαί, διὰ ταύτα μὴ ἐμαυτοῦ μὴ ἂν οὗτος ἀποδέχομαι λέγοντος ὡς ψυχὴν ἠτέρων ἁρμονίαν; — Surely you will not allow yourself to maintain that a composite harmony existed before those elements from which it had to be composed, or would you? — I do not, Socrates, he said.

— Do you realize, he said, that this is what you are in fact saying when you state that the soul exists before it takes on the form and body of a man and that it is composed of elements which do not yet exist? (…) — So your statement is inconsistent? Consider which of your statements you prefer, that learning is recollection or that the soul is a harmony. I much prefer the former, Socrates. I adopted the latter without proof, because of a certain probability and plausibility, which is why it appeals to most men. I know that arguments of which the proof is based on probability are pretentious and, if one does not guard against them, they certainly deceive one, in geometry and everything else. The theory of recollection and learning, however, was based on an assumption worthy of acceptance, for our soul was said to exist also before it came into the body, just
as the reality does that is of the kind that we qualify by the words “what it is,” and I convinced myself that I was quite correct to accept it. Therefore, I cannot accept the theory that the soul is a harmony either from myself or anyone else.

92a-e

T9. The method of hypothesis

ἐδέισα μὴ παντάπασι τὴν ψυχὴν τυφλωθείν βλέπων πρὸς τὰ πράγματα τοὺς ὑμμαίοις καὶ ἐκάστῃ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἐπιχειρῶν ἀπεσθαί αὐτῶν. Ἐδοξε δὴ μοι χρήναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνωσι σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Ἡσυχὸς μὲν οὖν ὁ ἰὰς εἰκάζω τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ ἔοικεν· οὐ γὰρ πάνυ συγχωρῶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκοποῦντα τὰ ὄντα ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν [τοῖς] ἔργοις. Ἀλλ᾽ οὖν δὴ ταύτῃ γε ὥρμησα, καὶ ὑποθέμενος ἐκάστοτε λόγον ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμεν ἄντις τὸν ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμεν ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα, καὶ περὶ αἰτίας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων ὄντων, ἃ δ᾽ ἂν μή, ὡς σύκο ἀληθῆ, (...)'Υποθέμενος εἶναι τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ καὶ ἀγαθὸ καὶ μέγα καὶ τὰλλα πάντα· ἃ εἴ μοι δίδως τε καὶ συγχωρεῖς εἶναι ταῦτα, ἐλπίζω σοι ἐκ τούτων τὴν αἰτίαν ἐπιδείξειν καὶ ἀνευρήσειν ὡς ἀθάνατον [ἡ] ψυχή.

I was afraid my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with any of my senses. So I thought I must have recourse to conceptions and examine in them the truth of realities. Now perhaps my metaphor is not quite accurate; for I do not grant in the least that he who studies realities by means of conceptions is looking at them in images any more than he who studies them in the facts of daily life. However, that is the way I began. I assume in each case some principle which I consider strongest, and whatever seems to me to agree with this, whether relating to cause or to anything else, I regard as true, and whatever disagrees with it, as untrue. (...) I assume the existence of a beautiful, itself by itself, of a good and a great and all the rest. If you grant me these and agree that they exist, I hope to show you the cause as a result, and to find the soul to be immortal.”

99e-100b

T10. Socrates’s argument arouses disbelief

Εἰπόντος δὴ τοῦ Σωκράτους ταῦτα, ὑπολαβὼν ὁ Κέβης ἔφη· «Ὡ Σώκρατες, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ καλῶς λέγεσθαι, [70a] τὰ δὲ περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς πολλὴν ἀπιστίαν παρέχει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μή, ἐπειδὲ ἀπαλλαγῆ τοῦ σώματος, οὐδαμοῦ ἔτι ᾖ, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ διαφθείρηται τε καὶ ἀπολλύται ἂν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀποθνῄσκῃ, When Socrates had finished, Cebes answered and said: “Socrates, I agree to the other things you say, but in regard to the soul men are very prone to disbelief. They fear that when the soul leaves the body it no longer exists anywhere, and that on the day when the man dies it is destroyed and perishes, and when it leaves the body and departs from it, straightway it flies away and is no longer anywhere, scattering like a breath or smoke.

69e-70a

T11. Socrates’s audience in dispair

Πάντες οὖν ἄκουσαντες εἰπόντων αὐτῶν ἄηδῶς διετέθημεν, ὡς ὦστερον ἐλέγομεν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐμπροσθοῦν πλοῦτος πολεμοῦμεν ὡς πάλιν ἔδοκομεν ἀναταράξεικα καὶ εἰς ἀπιστίαν καταβάλεικα ὡς μόνον τοῖς προειρημένοις λόγοις, ἂλλα καὶ εἰς ταῦτα μέλλοντα ῥηθήσεται, μὴ οὐδενὸς ἄξιος εἰμι κριτή ἢ καὶ τὰ πράγματα αὐτὰ ἀπιστά ἢ. (...) [88e] Καὶ μήν, ὥς Ἐχέκρατες, πολλάκις θαυμάσας Σωκράτη ὡς πόστοτε μᾶλλον ἡγάσθην ἢ τότε παραγενόμενος, [89a] Τό μὲν οὖν ἔχειν ὃ ἔλεγον ἐκεῖνος Ἰῶς οὐδέν ἄτοπον· ἀλλὰ ἐγὼς μάλιστα εἰμι αὐτοῦ πρώτον μὲν τούτο, ὡς ἰδέως καὶ εὐμνῶς καὶ ἀγαμέμνων τῶν νεανίσκων τῶν λόγων ἀπεδέξατο, ἐπειτὰ ἤμοιν ὡς οὖς ἡδεῖ καὶ ἐξέθετο ὃ πεπόνθηκεμ ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων, ἐπειτὰ ὡς εὐ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο καὶ ὅπερ περευγότας καὶ ἴχθυμονός ἀνεκάλεσατο καὶ προύτρεψεν πρὸς τὸ παρέπεσθαι τε καὶ συσκοπεῖν τὸν λόγον.

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Now all of us, as we remarked to one another afterwards, were very uncomfortable when we heard what they said; for we had been thoroughly convinced by the previous argument, and now they seemed to be throwing us again into confusion and distrust, not only in respect to the past discussion but also with regard to any future one. They made us fear that our judgment was worthless or that no certainty could be attained in these matters. (...) Echecrates, I have often wondered at Socrates, but never did I admire him more than then. That he had an answer ready was perhaps to be expected; but what astonished me more about him was, first, the pleasant, gentle, and respectful manner in which he listened to the young men’s criticisms, secondly, his quick sense of the effect their words had upon us, and lastly, the skill with which he cured us and, as it were, recalled us from our flight and defeat and made us face about and follow him and join in his examination of the argument.

88c-89a

T12. Socrates warns against misology

ἐπειδάν τις πιστεύῃ λόγῳ τινὶ ἀληθεῖ εἶναι ἄνευ τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης, καπείτα ὁλίγον ύστερον αὐτῷ δόξη ψευδὴς εἶναι, ἐνίοτε μὲν ὄν, ἐνίοτε δ’ ὄν ὄν, καὶ αὐθῆς ἔτερος καὶ ἔτερος - καὶ καλίστα δῆ οἱ [90c] περὶ τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους διατρίψαντες οἴσθ’ ὅτι τελευτῶντες οἴονται σοφοίνει καὶ κατανενοηκόνει μόνον ὅτι οὔτε τῶν πραγμάτων οὐδὲνος οὔτε ὄνηις οὔτε βεβαιον οὔτε τῶν λόγων, ἀλλὰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα ἀτεχνῶς ὄσπερ ἐν Εὐρίπῳ ἀνὸς κάτω στρέφεται καὶ χρόνον οὐδένα ἐν οὐδὲνι μένει.

- Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἐφιν ἐγὼ, ἀληθή ξέγεις.
- Οὐκοῦν, οὐκοῦν, ὃς ὁ Σιμμίας, ἔφη, οὐκοῦν ἃν εἴη τὸ πάθος, ἐννῦν οὐκ ὄς τίνος ἀληθοῦς καὶ βεβαιοῦ λόγου καὶ δυνατοῦ [90d] κατανοήσαι, ἔπειτα διὰ τὸ παραγίγνεσθαι τοιοῦτος τιοὶ λόγοις, τοὶ αὐτοί τοτὲ μὲν δοκοῦσιν ἀλῆθείν εἶναι, τοτὲ δὲ μὴ, μὴ ἐαυτῶν τὶς άιτῃ ὅτι τὴν ἐαυτοῦ ἀτεχνωθηκόνει, ἀλλὰ τελευτῶν διὰ τὸ ἀλγεῖν ἄσμενος ἀρ’ ἀντοῦ τὶν ἀπάσωσαι καὶ ἡ ἡ τὸν λοιπὸν βίον μων τι καὶ λοιδορῶν τοὺς λόγους διατελοῖ, τῶν δὲ οὔτων τὶς ἀληθείας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης στερηθείη.

— The similarity lies rather in this: it is as when one who lacks skill in arguments puts his trust in an argument as being true, then shortly afterwards believes it to be false — as sometimes it is and sometimes it is not—and so with another argument and then another. You know how those in particular who spend their time studying contradiction in the end believe themselves to have become very wise and that they alone have understood that there is no soundness or reliability in any object or in any argument, but that all that exists simply fluctuates up and down as if it were in the Euripus and does not remain in the same place for any time at all. — What you say, I said, is certainly true.

— It would be pitiable, Phaedo, he said, when there is a true and reliable argument and one that can be understood, if a man who has dealt with d such arguments as appear at one time true, at another time untrue, should not blame himself or his own lack of skill but, because of his distress, in the end gladly shift the blame away from himself to the arguments, and spend the rest of his life hating and reviling reasonable discussion and so be deprived of truth and knowledge of reality.

90b-d

T14. Simmias hardly recollects the recollection argument

— Εἰ δὲ μὴ ταῦτη γε, ἐφη, πειθεῖ, ὃ Σιμμία, ὃ Σωκράτης, σκέψιν ἄν τῇδι πῆς σοι σκοπομενῶς συνδόξῃ. Απιστεῖ γὰρ δὴ πῶς ἡ καλομένη μάθησις ἀνάμνησις ἔστιν;
— Απιστῶ μὲν [σοι] ἐγώγε, ἢ δ’ ὃς ὁ Σιμμίας, οὐ, αὐτὸ δὲ τούτο, ἐφη, δέομαι παθεῖν περὶ οὗ ὁ λόγος, ἀναμνησθήσῃ. Καί σχεδὸν γε ἐξ ἓν Κέβης ἐπεχείρησε
— If this does not convince you, Simmias, said Socrates, see whether you agree if we examine it in some such way as this, for do you doubt that what we call learning is recollection?
— It is not that I doubt, said Simmias, but I want to experience the very thing we are discussing, recollection, and from what Cebes undertook to say, I am now remembering and am pretty nearly convinced. Nevertheless, I should like to hear now the way you were intending to explain it.

RÉSUMÉ (Français)

De l'intérêt de répéter un argument.

Métamorphoses de la théorie des formes dans le Phédon de Platon.

Un aspect déconcertant de la théorie des formes dans le Phédon est la manière dont elle est présentée. Contrairement à l'immortalité de l'âme ou à la nature des causes, par exemple, l'existence des formes ne fait pas l'objet d'un exposé continu: Platon en propose des descriptions différentes dans quatre passages bien distincts:
(a) Au début de son «apologie», Socrate présente la vérité sur chaque chose comme une réalité désincarnée que le philosophe parvient à contempler au moyen de son âme seule (65b1-68b7).
(b) Dans le cadre de la théorie de la réminiscence, les formes sont présentées comme des réalités distinctes et supérieures aux objets particuliers qui en participent (74a9-76e4).
(c) Lorsque Socrate parle de l'affinité entre l'âme et les objets intelligibles, ces derniers sont décrits comme des réalités divines et éternelles (78c10-79e7).
(d) À la fin de la démonstration de l'immortalité de l'âme, les formes sont présentées comme les causes (aiítias) des phénomènes sensibles (99d4-107a2).

Je voudrais montrer que, en vertu de cette présentation fragmentée, Platon ne livre pas seulement une leçon doctrinale sur la nature des formes intelligibles: il propose encore une leçon de méthode, en indiquant le bon usage qu'il convient de faire de l'hypothèse des formes dans le cadre d'une recherche dialectique. La récurrence de l'argument montre en particulier que (1) les formes ont une fonction argumentative et (2) qu'elles sont un remède contre la misologie.

(1) La manière dont chaque exposé sur les formes s'insère dans la démonstration générale du dialogue révèle que le but principal de Socrate n'est pas de démontrer l'existence des formes mais plutôt d'utiliser la théorie des formes comme un argument servant à justifier les thèses principales du dialogue: l'espoir que le philosophe ressent à l'approche de la mort (a) et l'immortalité de l'âme (b, c et d).

(2) Cette fonction démonstrative peut être identifiée au procédé argumentatif (têchnê peri toûs lóguous, 90b) qui permet, à en croire Socrate, d'éviter de devenir «contempteur d'argument» (mioiólogos, 89d). J'interpréterai les multiples détours du dialogue (en particulier les coups manqués par lesquels Socrate tente de convaincre ses amis de l'immortalité de l'âme) comme un moyen pour le dialecticien d'engager ses interlocuteurs dans l'expérience de trouble (taraçhi) qui est à l'origine de la misologie. En employant à plusieurs reprises la théorie des formes pour dissiper ce trouble, Socrate, au moment de mourir, entraîne ses interlocuteurs à reproduire l'expérience fondatrice qui l'a fait naître lui-même à la philosophie lorsque, confus, par les explications contradictoires fournies par les sciences de la nature, Socrate a posé l'existence des formes pour ne plus offrir de prise à la haine.
Probablement, le Phédon est le dialogue préféré pour qui a jamais lu Platon, et la raison de cette attitude est la perfection de sa composition, ainsi que la largeur de son horizon, ce dernier surpassant celui de l'argumentation philosophique présentée dans le dialogue. Néanmoins, les philosophes concentrent, souvent, leur attention principale sur quatre arguments sur l'immortalité de l'âme formulés par Socrate, ce qui peut être justifié plutôt par la tradition de la philosophie, et avant tout par celle de la scolastique, que par notre intuition contemporaine concernent la raison de notre intérêt pour le Phédon.

Si nous considérons le Phédon comme une œuvre à la fois philosophique et littéraire, nous aurons plus de chances de découvrir ce qui fait de ce dialogue un vrai chef-d'œuvre même parmi les autres dialogues de Platon, tout aussi excellents.

De quoi s'agit-il dans le Phédon ? Son thème est « Philosophe et la mort », ou « Le Philosophe et la mort », ou « Le vrai Philosophe et la mort », ou bien « Socrate et la mort », tous ces titres ne signifiant que la même chose pour Platon. Le sujet de Phédon continue celui de Criton, l'action de Phédon se passe le jour suivant celui de la conversation entre Criton et Socrate. Mais une ou deux décades qui séparent la création de ces deux dialogues nous montrent le changement de vues, ainsi que l'accroissement de la maitrise de leur auteur.

La composition du Phédon est plus compliquée que celle du Criton. Le Phédon est une sorte de dialogue situé dans l’intérieur d’un autre dialogue. Le contenu du dialogue intérieur (central) est la discussion entre Socrate et ses amis, celle entre Échécrate et Phédon formant le dialogue extérieur. Cette forme d’un dialogue situé dans un autre n’y est pas introduite par Platon, pour la première fois : nous la rencontrons dans les autres dialogues aussi, par exemple dans le Protagoras et le Banquet, mais ce n’est que dans le Phédon que le dialogue extérieur est toujours présent « dans la coulisse » du dialogue central, dont les deux irruptions du premier dans le deuxième rendent témoignage. Ces deux irruptions (quand Échécrate interrompt la narration de Phédon) sont de grande importance dans Le Phédon : elles sont deux culminations de ce dernier, à la fois littéraires et philosophiques ; et le fait qu’il y ait plus d’une culmination dans le Phédon nous prouve la présence de plus qu’un vecteur dans la pensée de Platon, à cette époque. En même temps, la partie centrale du dialogue, celle qui décrit la discussion entre Socrate et ses amis dans la période entre deux irruptions de Phaedo par Échécrate est probablement la plus importante sur le plan théorétique. Rappelons-nous qu’Échécrate interrompt Phédon pour la première fois, après les objections de Simmias et Cébès aux arguments de Socrate sur l’immortalité de l’âme : «... il nous semblait qu’on nous avait plongés à nouveau dans le trouble, rejetés dans l'impossibilité d'adhérer non seulement aux raisonnements précédents, mais à tous ceux qu'on pourrait tenir par la suite »; explique Phédon (Phédon 88c) ; puis Phédon dit que Socrate « guérit » ses interlocuteurs des « effets que ces objections ont produits sur nous » (c'est-à-dire sur les amis de Socrate) (Phédon 89a). (A ce propos, nous voudrions donner notre interprétation des derniers mots de Socrate : « Criton, nous devons un coq à Esculape. Payez cette dette, ne soyez pas négligent » (Phédon, 118a). Esculape et

1 Toutes les références à l’œuvre de Platon sont basés sur : Platon, œuvres complètes, soul la direction de Luc Brisson (Paris, Flammarion, 2008).
Socrate, tous les deux, guérissaient les gens ; et quant à Socrate, il guérit ses amis de la peur de la mort, d’annihilation de l’âme après la mort du corps qu’elle habite). La deuxième « irruption » d’Échécrate dans le dialogue « intérieur » a lieu après que Socrate eut exposé les principes de sa théorie des Idées ; ce premier exprime son admiration devant la pensée de Socrate : « C’est étonnant comme cet homme-là a réussi à rendre lumineux tout ce qu’il disait, et même, à mon avis, si on n’est pas très intelligent » (Phédon 102a). Ainsi, la « guérison » par Socrate de ses interlocuteurs se passe entre les deux moments du dialogue principal : la peur de la disparition de l’âme après la mort et l’exposition de l’ontologie par Socrate. Ici, nous voyons encore les deux vecteurs de la pensée de Platon (prenant en considération le fait qu’Échécrate exprime son admiration devant Socrate avant que ce dernier ne fonde la preuve de l’immortalité de l’âme sur sa théorie des Idées). 

A la différence du Criton, le Phédon est plein d’harmonie. En dehors des idées communes, les participants de ce dernier ont de mêmes impulsions émotionnelles.

« Le plaisir » et « la douleur » - ce sont deux sentiments déconcertants qu’éprouvent ceux qui voient Socrate se préparer à la mort, et dont le jeune Apollodore sert d’indicateur. « L’agréable » et « le pénible » – avec ces mots, Socrate comme s’il eut pénétré dans l’humeur de ses amis, prend la parole. (La même harmonie est évidente dans le dialogue « extérieur », nous la sentons dès les premiers phrases qu’Échécrate et Phédon échangent : pour tous les deux, il n’est de plus grand plaisir que de se souvenir de Socrate, d’en parler ou entendre un autre en parler (Phédon 58 d).)

La conduite de Xanthippe est en contradiction avec cette mélodie, partagée par tous les autres, et Socrate commande à l’emmener.

« Je n’éprouvais cependant pas non plus un plaisir semblable à celui que je prenais lorsque, comme nous en avions l’habitude, nous étions plongés dans de la philosophie – car telle était bien la nature des discours que nous tenions », – Phédon dit à Échécrate. Mais Socrate aussi a réinterprété le rêve récurrent tout au long de sa vie lui disant de « faire une œuvre d’art » : « Et moi, du moins dans le passé, je croyais comprendre que ce que je faisais, c’était ce à quoi le rêve m’incitait qu’il m’encourageait à poursuivre comme lorsqu’on acclame les coureurs le long de la piste ; et qu’aussi, le rêve m’encourageait à continuer exactement ce que j’étais en train de faire, une œuvre d’art. Car, dans mon esprit, la philosophie était l’œuvre d’art la plus haute, et c’était ce que je pratiquais. Mais le procès a eu lieu, la fête du dieu fit obstacle à ma mort. Alors, et au cas où – sait-on jamais ? – le rêve insisterait pour me prescrire de faire une œuvre d’art au sens où tout le monde entend ce mot, il m’a semblé qu’il fallait ne pas désobéir, et me mettre à composer <…> ; le poète, me suis-je dit, si toutefois c’est poète qu’il veut être, doit inventer des histoires et non se contenter de dire » (Phédon 60 e – 61b).

Le Phédon se distingue aussi, par plus qu’une référence à Esope. Primo, en parlant des rapports étonnants entre l’agréable et le pénible, Socrate suppose que si Esope avait réfléchi à cela, il aurait fait une fable : le dieu, voulant faire cesser cette guerre entre eux et ne pouvant y parvenir, attacha leurs deux têtes pour en faire un seul morceau » (Phédon, 60 c). Secundo, Socrate dit qu’il « savait par cœur » les fables d’Esope (Phédon, 61b). Finalement, en parlant des « âmes d’hommes sans valeur » Socrate explique qu’après la mort de leur corps, « elles reviennent de nouveau s’enchaîner à un corps. Et, comme on pouvait s’y attendre, elles s’enchaînent à des corps dont le comportement est identique en tout point aux occupations qu’elles ont pu avoir leur vie durant. <…> Par exemple, ceux qui n’ont jamais rien fait d’autre que bâfrer, forniquer, se saouler, qui ne se sont jamais retenus, ceux-là viennent vraisemblablement plongés dans des corps appartenant à l’espèce des ânes ou de bestiaux de ce genre » (Phédon 81d-e), etc. N’ayant aucune preuve de la présence de doctrine de transmigration des âmes chez les Pythagoriciens et probablement les
Orphéâns\textsuperscript{2} nous risquons supposer que Socrate y a ajouté quelque motif populaire, que nous pourrions peut-être associer avec les mouvements religieux aussi bien qu’avec des fables d’Esop.

A propos de la doctrine sacrée (« les Mystères » (Phédon 62b)) de transmigration des âmes (quoique nous n’en connaissions pas grand-chose, sauf quelques mentions, par ex. : « ceux qui ont établi à notre intention les rites initiatiques » (Phédon 69c)), nous avons à ajouter que ce n’est que dans ce dialogue que Platon affirme d’une manière décisive que « …pour l’espèce des dieux, si l’on ne s’est pas occupé à philosopher et si l’on n’est pas parfaitement pur au moment du départ, il n’est pas permis d’arriver jusqu’à elle : ce n’est permis qu’à celui qui aime apprendre » (Phédon 82c). Avoir « cultivé la vertu publique et sociale, celle qu’on appelle la modération et aussi la justice » (Phédon 82b) n’est pas suffisant pour être purifié complètement : cette vertu nait de l’habitude et de l’exercice, alors que la purification complète exige « la philosophie et l’intelligence », autrement dit, l’aspiration à la connaissance (de ce qui est).

A la fin du dialogue, en exposant le mythe de transmigration des âmes, Socrate répète de nouveau que « ceux qui ont réussi à se purifier autant qu’il faut grâce à la philosophie vivent, pour tout le temps à venir, absolument sans corps… » (Phédon 114c). Cela nous permet de conclure qu’ici, il s’agit d’un culte, religieux et mystique, dans lequel l’idée de la purification de l’âme par la connaissance (des essences de choses) est dominante.

Une autre question liée à la doctrine sacrée, est la question de la différence des raisons des vertus. Les (vrais) philosophes et la plupart de peuple. Tous, hormis de (vrais) philosophes, sont courageux parce qu’ils ont peur ; et « comme ils ont peur d’être privés de certains plaisirs qui leur font envie, ils s’abstiennent d’autres plaisirs, mais cela parce qu’ils sont dominés par des plaisirs ! » (Phédon 68e). « Mais, continue Socrate <…>, il est fort à craindre que ce ne soit pas, pour acquérir de la vertu, un mode correct d’échange, celui qui consiste à échanger des plaisirs contre des plaisirs, des peines contre des peines, de la peur contre de la peur <…> ; à craindre qu’il n’y ait au contraire qu’une seule monnaie qui vaille et en fonction de laquelle tout cela doit être échangée : la pensée ! » (Phédon 69 a-b), la pensée étant un moyen de purification.

Nous pensons qu’au temps de la composition du Phédon, Platon avait sérieusement adhéré à une sorte de doctrine sacrée, c’est-à-dire, à une religion/philosophie sotériologique qui voyait dans la pensée (connaissance) un des moyens de purification de l’âme pendant son existence dans ce monde. Sinon, Platon aurait remarqué qu’en fin de compte Socrate parle du même échange des peurs contre des peurs et des plaisirs contre des plaisirs – déjà ceux de notre monde contre ceux du monde de l’au-delà.

A notre avis, le problème le plus difficile de l’analyse du Phédon est celui de la corrélation entre les aspects religieux/théologiques et philosophiques/rationnels des points de vue de Platon sur l’Univers. Ce n’est pas par hasard qu’au début du dialogue Socrate revoit son vieux et récurrent songe où le dieu l’appelait à faire « une œuvre d’art ».

Quelles sont les assertions philosophiques dans le Phédon ?

Primo, nous devons noter le désir de Platon de sauver à tout prix la thèse (formulée d’abord dans le Menon) que la connaissance humaine n’est que la réminiscence.

Secundo, c’est la théorie des Idées : les choses de ce monde existent grâce à leur participation aux Idées (le Nous d’Anaxagore y sert de symbole du monde

\textsuperscript{2} Luc Brisson, Orphee et l’Orphisme dans l’Antiquité Greco-romaine (Aldershot: Variorum, 2003).
La plupart des exemples pris par Platon appartiennent au domaine des mathématiques (le nombre, l'égal, la quantité, etc.). Selon Socrate, « il va de soi que notre raisonnement présent ne porte pas plus sur l'égal que sur le beau en soi, le bon en soi, ou le juste, ou le pieux – en un mot, sur tout ce à quoi nous imprimons la marque « ce que c'est »... » (Phédon 75 d). Mais, on ne trouve au Phédon aucun exemple des Idées (des essences des choses), hormis celui cité ci-dessus, celui des mathématiques. Pour parler précisément, nous ne pouvons pas, au moins dans cette vie, connaître des Idées.

Ici, nous ne pouvons pas ignorer le motif de logos (du mot, du raisonnement, du concept, de la raison divine), qui joue un rôle très important dans la philosophie de Platon. Selon Platon, le mot exprime la connaissance. « ... Un homme qui possède un savoir pourrait-il, oui ou non, rendre raison de ce qu'il sait ? » (Phédon 76b) – cette question de Socrate sous-entend une réponse affirmative. C'est pourquoi, Socrate ne veut pas que ses amis deviennent misologues, qu'ils se mettent à « haïr les raisonnements » (Phédon 89 d). Dans notre aspiration à explorer les premières causes (les Idées), nous ne pouvons commencer que par les raisonnements (inséparables des mots). « Voici alors ce qu'il me sembla devoir faire : me refugier du côté des raisonnements, et, à l'intérieur de ces raisonnements, examiner la vérité des êtres » (Phédon 99 e), - dit Socrate à propos de sa voie spirituelle (exactement, de sa « deuxième navigation »).

Chaque artisan (demiurge), tâche de faire son ouvrage le mieux possible.

Et puisque le Noos est l'intelligence divine, il y a parfaitement réussi. Il a ordonné toute chose et dispose chacune de la meilleure manière possible (Phédon 98c). Donc, notre voie vers les « premières causes » est celle d'en bas à là-haut, de l'exploration (réminiscence), toujours plus profonde des concepts.

Quelle que soit la connexion intérieure de notre raison à la raison divine (ce lien pourrait être évident pour les interlocuteurs de Socrate, en cas de leur sympathie pour les idées de Héraclite, par exemple ; ou bien, Platon n'a pas encore élaboré cette thèse, c'est pourquoi il ne concevait ce lien que par son intuition).

La certitude de Socrate qu'il ait avancé plus que quelqu'un d'autre dans cette investigation des concepts (lies aux Idées), d'où vient-elle ? Nous ne tentons pas de l'expliquer. Sa méthode, celle d'examiner si toutes les affirmations qui, sur son élan, ont procédé de son hypothèse, sont mutuellement consonantes ou dissonantes (Phédon 101d), ne nous y aide pas.

Et malgré l'exclamation d'Échécrate : « C'est étonnant comme cet homme-là a réussi à rendre lumineux tout ce qu'il disait, et même, à mon avis, si on n'est pas très intelligent » (Phédon 102 a), les interlocuteurs directs de Socrate gardent encore quelque doute (« ... la grandeur du problème que nous traitons et le peu de considération que j'ai pour la faiblesse humaine font qu'il m'est impossible de ne pas éprouver encore au fond de moi une certaine réticence à croire aux affirmations précédentes », -dit Simmias (Phédon 107b), que Socrate leur laisse avoir : « Non seulement tu as raison de dire cela à leurs propos, Simmias, dit Socrate, mais aussi à propos des hypothèses qui nous ont servi de point de départ : même si elles sont convaincantes à vos yeux, il faut cependant les examiner avec un souci de clarté encore plus grand. Si vous les explorez suffisamment à fond, vous pourrez ensuite, j'en suis sûr, aller aussi loin que vous conduira le discours de la raison, autant qu'il est possible à un homme de faire. Et si ce discours-là devient tout à fait clair, vous ne chercherez pas plus avant » (Phédon 107b).

Il nous semble que Socrate ait fini de « chercher plus avant ».

Si nous pratiquons l'approche complexe (philosophique et littéraire) du Phédon, nous verrons que non seulement la théorie des Idées, développée dans
ce dernier, anticipe sur l'ontologie de la République et le mythe à la fin du Phédon anticipe sur le récit d'Er de Pamphylie, mais aussi que le mythe, exposé par Socrate à la fin du Phédon, est le précurseur de l'allégorie de la caverne (République VII, 514a-517) : dans le Phédon, il s'agit, aussi, des gens qui ne peuvent pas s'imaginer qu'il existe une autre réalité, plus sublime, hors de celle qu'ils peuvent voir autour d'eux-mêmes : « Et nous, nous habitons dans ces creux (de la Terre – M.K.) sans nous en apercevoir : nous croyons habiter en haut, à la surface. Nous ressemblons à un être qui, séjournant au milieu des profondeurs de la haute mer, croirait habiter à la surface des flots ; voyant le soleil et les astres à travers l'eau, il prendrait la surface de la mer pour un ciel ! (Phédon 109 b-d). Et aussi : « <…> cette condition-là, c'est justement la nôtre. Nous habitons je ne sais quel creux de la terre, et nous croyons habiter au plus haut <…> … si l'un de nous parvenait jusqu'aux cimes de l'air, ou si, pourvu subitement d'ailes, il s'envolait <…>, et si sa nature était propre à soutenir cette vision, il saurait que c'est là le ciel véritable, la lumière véritable, et la Terre qui véritablement est Terre » (Phédon 109 e-110a).

La composition du Phédon (bien que Socrate réfute l'objection de Simmias qui pourrait être une thèse pythagoricienne) porte la marque du Pythagorisme. Avant tout, nous y voudrions mentionner l'idée de l'harmonie, qui pénètre tout le dialogue comme un motif musical, ainsi que tout ce qui concerne les nombres et les dimensions, quoiqu'en parlant des nombres comme nécessairement liés au Pythagorisme, nous rendons peut-être seulement hommage à la tradition philosophique ; en tout cas, l'un doit prendre en considération l'avertissement de L. Brisson : « …un lecteur de Platon peut et doit échapper à un réflexe conditionné, consistant à rapporter à une source pythagoricienne tout ce qu'il lit sur <…> les mathématiques au sens large ».3

Les images du Phédon sont impressionnantes : l'agréable et le pénible, faisant un seul morceau à deux têtes ; l'âme dans le corps ou l'œuvre de l'appétit « de sorte que c'est l'enchaîné lui-même qui coopère de la manière la plus efficace à parfaire son état d'enchaîné » ; le plaisir et la peine, comme s'ils possédaient un clou avec lequel ils clouent l'âme au corps » ; les cygnes qui chantent « tout à la joie d'aller retrouver le dieu qu'ils servent » ; la parole erronée, comme une abeille, qui laisse en ceux qui la suivent son aiguillon; et beaucoup d'autres.

Néanmoins, ce sont les images, liées au thème de la navigation, qui sont les plus fortes sur le plan théorétique : celle d'un radeau (le symbole de la doctrine humaine) sur lequel l'un puisse « traverser la vie » ; et sans doute, l'image la plus importante et la plus famouse, celle de la « seconde navigation, de Socrate, symbolisant sa voie personnelle de la recherche de premières causes.

Tous ces exemples nous montrent, à notre avis, la nécessité d'une approche complexe de l'œuvre de Platon, et, en premier lieu, de Phédon.

Abstract

The Phaedo is probably the favorite dialogue of everyone who has ever read Plato. The reasons of its popularity surely have to do with the perfection of its composition and literary style, as well as the breadth of its horizon, obviously surpassing the scale of the philosophical argumentation in the dialogue. Scholars, however, tend to concentrate on the four arguments for the immortality of the soul advanced by Socrates. Of course, this could be justified by the long philosophical tradition starting with scholasticism. But does it explain the contemporary reader's fascination with the Phaedo? Why does it strike us as a true masterpiece even when compared with Plato's other famous dialogues? To answer these questions, we need,

I believe, to approach the Phaedo as a literary not only philosophical work.

What is the dialogue about? Is it about “philosopher and death” or “the philosopher and death” or “the true philosopher and death” or “Socrates and death” (for Plato himself, all these titles mean the same)? The topic of the Phaedo aligns it with the Crito; the action in the former takes place the next day after Crito’s visit to Socrates’ cell. The composition of the Phaedo is much more sophisticated than those of most Platonic dialogues. The former is a dialogue within another dialogue. Echecrates’ conversation with Phaedo forms the external dialogue while the internal dialogue consists of Socrates’ discussion with his friends. This is not for the first time that Plato places one dialogue within another. We can find this structure in the Protagoras or the Symposium, for example. The most interesting features of the Phaedo’s composition are the breaking of the external dialogue into the internal one, which happens twice, when Echecrates interrupts Phaedo’s narrative. These are both literary and philosophical culminations of the dialogue.

In difference from the Crito, where both interlocutors try to persuade each other of their own rightness, the Phaedo is filled with harmony, which find its manifestation not only in a peaceful discussion of the like-minded persons, but also in the coincidence of their emotional impulses. “Pain and pleasure” are the feelings of those who observe Socrates preparing for his death. “Pain and pleasure” – with these words Socrates starts his speech, penetrating, as if were, the emotional experience of his friends.

Probably, the most difficult problem associated with the Phaedo is to define a proper correlation between the religiously-theological and philosophically-rational views of the world. It is not by chance that at the beginning of the dialogue we find Socrates reinterpreting his old recurring dream. Now Socrates understands god’s command “Practice and cultivate the arts” as his calling upon Socrates to compose poetry not arguments. The Idea of the Pious, the emphasis on the hope, the belief in a better future awaiting good people after death, the necessity of initiation and religious purification – all this testifies to Plato’s acquaintance with (or even initiation in some) soterioplogical religious cult. What are the main philosophical theses found in the Phaedo?

First, there is a very strong desire of Socrates to save the view of knowledge as recollection. Second, there is the theory of Ideas grounding the existence of the things of this world in their participation in the Ideas and identifying the world of Ideas (and, possibly, Nous as the symbol of the intelligible world) as the cause of the existence of this world, grasped by sense perception.

And finally, there is the thesis, put forward without much support – indeed, simply postulated – that Nous had to arrange everything in the best way possible. Every master (a demiurge) is aspiring to make his product the best possible. But in difference from us, Nous being the divine reason, it has perfectly succeeded in this.

But we can know the Ideas (as far as it is possible during our lifetime) only through the analysis of our own concepts. There is some connection between the human and the divine minds, and this is why Socrates is so much afraid of his friends becoming misologues. We are here taking the risk of attributing to Plato some Heraclitan ideas about logos (the word, the reason, the concept, the divine mind, etc.)

Reading the Phaedo, we notice that, not only does the theory of Ideas anticipate the ontology of the Republic, but also the myth at the end of the dialogue (“we who dwell in the hollow of it (i.e. of the earth) … think that we live above, on the surface of the earth”) anticipates the image of the Cave. The powerful images and the mentioning of Aesop and Asclepius also open new ways for the studies of the Phaedo.
Dokein, Doxa and Eikos in the Phaedo

Kraus, Manfred

1. Introduction

"Εδοξε δή μοι χρήναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἑκέινοις σκοπεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν – “It seemed to me that I must take refuge in the λόγοι, and study in them the truth of things” (Phaedo 99e4-6). This is one of the core sentences, if not the core sentence of the famous methodological passage of the Phaedo. Yet this phrase is very significantly and meaningfully framed: it begins with δόξα and leads to ἀλήθεια, with the λόγοι functioning as a kind of mediators in between both.

The semantic field of δοκεῖν and δόξα, as a rule does not have the best of reputations in the context of Platonic epistemology. In the Phaedrus, for instance, the Sicilians Tisias and Gorgias are severely criticized for the view that an orator will not need to know what is truly just, but only what would seem just to the masses (τὰ δόξατ᾽ ἂν πλήθει), nor what is really good or beautiful, but what will seem to be so (δόσα δόξει) (260a1-3). By the same token, they are equally accused of holding that “probabilities (εἰκότα) should be more honoured than truths.” (267a6-7). Socrates later attributes to Tisias a definition of the concept of εἰκός as “that which seems to the majority of people” (τὸ τῷ πλήθει δοκοῦν, 273a7-b1), thereby closely relating to one another the concepts of δόξα/δοκεῖν and εἰκός/ἐοικέναι. Both these terms are thus openly denounced as hallmarks of sophistry and rhetoric. They are associated with mere appearances and unphilosophical or at least prephilosophical opinions that fall short of real truth.

It is thus quite surprising to find that in the Phaedo, a dialogue that is so rich in methodological reflections central to Plato’s epistemology, not only do both these concepts recur frequently and in prominent passages, but they also seem to be devoid of the negative connotations associated with them later in the Phaedrus, but rather appear to be fairly legitimate and acceptable starting points for the quest for truth.

In the following, I will analyze the employment of the semantic fields of δοκεῖν and ἐοικέναι (and other cognate terms) in the Phaedo, in order to find out if they have a specific epistemological function in that dialogue.

2. Δοκεῖν and ἐοικέναι in the Phaedo

The term by far most frequent of all these in the Phaedo is the verb δοκέω. It occurs 108 times in the dialogue, followed by twenty-three occurrences of ἔοικα, seventeen of the participle εἰκός and five of its adverb εἰκότως. The noun δόξα itself is more infrequent, with only six occurrences in total. But if we also include the five occurrences of the verb δοξάω (“guess, surmise”), this makes a total of 119 occurrences of the δοκέω/δοκεῖν and εἰκός/ἐοικέναι (and other cognate terms) in the Phaedo, in order to find out if they have a specific epistemological function in that dialogue.
impersonal sense ("seem, appear"), mostly with a personal dative indicating the person or group to whom something appears. These impersonal usages are divided into three categories: Some are, as it were, neutral, describing that something appears to ordinary people or mortals in general, or to the philosophers, or to the Athenians, or without specifying any recipient at all. These cover 19 instances (plus three of the noun δόξα). The biggest group, however, comprises those instances, in which Socrates elicits or is given his interlocutors’ consent to his own statements (mostly in phrases such as “Does this seem [good] to you …?” – “Yes, so it seems to me!”). This category comprises about 55 instances. The remaining 33 instances (plus three more employing the noun δόξα), however, refer to Socrates’ own opinions, convictions or judgments. This last group is the most interesting, since it refers to opinions that Socrates himself either held at some point in the past (ἔδοξε) or even still continues to hold (δοκεῖ). Socrates alludes by these expressions to what appeared appropriate or reasonable to him at various stages of his life, including also his most recent decisions in the context of his trial and imprisonment. His reports on such decisions are also almost invariably introduced by the standard formula ἔδοξε μοι.

A similar distribution applies to the εἰκός group, yet with a slight variation. Three out of the 23 instances of the finite verb ἔοικα are complemented by a dative and thus have the special sense of “to resemble” or “to be equal to” (80a7, 100a1, 104b9). The rest are distributed among instances where something appears reasonable either to the interlocutors (7) or to Socrates himself (13). Out of the 17 instances of the participle εἰκός, six are as it were “neutral”, seven refer to interlocutors’ opinions, and four to Socrates’ own views.

Yet these categories are not evenly distributed over the dialogue. Whereas in the rest of the dialogue the overwhelming majority concern the interlocutors’ opinions or consent, this changes significantly at the beginning of the central autobiographical and methodological section (96a6-102a7). In this particular passage the verb δοκεῖν is used virtually exclusively to refer to Socrates’ own opinions and judgments. 14 out of its 19 occurrences refer to Socrates himself: He reports that in his youth the study of nature appeared to him to be something glorious (96a9), but when the knowledge he appeared to have found failed, he appeared to himself totally unfitted for this kind of investigation (96c1, 4). When he then met with Anaxagoras’s book, it appeared reasonable to him that everything be governed by the νοῦς (97c3), but he was badly disappointed when it appeared to him that Anaxagoras had not made appropriate use of his own concept (98c2).

For these reasons Socrates has developed his own methodology, which he expounds in 99d4-100a8. In this brief and dense passage all instances of δοκεῖν refer to Socrates: The passage emphatically begins with ἔδοξε τοίνυν μοι: “it seemed to me that I should avoid getting blinded” (99d4), reiterated in the programmatic phrase on taking refuge in the λόγοι (99e4). When he then outlines the method of hypotheses and hypothesis-testing, the testing is again based on δοκεῖν: “In each case I hypothesize some λόγος which I consider strongest, and whatever seems to me to agree with this, I regard as true, and what disagrees, as untrue” (100a3-7). When he subsequently applies that method to the question of causes and gives an exposition of an early version of the theory of forms, claiming that beautiful things are made beautiful by beauty itself, his rationale for thinking so is again that “this appears to me to be the safest answer” (100d8-9).

Hence, all these pivotal methodological advancements central to Plato’s epistemology are based on what is described as Socrates’ own δόξαι or involve some element of δόξα at decisive points. Surprisingly, none of the standard commentaries on the Phaedo has ever deemed this striking fact worthy of commenting. We need
not bother about the question, much-debated in commentaries,¹ of how much of this is actually biographical of the historical Socrates, and how much of it is Plato's invention. Suffice it to say that by attributing it to Socrates Plato makes clear he approves of the method.

Much more important is the fact that Socrates openly admits that some of his own earlier opinions have proved wrong or misguided, but that step by step he has learned better by subjecting his opinions to the trying and testing procedure of the hypothesis method, each time following the counsel of the best of his opinions, until what we may call true opinion is reached, which finally stands to testing. If this is not simply another instance of Socratic irony – as I don't think it is in this context –, we may take it to be a serious Platonic description of the way to ascend to knowledge. If this is so, then Plato is telling us here that there is a way of bridging the borderline between the realms of δόξα and of διάνοια and νόησις as described in the Divided Line in book VI of the Republic, and consequently that starting from δόξα may be an altogether legitimate approach.

At 96b5-8, at the beginning of the autobiographical narrative, Socrates had mentioned a theory according to which from sense-perception arise memory and opinion (μνήμη καὶ δόξαι), and from these, “when they reach a state of quiescence”, comes knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). This theory is certainly not Socrates’ own; Burnet, following Diels, ascribes it to Alcmaeon.² Yet Socrates says that he had considered it for some time, but found it unsatisfactory. The irritating moment obviously had been the requirement described rather vaguely in mystical vocabulary as “reaching a state of quiescence” (λαβούσης τὸ ἠρεμεῖν). It is this essential step that is now being as it were “rationalized” by the methodically sound and intellectually accountable procedure of the hypothetical method based on λόγοι. The element of μνήμη may also anticipate the theory of recollection and the later theories of the Theaetetus.

3. The Imagery of Images

Another element in the Phaedo that is closely and etymologically related to the lexical field of εἰκός is the employment of images (εἰκόνες). After Simmias has adduced the image of the lyre, comparing the soul to the immaterial harmony of the chords and body of the instrument (85e-86d), Socrates first responds to this with the different image (εἰκών, 89b3, d3) of the weaver and the successive dresses he produces and survives, an image that Socrates himself declares (equally) unreliable and uninformative. But later, within the methodological passage, Socrates doubles the motif, employing an imagery of images, when he compares those who try to look at Being itself to people ruining their eyes by looking directly into the sun instead of looking at its image (εἰκών, 99e1) in water or some other reflecting surface. It is for this very reason that it appeared (ἔδοξε) to him that he had better look at the truth of τὰ ὄντα in its reflection in λόγοι. But he immediately notices the danger of this imagery that would compare λόγοι to εἰκόνες, and thus to εἰκότα. So he calls himself back, expressing his concern that things may somehow not really resemble (οὐκ ἔοικε) to him that he had just compared them (ψ εἰκάζω, 99e6-100a1 – the only instance of that verb in the dialogue!). And then follows a remarkable phrase: “I will never in the least concede,” says he, “that he who studies τὰ ὄντα in λόγοι is looking at them any more ἐν εἰκόσι than he who studies them in facts (ἔργα)” (100a1-3). Christopher Rowe is clearly right in referring this “cryptic point” to the

¹ See Hackforth (1972) 127-131.
subsequent discussion of αἰτίαι and the hypothesis of forms.3

But what exactly does ἐν εἰκόσι mean here? None of the commentaries I have looked at has noticed that this form of the plural dative is ambiguous; it can be derived from the nasal-stem noun εἰκών (“image”) just as well as from the dental-stem perfect participle εἰκός (“plausible, appropriate”). As a matter of fact, this ambiguous form of the dative plural occurs only in two other passages in Plato’s entire oeuvre, both of which are highly pertinent: First, it appears twice in book VI of the Republic (VI 510b4 and e3), in the context of the Divided Line, where it refers to the εἰκόνες mathematicians draw as sensible images of the intelligible entities that are the real objects of their science. Yet these intelligible objects are described as that which the visible images resemble (οἷς ταῦτα ἔοικε, 510d7). So some ambiguous play with εἰκών and εἰκός is present here as well. And it is from these εἰκόσιν that mathematicians take their start as hypotheses and from which they proceed methodically until they reach the intelligible domain of the ἀνυπόθετον (510b4-9). Hence it is possible to transcend the boundary between the sensible and the intelligible world from εἰκόσι.

The last instance of the form εἰκόσι is found in the Theaetetus. There it is coupled with πιθανολογία and is hence probably closer to τὸ εἰκός. Protagoras is ironically envisaged as reproaching Socrates and Theodorus the geometrician for basing their statements on εἰκός (162e5), while “in matters of such importance” they might rightly be unwilling to “accept any λόγοι based on εἰκόσι” (162e8; “mere likelihood”, as Cornford translates).4 In both these passages the ambiguity also seems deliberate, and in each of them it is related to mathematical hypothesis-building.

Hence, in the Phaedo passage, too, there seems to be some deliberate and meaningful word-play with the imagery of images (εἰκόνες) that is prominent with respect to the theory of ideas also in other dialogues (see e.g. Phaedrus 250b3-4; Republic 520c4-6; Timaeus 48e3-49a1), but also with a positive role of εἰκότα in the context of the hypothesis method. What Socrates is saying here is that although they are in a certain sense images of truth, λόγοι must be superior to εἰκός since they are the very means for transcending the boundary from the world of δόξα and εἰκός into the realm of truth.

4. Δόξα and εἰκός in Other Dialogues

The observations on the epistemological value of δόξα and εἰκός in the Phaedo can be compared to similar remarks in other dialogues.

In the Gorgias, the famous passage on the four genuine technai and their flattering counterparts is also introduced by the formula δοκεῖ μοι (463a6), and the verb δοκεῖν recurs repeatedly, yet in two different senses: at 463b1, for instance, as in the introductory phrase, it refers to Socrates’ own opinions or judgments (as does φαίνεται, at 463e5); but only two lines later, at 463b3, it describes something that only looks like an art (δοκεῖ μὲν εἶναι, cf. 464a3, 4, 8, d3; 466a4, 9, b3, 9), but in truth is not (οὐκ ἔστιν), but only a knack or routine. Rhetoric, one of the four kolakeiai, is only an εἴδωλον of the true τέχνη, the art of politics (463d2). Flatteries do not know, but speculate (οὐ γνοῦσα […] ἀλλὰ στοχασμένη, 464c6) and pretend to know (προσποιεῖται, 464c7; d4), since they lack λόγος. Exploiting this ambiguity, when Polus objects that orators, like tyrants, may do what they please (δοκῇ αὐτοῖς, 466c2, d2), Socrates interprets this as them doing only what appears to them to be best (δόξῃ, 466e2, 10; 467a3, 5, b2; 468d4, e4, 7, 8), but is not, inquiring repeatedly for Polus’s assent (σοι δοκοῦσιν; 467c5, 8). Parallels with the central passage of the

4 Cornford (1957) 62.
Another pertinent dialogue is the *Meno*. There, in the process of solving the mathematical problem of doubling a square Socrates explicitly encourages the uneducated slave-boy to respond freely what appears to him (τὸ γάρ σοι δοκοῦν τοῦτο ἁπακρίνου, 83d1-2), after the boy had just once replied: ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ (83d1). Socrates then explains to Meno that what he is eliciting from the boy are only the boy’s own δόξαι (85b8, c4, c10, e7), which he “dreams”, but which, if tested and adjusted, may become ἀληθεῖς δόξαι (85c7). It is Meno who accompanies these explanations with interjections of approval such as ἔοικεν (84c3) or δοκεῖ μοι (84c9, 86b5, c3). The method applied is clearly a variant of the hypothesis method: The hypotheses are brought forward by the boy as δόξαι, and examined and refuted by Socrates, until ἀληθῆς δόξα is finally attained.

This takes us to the *Theaetetus*. This dialogue has as its central theme the relationship of δόξα and ἐπιστήμη. In a sequence that again makes use of the method of hypothesis-testing, Theaetetus makes three attempts at defining knowledge, each of which Socrates subjects to a dialectical test that ends in refutation and aporia. We learn that neither sense-perception nor δόξα, not even ἀληθῆς δόξα can simply be equated with ἐπιστήμη. But Socrates at least defines that when the soul affirms something consistently without any doubt, this is called a δόξα (190a2-4). Theaetetus’ third attempt, which adds to ἀληθῆς δόξα the element of λόγος, clearly points in the right direction. Even if this final definition also fails, owing to the interlocutors’ inability to find an appropriate definition of λόγος, it is clear that if such a definition can be found (a question that refers the reader beyond the boundaries of the dialogue), Theaetetus’ third definition of ἐπιστήμη will be viable, which again attributes an important epistemological role to δόξα. Translators and commentators are significantly undecided on how they should best render δόξα in this context: Cornford for instance first starts off with “judgment”, but later switches to “belief” or “notion”; Burnyeat seems torn between “opinion” and “judgement”, but finally defends the latter, which is also M.J. Levett’s solution in her 1928 translation appended to Burnyeat’s commentary. Polansky generally opts for “opinion”. This undecidedness is understandable: “opinion” and “belief” sound depreciative, but “judgment” seems to express a positive value. Translators apparently feel that a more favourable term is called for, but don’t ultimately dare trust their own intuitions.

As for εἰκός, a more positive view towards εἰκός and probability emerges for instance in the *Timaeus*, in which the entire cosmology described is characterized as an εἰκὸς λόγος, much in the same sense as Parmenides’ ἐοικός διάκοσμος, and with similar debates about its meaning. Yet later in the dialogue Plato somehow seems to associate the εἰκός λόγος with truth, since “in accordance with this likely account, this Cosmos has in truth come into existence as a Living Creature” (30b7-8). Here again, keeping always to what is most likely (τοῦ μάλιστα εἰκότος, 44c7-d1) is recommended as a methodical principle, and the εἰκός λόγος may run parallel to the ὀρθὸς λόγος (56b4).

5. Δόξα and εἰκός before Plato

Recent scholarship has shown that in times before Plato the terms εἰκός and δόξα did not have entirely negative connotations. It can be demonstrated that

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5 Cornford (1957) 109 vs. 142, 155.
6 Burnyeat (1990) esp. 69 and 179 note 62.
7 Polansky (1992) 172 and passim.
from Homer onwards, ἔοικε and εἰκός have had basically two different meanings, depending on whether or not they were accompanied by a dative complement. With a dative, their meaning would be “to resemble” or “to look like” something, but in absolute usage, without the dative, they have a clearly approving sense, something like “to be appropriate, fitting, suitable, or proper”. It can even be argued that this latter meaning may have been the more original one. Accordingly, the ἐοικὼς διάκοσμος in Parmenides’ poem should not be interpreted as a cosmos only “seeming” or “apparent”, but as a “plausible” or “fitting” description, the best explanation available given the frailty of human understanding. And since this term refers to the cosmology of Parmenides’ so-called δόξα, not even δόξα or τά δοκοῦντα in that context need to be taken as entirely negative terms, even if they are admittedly far from truth; they are still the best mortals can get at without a philosopher’s help. Similar thoughts are also found in Xenophanes. Δοκεῖ μοι is a fairly common formula to express one’s own firm convictions, not only in the Presocratics but also in Herodotus. This is not to deny, though, that δοκεῖν may also occur with a depreciatory meaning in Presocratic contexts.

In the context of Attic oratory (especially in Antiphon or Lysias), furthermore, arguments based on εἰκός, on the most plausible and most consistent interpretation of the available pieces of evidence, served as a highly efficient tool for finding the truth about obscure crimes. Gorgias himself, the arch-champion of εἰκός-arguments, in his Eulogy of Helen even uses the word δόξα in this same sense (δεῖ δὲ καὶ δόξῃ δεῖξαι, Frg. B 11, 9; explained by Buchheim as “die schon akzeptierte, gängige Ansicht, durch deren Erinnerung man auch weniger Bekanntes annehmbar machen kann”).

The problem of δόξα and ἐπιστήμη had been brought up by the Eleatics, and exploited by the Sophists; so it must have been on the agenda in Plato’s times; Plato’s contemporary Antisthenes is credited with a work in four books Περὶ δόξης καὶ ἐπιστήμης.

5. Conclusion

Returning to the Phaedo, given this history of the terms before Plato, and considering the density of the related vocabulary in and around the central epistemological and methodological passages of the dialogue, and also the resonances of the concept in other dialogues, it seems inevitable to assume that by using the frequent vocabulary of δοκεῖν and εἰκός with respect also to Socrates’ own opinions, Plato is describing a method of finding truth that starts from δόξαι and εἰκότα; but he insists on these opinions being only preliminary hypotheses that must be tested by means of λόγοι and, if refuted, abandoned or replaced by more refined or modified hypotheses. Yet if found acceptable, they may be made the basis of superior hypotheses, until finally a point is reached that Plato here calls ἱκανόν (101e1).

11 Kraus (2006); for the contrary view, see Hoffman (2008).
12 Parmenides, Frg. B 8,60.
13 See Xenophanes, Frg. B 34, 4 and B 35 Diels/Kranz.
14 Cf. e.g. Archytas, Frg. B 1 and B 4 Diels/Kranz (with reference to mathematics!)
15 Cf. e.g. Heraclitus, Frg. B 17 and B 28 Diels/Kranz.
16 Kraus (2006) 139-141.
17 Buchheim (1989) 165.
18 Diogenes Laertius VI, 17.
19 Cf. the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή Republic VI, 510b7, 511b6. Cf. Trabattone (2011) 205;
Michael Erler has recently made a good point by highlighting that Socrates often starts an investigation from a view that he or one of the interlocutors has heard from others. If such ἀκούσματα are fit as starting points for an investigation according to the hypothesis method, why not δόξαι and εἰκότα in general, especially so if they are Socrates’ own δόξαι? A formula like the anaphorically repeated ἔδοξέ μοι may well have been understood by his contemporaries as meaning more than just “it seemed to me”, namely rather “I decided”. The legal sense of δοκεῖν in political decision-making (ἔδοξεν τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ was the standard formula for a valid decree taken by the Athenian council and assembly) may at least partly be evoked by this formula.

Looking at things this way, a more favourable understanding of the role of δόξα and εἰκός within Plato’s epistemology emerges. Mind that the adverb εἰκότως is invariably used in the positive sense of “rightly”, “appropriately” throughout the dialogue. So Plato may actually have adopted a positive pre-Platonic sense of εἰκός as “appropriate” or “reasonable”. As he often does, he may have deliberately adapted these sophistic concepts and catchwords and incorporated them to his own philosophical thinking, so as to eradicate or at least reduce their dangerous sophistic potential. If this is correct, δόξα and εἰκός must be taken into account more seriously as elements of Plato’s epistemological concepts, and the Phaedo would thus occupy a pivotal position as a central piece of evidence in this development within Plato’s epistemological thinking.

SUMMARY: Im Kontext platonischer Philosophie genießen die Begriffe δοκεῖν, δόξα und εἰκός nicht den besten Ruf. Im Phaidros etwa werden sie mit bloßen Erscheinungen und vorphilosophischen Ansichten in Verbindung gebracht und als Markenzeichen von Sophistik und Rhetorik gebrandmarkt. Um so mehr muß verwundern, daß dieselben Begriffe in einem an für die Platonische Epistemologie wichtigen methodologischen Reflexionen so reichen Dialog wie dem Phaidon nicht nur häufig und an zentralen Stellen konzentriert begegnen, sondern ihnen auch die negativen Konnotationen zu fehlen scheinen.

Der Beitrag untersucht die Belege der Termini δοκεῖν, δόξα und εἰκός und ihrer Ableitungen in ihren jeweiligen Kontexten, in ihrer Verteilung innerhalb des Dialogs und auf verschiedene Personen (Sokrates, Gesprächspartner, andere oder ungenannte Personen) und im Vergleich mit ähnlichen Begriffen wie φαίνεσθαι or οἴεσθαι, um so eine eventuelle spezielle Bedeutung und Funktion dieser semantischen Felder im Phaidon zu ermitteln.

So holt Sokrates ständig die Zustimmung seiner Gesprächspartner für seine Thesen ein durch Fragen, ob ihnen etwas einleuchte (δοκεῖ) oder plausibel (εἰκός) erscheine. Auch Meinungen beliebiger anderer Personen werden gerne mit diesen Begriffen billigend eingeführt. Insbesondere aber bezieht sich Sokrates in der autobiographischen Passage 96a6-102a7 und in noch größerem Maße in dem methodologischen Kernstück 99d4-100a8 mit diesen Termini auf seine eigenen grundlegenden Ansichten und Entscheidungen, vor allem aber auf seinen methodischen Entschluß der Zufluchtnahme zu den λόγοι.

Dabei stellt sich auch eine wichtige methodische Funktion dieses Begriffsfeldes im Kontext der Überlegungen zur Hypothesis-Methode heraus, insofern auch die Prüfung von Sätzen nach Kriterien des δοκεῖν oder εἰκός erfolgen kann. Daraus ergibt sich ein Weg, die im Liniengleichnis der Politeia gezogene Grenze

Hackforth (1972) 141.
21 So translated by Hackforth (1972) 133.
zwischen den Bereichen von δόξα einerseits und διάνοια und νόησις andererseits erkenntnistheoretisch mit Hilfe der λόγοι zu überwinden.


Insofern sich auch für die vorplatonische Epoche in der jüngeren Forschung ein wesentlich positiver gefärbtes Bild der Begriffe εἰκός und δόξα und ihres Umfelds abzeichnet, scheint nichts zu hindern, in der extrem dichten und prägnant zugespickten Verwendung dieser Termini im Phaidon eine bewuβte Übernahme älterer, teilweise vorsokratischer oder sophistischer Denkmodelle und Leitbegriffe durch Platon und ihre aufwertende Integration in eigene erkenntnistheoretische Konzeptionen zu erkennen.

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La figure du philosophe : entre réalité et apparence

Lachance, Geneviève

Le terme φιλοσοφία apparaît dès les premières pages du Phédon : le narrateur du dialogue nous y apprend que Socrate, bien qu’enchaîné en prison et attendant sa dernière heure, continuait à s’occuper de philosophie (59a3). Il réapparaît ensuite à de multiples reprises, laissant ainsi présager l’importance du thème philosophique dans l’ensemble du dialogue. Or, des 39 occurrences recensées des termes de la famille de φιλοσοφία (incluant φιλόσοφος, φιλοσοφέω et ses dérivés), plus du tiers est accompagné de qualificatifs servant à souligner son caractère authentique1. Ainsi, il ne s’agit pas uniquement du philosophe, mais du philosophe véritable (ἀληθῶς, γνησίως), de celui qui pratique réellement (τῷ ὄντι) la philosophie. De même, il ne s’agit pas seulement de la philosophie, genre dans lequel peut s’immiscer de nombreux éléments disparates, voire opposés, mais de la philosophie droite et convenable, qui s’exerce de façon correcte (ὁρθῶς) Cet ajout, qui a de quoi surprendre, révèle une tension inhérente au texte. Si Socrate ressent la nécessité de parler d’une philosophie authentique, n’est-ce pas là le signe qu’il en existe une autre, inauthentique et illusoire, avec laquelle il désire prendre ses distances? Si Platon déploie autant d’efforts pour souligner le caractère légitime de certains philosophes, n’est-ce pas parce qu’il est d’avis qu’il en existe d’autres, frauduleux, avec lesquels il est confronté?

Une description de la philosophie illégitime, apparente et inauthentique se trouve en effet en filigrane de cette caractérisation de la philosophie véritable. Le philosophe inauthentique présente tous les attributs contraires du philosophe authentique et s’ oppose à ce dernier comme l’ombre à la lumière. Cette description, plus tacite que formelle, culmine pourtant par la présentation d’un cas précis : l’antilogicien (ἀντιλογικός). Figure vague et trompeuse qui revêt insidieusement le masque du philosophe, l’antilogicien – ou celui qui aime à s’occuper de discours contradictoires – fait plusieurs apparitions marquées dans l’œuvre de Platon, notamment dans les dialogues dits de maturité et de vieillesse2, et intervient à deux reprises dans le Phédon. Quelquefois décrit comme un sophiste, fréquemment relié à l’éristique, il est le portrait typique de ce qu’il convient d’éviter lorsqu’on se donne pour but de philosopher. La critique platonicienne de l’antilogicien, laissée bien souvent de côté par les commentateurs, permet de mieux comprendre les pièges qui

1 Les astérisques indiquent les passages où se trouvent de tels qualificatifs. Φιλοσοφία : 59a61, 3a63, 3e64, *10a66, *5d68, 2c81, 11b82, 7b82, 2d82, 5e83, 1a2, 84a114, 3c3, Φιλόσοφος : 61c61, 6d62, 5c64, 10b64, *9d64, 2e65, *2a65, 1c66, 11b, *2 67d68, 9b3*, 68c1, 68d12, 82c3*, 83b6*, 84a2, 91a2*, 95c1, 101e6*. Φιλοσοφέω et ses dérivés : 64b64, 3b67, *4d67, *8e69, *4d80, *2e82, *6b10. Plusieurs passages qui ne contiennent pas ces qualificatifs de manière explicite les sous-entendent toutefois.

2 Hormis le Lysis, généralement considéré comme un dialogue de jeunesse. Plus précisément, les dialogues de Platon contiennent deux occurrences du substantif ἀντιλογία (République V 454b2 et VII 539b4), 12 occurrences de l’adjectif αντιλογικός (Lysis 216a7; Phédon 90c1 et 101e2; Phèdre 261d10; République V 454a1; Sophiste 225b11, 225b12, 226a2, 232b6, 232e3 et 232b12; Théétète 197a1) et une occurrence de l’adverbe ἀντιλογικῶς (Théétète 164e7). Pour le verbe ἀντιλέγειν, voir mon article « De deux expressions utilisées par Platon en contexte réfutatif : ἐναντία λέγειν et ἀντιλεγεῖν » publié prochainement dans Hermes, Zeitschrift für Klassische Philologie.
se dressent sur le chemin de la sagesse et apporte ainsi un éclairage nouveau sur l’un des thèmes centraux du Phédon, à savoir la philosophie. Si Socrate et, à plus forte raison, Platon s’opposent aussi fermement aux antilogiciens, c’est parce que ceux-ci donnent l’illusion d’être des philosophes hors pair. Toutefois, par leur utilisation dévoyée du λόγος, ils empoisonnent toute recherche philosophique sérieuse et détournent les âmes philosophiques vers le relativisme le plus absolu.

L’« Autre » philosophe

On sait, depuis l’Antiquité, que le Phédon s’attache à définir l’exercice pur et vrai de la philosophie. La description platonicienne du philosophe véritable est donc bien connue. Beaucoup moins connus toutefois sont les opposants à cette figure du philosophe légitime. Quelques candidats apparaissent timidement dès le début du dialogue. Ainsi, le philosophe véritable s’oppose au commun des mortels, aux « autres » (οἱ ἄλλοι [64a5]), qui ne remarquent pas que ceux qui s’occupent droitement de philosophie ne s’appliquent qu’à mourir, c’est-à-dire à détacher leur âme de leur corps. Il se différencie également du sophiste Événos de Paros, qui « paraît » (δοκεῖ [61c7]) s’occuper convenablement (ἀξίως [61c8]) de philosophie, mais qui n’accepterait jamais de mourir pour se rapprocher de l’objet réel de cette dernière. Il semble également se distinguer des pythagoriciens Cébès et Simmias qui, comme le commun des mortels, ne comprennent pas que l’exercice philosophique se rapproche de l’acte de mourir. Bref, le philosophe véritable s’oppose à tous ceux qui sont φιλοσώματοι (68c1), y compris aux φιλοχρήματοι et aux φιλότιμοι (68c2).

Un groupe d’adversaires plus sérieux apparaît toutefois dans la deuxième moitié du Phédon et sont nommés à partir d’une activité qu’ils aiment à pratiquer : « ceux qui passent leur temps à s’occuper d’arguments contradictoires » (οἱ περὶ τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους διατρίψαντες [90b9-c1]) ou, simplement, « antilogiciens » (οἱ ἀντιλογικοί [101e2-1]). Les arguments ou discours contradictoires dont il est ici question ne sont pas explicitement décrits par Platon. Les commentateurs ont fréquemment associé ces discours aux Dissoi Logoi, ce mystérieux recueil de textes – parfois attribué à Protagoras ou même à Socrate – dans lequel l’auteur présente des arguments pro et contra la même thèse3. Ils peuvent également faire référence à une quelconque pratique de la réfutation (elenchos), pratique durant laquelle une thèse est affirmée après mise en contradiction de la thèse opposée. En effet, les antilogiciens sont souvent représentés dans les dialogues platoniciens comme d’ avides réfuteurs. Par exemple, dans le Lysis (216a5-b9), les antilogiciens (ἄντιλογοι) [216a7] posent des questions (ἐρήσονται [216a7]) tout en ciblant les contradictions (ἐναντιώτατον [216b1]) dans le discours de leurs interlocuteurs. Dans le Théétète (163b1-165e6), ils posent des questions terribles (τὸ δεινότατον ἐρώτημα [165b2]) qui ressemblent à des pièges logiques. Dans la République (VII, 537e1-539d7), les jeunes gens contredisent (ἀντιλέγοντα [539c8]) par pur plaisir tous ceux qui se trouvent sur leur passage et les réfutent (nombreuses occurrences de termes de la famille d’ἔλεγχος [538d8 et d539 ,b5, b9 et c1]) de manière superficielle, c’est-à-dire en obtenant des contradictions apparentes (eis ἀντιλογίαν [539b4]). Enfin, dans le Sophiste 225a2-226a4, les λόγοι dits « antilogiques » sont décrits comme consistant à formuler des questions et des réponses bênes (κατακεκερματισμένον ἐρωτήσει πρὸς ἀποκρίσεις [225b9-8]) et situés dans le cadre de réunions privées (ἐν ἰδίοις [225b8]) et non publiques. Il est à

noter toutefois que le type de réfutation utilisé par les antilogiciens est dévoyé et ne possède pas les mêmes finalités morales que la réfutation socratique.

L’antilogicien fait une première apparition dans le Phédon en 89c11-91c5, soit dans le passage sur la misologie. Ce passage contient d’ailleurs l’une des dernières oppositions entre « philosophie véritable » et « philosophie apparente » et nous donne de précieux indices sur l’identité de ces philosophes inauthentiques. Après avoir entendu les arguments de Cébès et de Simmias, qui mettaient en doute la solidité de la thèse socratique sur l’immortalité de l’âme, les amis de Socrate se sentent attérris, voire découragés. Socrate leur adresse alors un avertissement (εὐλαβέομαι [89c11]) : il faut prendre garde de détester les λόγοι. En effet, il n’y a pas pire mal (μεῖζον... κακόν [89d2-3]) que la misologie. Le misologue en vient à détester les discours, car il a accordé trop souvent sa confiance à des raisonnements qui, par la suite, ne sont découverts que faux. Platon précise bien le fait suivant : ces raisonnements qu’il croyait bons et qui lui ont ensuite semblé bons étaient parfois bons, mais parfois on ne les recouvre que faux. C’est donc dire que le misologue est incapable de distinguer quels raisonnements sont réellement bons de ceux qui ne le sont pas : il accorde sa confiance à un raisonnement qui s’avère faux ou délaisse un argument vrai en pensant qu’il est erroné. Cette expérience implique l’absence d’une compétence : le misologue est ἄνευ τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης (90b7). Il lui manque le savoir de l’expert en λόγοι : il ne possède pas la compétence nécessaire pour discriminer les λόγοι vrais des λόγοi faux. Cette expérience nécessite aussi la répétition : il faut avoir été confronté plus d’une fois à une telle déception pour devenir misologue. Enfin, les λόγοι dont il est ici question – peuvent être bons ou faux. Plus précisément, Platon reconnaît qu’il existe des λόγοi vrais, mais ne nie pas qu’il puisse également exister des λόγοi faux, solides et qui peuvent être saisies comme tels.

Après avoir ainsi décrit le piège de la misologie et l’avoir comparé à celui de la misanthropie, Socrate donne un exemple frappant (90b9-c6) :

Et, tu le sais bien, ce sont surtout ceux qui passent leur temps à s’occuper d’arguments contradictoires qui finissent par croire qu’ils sont arrivés au comble de la maîtrise et qu’ils sont les seuls à avoir compris qu’il n’y a rien de sain ni d’assuré en aucune chose, ni en aucun raisonnement non plus ; que tout ce qui existe se trouve tout bonnement emporté dans une sorte d’Euripe, balloté par des courants contraires, impuissants à se stabiliser pour quelque durée que ce soit, en quoi que ce soit. (trad. Dixsaut, légèrement modifiée) (καὶ μάλιστα δὴ οἱ περὶ τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους διατρίψαντες οἶσθ’ ὅτι τελευτῶντε οἴονται σοφώτατοι γεγονέναι καὶ κατανενοηκέναι μόνοι ὅτι οὔτε τῶν πραγμάτων οὔδενος οὔδεν ὑγιὲς οὐδὲ βέβαιον οὔτε τῶν λόγων, ἀλλὰ πάντα τὰ ἄνθρωπος ὁσπέρ ἐν Ἑυρίπῳ ἀνω κάτω στρέφεται καὶ χρόνον οὐδένα ἐν οὐδενί μένει.)

L’antilogicien apparaît ici comme un cas exemplaire : il est précisément (καὶ μάλιστα δὴ [90b9]) un misologue. Comme le misanthrope, à qui il manque la τέχνη portant sur l’objet de son mépris (ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι) (90b7). Cette spécification a de quoi étonner, car il est dit plus tôt qu’il s’occupait précisément de λόγοι. En d’autres mots, l’antilogicien détecte les λόγοι, mais passe son temps à s’occuper d’une forme précise de λόγοi, les arguments antilogiques (ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι). La science qui lui fait cruellement défaut ne saurait donc s’assimiler à l’antilogie : elle s’y opposerait même totalement. Quoique Platon ne décrive pas explicitement cette mystérieuse science dans le passage qui nous occupe, il est possible d’y voir une référence à la dialectique, plus précisément à cette partie la plus difficile de la philosophie qui
concerne les λόγοι (τὸ περὶ τοὺς λόγους [Rép. VI, 498a3])4. En effet, l’antilogicien misologue croit qu’il n’existe rien de sain ni d’assuré dans les discours et les choses. Le philosophe véritable, lui, croit également qu’il n’existe rien de sain dans les choses du monde sensible, car elles varient constamment (79c1-10). Toutefois, il est d’avis qu’il existe des formes qui, toujours, restent les mêmes et a fait de ces dernières l’objet de sa recherche. Il est également d’avis qu’en haïssant les λόγοι, on se prive de la vérité et du savoir sur ce qui est (τὰ ὄντα [90d7-6]). Les λόγοι sont donc instrumentaux à sa recherche philosophique. Pour le véritable philosophe, il existe des λόγοι fermes et sains, lesquels portent sur ce qui est et non sur le monde sensible. Il en va tout autrement de l’antilogicien, qui apparaît comme un matérialiste extrême. Comme le philosophe véritable, il reconnaît que le monde matériel ne laisse place à aucune certitude et stabilité. Toutefois, cet aveu ne se double pas, comme chez le philosophe authentique, de la croyance en un autre niveau de réalité : l’antilogicien n’a que faire de ce qui est5. Selon lui, tous les êtres (τὰ ὄντα) sont changeants comme l’Europe, ce détrône célèbre pour ses courants variables6. Il n’est donc pas étonnant qu’il s’occupe de discours contradictoires. Ses discours sont à l’image du monde sensible dans lequel il vit et sur lequel il concentre son attention : ils sont en mouvement constant...

4 Contre cette thèse, voir T. MILLER, Socrates’ Warning Against Misology (Plato, Phaedo 88c-91c), « Phronesis », 60, 2015, p. 161-162. Miller affirme que l’expression τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης utilisée en Phèdon 90b7 ne peut se rapporter à la dialectique, car les antilogiciens, qui sont déjà des « expert publics arguers, already possess dialectical skill » (p. 161). Miller ignore ici la définition donnée en Sophiste 225a-b, où l’antilogicien est placé dans la sphère des discours privés et non publics. Quant aux aptitudes dialectiques qu’il possède, il est vrai que l’antilogicien utilise la réfutation, mais il ignore totalement les outils propres à la dialectique platonicienne, comme le prouve d’ailleurs les passages 452e-456a du cinquième livre de la République et 101e1-102a1 du Phèdon. Enfin, Miller affirme que l’expression τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης ne peut se rapporter à la dialectique, car cette expression est trop vague. Selon lui, Platon avait déjà adopté la terminologie de la dialectique au moment où il écrivit le Phèdon (p. ex., dans l’Euthydème, le Ménon et la République) (n. 45, p. 162). Cet argument est faible, car il suggère que le Phèdon est antérieur à tous ces dialogues. Or, même s’il semble que Platon fasse référence au Ménon dans le Phèdon (73a-b), on ne connaît pas la chronologie exacte des œuvres de Platon. Tout argument reposant sur la chronologie de ses dialogues prête donc le flanc à la critique. Miller est d’avis que l’expression τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης fait référence à la rhétorique. Pour appuyer son propos, il se repose sur le fait que Platon utilise une expression similaire dans d’autres dialogues en référence à la rhétorique : entre autres, en Gorgias 449d-e et 450b (περὶ λόγων) et en Phèdre 273a (οἱ περὶ τοὺς λόγους τεχνικοί), 261b et 273e (τέχνη περὶ λόγων) et 260d, 262c, 266c-d, 267b-d, 270a, 270e, 271c, 272b, 273d et 274b (τέχνη λόγων). De cela, il conclut que « the misologists… [lack] not dialectical but rhetorical expertise » (p. 162). Cet argument n’est pas convaincant. Platon a lui-même créé un terme pour désigner la rhétorique : ἡ ῥητορική. Dans le Gorgias et le Phèdre, il n’utilise jamais les expressions περὶ λόγους, οἵ περὶ τοὺς λόγους τεχνικοί ou τέχνη περὶ λόγων seules, mais toujours dans le voisinage du terme ῥητορική. Dans le Gorgias, il conteste le fait que la rhétorique soit le seul art à utiliser les λόγοι (450a-c). Quant à la rhétorique décrite dans le Phèdre, elle se rapporte tantôt à la rhétorique proprement dite, tantôt à l’antilogique, tantôt à un art qui engloberait également la dialectique. Ainsi, la rhétorique n’est pas seule à porter sur les discours, mais également la dialectique et l’antilogique. Cette absence de délimitations claires peut également être observée chez Xénophon (Mémorables I, 2.31). Dans les Mémorables, Xénophon nous apprend que Critias avait institué une loi visant Socrate et selon laquelle il était interdit d’enseigner la τέχνη λόγων. Xénophon nous apprend que Critias avait institué une loi visant Socrate et selon laquelle il était interdit d’enseigner la τέχνη λόγων. Socrate était-il maître de rhétorique? Il convient d’en douter. Toutefois, L.-A. Dorion reconnaît que l’expression τῆς περὶ λόγων est vague et, selon le contexte, peut tant renvoyer à la rhétorique qu’à la dialectique (Xénophon, Mémorables I, Paris, Les belles Lettres, 2010, p. 98-99). Enfin, Miller garde silence sur le passage 498a3 de République VI, dans lequel Platon utilise l’expression τοὶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους pour décrire cette partie la plus difficile de la philosophie, qu’il est permis d’assimiler – en fonction du contexte même dans lequel l’expression se trouve – à la dialectique.

5 …ἐπεί βούλοι τιν τῶν ὄντων εὑρεῖν; ἐκείνους μὲν γὰρ ἴσως τοῦ περὶ τοὺς λόγους οὐδὲ φροντὶς (101e5-3).


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et oscillent d’un opposé à l’autre.

Le passage sur la misologie se termine par une caractérisation plus marquée de la manière d’agir non philosophique :

Car je cours un risque, moi, dans ce moment présent où il n’est plus question que d’elle [la mort] : celui de ne pas me comporter en philosophe mais, semblable en cela aux gens qui manquent de culture véritable, en homme qui aime à triompher. Les gens dont je parle se moquent en effet complètement, lorsqu’ils entament une controverse à propos d’un objet donné, de savoir comment sont réellement les objets dont ils parlent. Non, ils mettent toute leur énergie à faire adopter par ceux qui les écoutent la manière dont eux ont déterminé ces objets. Pour moi, à l’heure présente, j’en viens à penser qu’entre eux et moi il n’existe que cette seule différence : ce à quoi je vais, moi, employer mon énergie, ce ne sera pas à faire que mes paroles paraissent vraies à ceux qui m’écoutent (si un tel effet se produit, ce sera par surcroît), mais à faire qu’elles me paraissent le plus possible, à moi-même, être telles. (ἐμοὶ δὲ αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα τοῦ θανάτου, ὡς κινδυνεύω ἔγωγε ἐν τῷ παρόντι περὶ αὐτοῦ τούτου οὐ φιλοσοφώς ἔχειν ἀλλ’ ὠψερ οἱ πάνω ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονίκως, καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι ὅταν περὶ τοῦ ἀμφισβητῶσιν, ὅπῃ μὲν ἔχει περὶ ἄν ἄν ὁ λόγος ἢ οὐ φροντίζουσιν, ὅπως δὲ αὐτοὶ ἐθετὸν ταῦτα δόξει τοῖς παροῦσι, τοῦτο προθυμοῦνται. καὶ ἐγὼ μοι δοκῶ ἐν τῷ παρόντι τοσοῦτον μόνον ἐκεῖνοι διοίσειν· οὐ γὰρ ὅπως τοῖς παροῦσιν ἃ ἔγὼ λέγω δόξει ἀληθῆ εἶναι προθυμήσομαι, εἰ μὴ εἰπόν ἐμφανίζω, ἀλλ’ ὅπως αὐτῷ ἐμοὶ ὅτι μάλιστα δόξει οὕτως ἔχειν. [90e4-91b1])

Contrairement à ce qu’ont avancé certains interprètes, Socrate n’avoue pas ici ne pas agir en véritable philosophe ou, pire, ne pas être en mesure d’adopter un comportement sain à l’égard des λόγοι7. Ces interprétations font abstraction d’un élément linguistique important : Socrate n’affirme pas qu’il se comporte de manière non philosophique, mais plutôt qu’il risque de se comporter de la sorte (κινδυνεύω ἔγωγε [91a1-2]), car il fait preuve d’un zèle trop ardent8. L’avertissement de Socrate

7 Pour une telle interprétation, voir : T. MILLER, op. cit., p. 164 : « Socrates here makes the rather shocking admission that he has been acting not like a philosopher… »; T. WOOLF, Misology and truth, in J. J. CLEARLY et G. M. GURTLER (éd.), « Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy », vol. XXII, 2007, p. 8 : « He says that he himself may not be acting philosophically, but from a love of victory… ». De nombreuses traductions anglaises suggèrent également une telle lecture : « …for at the moment on this very question I look like being not philosophically-minded, but, like the utterly uneducated, merely contentious. » (R. S. BLUCK, Phaedo, Londres, 1955, p. 96-97); « …for very possibly it is not a love of wisdom that I am showing on this present issue, but that love of defeating an opponent which goes with utter lack of culture. » (HACKFORTH, op. cit., p. 109).

8 À la toute fin du passage sur la misologie (90d9-91c5), des termes de la famille de προθυμία (zèle) apparaissent à cinq reprises. Ainsi, Socrate affirme que ce ne sont pas les λόγοι qui sont malsains, mais ceux qui les utilisent. Il enjoint ses auditeurs, ainsi que lui-même, à faire preuve de zèle (προθυμία [90e3]) pour se comporter sainement. Puis, il soutient qu’il risque de ne pas se comporter en philosophe véritable, mais à la façon de ces gens sans culture que nous pouvons assimiler aux misologues et aux antilogiciens. Que font ces gens sans culture? Ils déploient de nombreux efforts (προθυμεύομαι [91a6]) pour faire accepter leurs thèses par leurs auditeurs, peu importe la vérité. Socrate affirme qu’il différa de ces personnes de la manière suivante : il mettra un zèle (προθυμεύομαι [91a8]) à faire en sorte que ses paroles soient vraies pour lui-même et non pour les autres. Socrate termine en enjoignant ses auditeurs à ne pas accepter tout ce qu’il dit, à le critiquer et à n’avoir en tête que la vérité. Ils ne doivent pas être trompés par son zèle (προθυμία [91c4]).
vise à souligner un risque, voire un danger, dont il est pleinement conscient. En fait, le passage 90e4-91b1 ne marque aucune coupure avec le texte qui précède : il continue à s'inscrire dans une mise en garde bien précise. En effet, tout comme il convenait de se mettre en garde (εὐλαβηθῶμεν [89c11]) contre la misologie, il convient ici de se mettre en garde (εὐλαβηθῶμεν [90d9]) contre l'idée qu'il n' existe rien de sain dans les raisonnements (τῶν λόγων οὐδὲν... ὑγιὲς εἶναι [90e1-2]). Comme cette façon de dire a déjà été utilisée plus tôt pour décrire le misanthrope (οὐδὲνος οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς εἶναι [89e2-3]), avec lequel le misologue a été comparé, et l'antilogicien (...οὔτε τῶν πραγμάτων οὐδὲνος οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς ἔχων οὔτε τῶν λόγων... [90c3-4]), il est permis de présumer que l'avertissement réitéré par Socrate se rapporte encore une fois à la misologie, à plus forte raison à l'antilogique. La misologie consisterait donc non pas uniquement en une haine des λόγοι, mais également en la croyance qu'il n' existe rien de sain dans ces derniers. Bref, la misologie est une attitude antiphilosophique.

D'ailleurs, le passage 90e4-91b1 reprend la même caractérisation qui avait été utilisée plus tôt : les personnes qui agissent οὐ φιλοσόφως sont des gens sans culture (ἀπαίδευτος [91a3]) qui, dans leurs discours ou arguments, n'ont aucun intérêt pour ce qui est (περὶ ὧν ἂν ὁ λόγος [91a4]). Cette absence d'intérêt envers ce qui est fait écho aux passages sur la philosophie authentique, dans lesquels l'objet de recherche du philosophe véritable est appelé οὐσία, τὸ ὄν ou τὰ ὄντα). (78d1, 78d4, 90d6-7). L'adjectif ἀπαίδευτος (91a3) renvoie quant à lui à la mention ἄνευ τέχνης, qui se rapportait au misologue (90b7). Quant à mention selon laquelle agir de manière non philosophique renvoie à agir par amour de la victoire, elle se rapporte directement aux antilogiciens. En effet, l'adverbe φιλονίκως est intimement lié à l'éristique, soit cet art de la controverse consistant en l'échange de questions et de réponses brèves et ayant pour but la réfutation (et la victoire) du répondant, peu importe la vérité. Il est à noter toutefois que la réfutation éristique est apparente : les raisonnements utilisés reposent principalement sur des sophismes. Or, contrairement à une idée répandue, Platon associe fréquemment les antilogiciens aux éristiques et les opposent plus d'une fois au philosophe véritable. Ainsi, en République V (452e-456a), un contradicteur anonyme (ἀντιλέγων [455a9]), possesseur d'une technique appelée « antilogique » (ἀντιλογική τέχνη [454a1]), présente de fausses objections qui viennent brouiller la discussion (V, 452e-456a). Cet antilogicien agit de manière éristique (ἐρίζειν [454a5]; ἐρίς [454a8]) : il ne veut pas vraiment discuter (διαλέγεσθαι [454a5], διάλεκτος [454a8]) en utilisant les instruments propres à la dialectique, soit la division selon les genres. Dans le Théétète (164c7-d10), la façon « antilogique » (ἀντιλογικῶς [164c7]) de raisonner est définie comme l'utilisation superficielle du langage dans le simple but de triompher aux dépens de son adversaire. Une telle conduite n'est pas le propre des philosophes (φιλόσοφοι [164c9-164d1]), mais des gens qui aiment à se battre (ἀγωνισταί [164c9]). Dans le Sophiste, enfin, il est question d’un « sophiste » qui utilise l’elenchos dans le cadre de réunions privées (225a2-226a4). Le savoir de ce sophiste est qualifié d’« éristique » (ἐριστικός [225c9]) et est compris dans le genre

Ainsi donc, si Socrate risque de se comporter οὐ φιλοσόφως, c'est parce qu'il fait preuve d'un zèle trop ardent, comme ceux qui se comportent φιλονίκως. Comme il approche de la mort, le succès de sa thèse lui tient fortement à cœur. Toutefois, il diffère des gens qui agissent φιλονίκως par le fait qu'il ne cherchera pas à faire triompher sa thèse au dépend de la vérité. Ceux qui agissent φιλονίκως n'ont pas le souci de la vérité et ne s'occupent pas de ce qui est. Socrate, lui, a toujours ce souci, lequel montre qu'il est un philosophe véritable.

9 Dans les Définitions (Ὅροι), traité pseudo-platonicien dont on ne connaît pas avec certitude la date de rédaction, on retrouve la définition suivante de l'anti-philosophie (ἀφιλοσοφία) : « état qui rend ennemi des discours » (trad. Souilhé) (Ἀφιλοσοφία ἕξις καθ' ἣν ὁ ἔχων μισολόγος ἐστίν [415e4]).

Le passage sur la misologie nous met en garde contre un danger réel : celui de penser qu’il n’existe rien de sain dans les λόγοι. Plus précisément, il s’agit d’attribuer aux λόγοι les mêmes caractéristiques que les objets du monde sensible, lesquels sont instables et toujours en mouvement. Lorsque l’âme se sert du corps dans ses recherches, elle est entraînée vers ce qui jamais ne reste le même. Elle devient errante (πλανάω [79c7]), elle est troublée (ταράσσω [79c7]), elle éprouve un vertige (εἰλιγγιάω [79c7]), comme si elle était ivre (μεθύω [79c8]). Le monde sensible, toujours en mouvement, ne constitue pas un objet de recherche fixe, mais contradictoire. Il abrite des phénomènes opposés qui apparaissent constamment en lutte. Dans les dialogues platoniciens, ce vocabulaire de l’errance et du trouble se retrouve fréquemment en présence de contradictions formelles : nombreux sont les interlocuteurs de Socrate qui, après réfutation (c’est-à-dire exposition de leurs propres contradictions), ressentent un vertige devant le renversement d’une croyance qu’ils pensaient assurée11. Le monde sensible est ainsi associé à l’erreur,


11 Par exemple, dans le Premier Alcibiade (116e-120e), le personnage éponyme se plaint, après s’être contredit pour la troisième fois, d’avoir « perdu la tête » ou, plus littéralement, d’être en proie à un « état bizarre » (ἀτόπως [116e3]). Pour décrire l’acte de se contredire, Socrate utilise le verbe πλανάω (117a10, a11, b3, b7, c3c7, d1 et d4), lequel signifie « varier », « errer » ou « s’égarder ». Socrate assimile le fait de varier dans ses réponses au fait de se tromper (ἁμαρτάνω [117e7]). Dans l’Euthyphron, le personnage éponyme se plaint, après avoir été réfuté au moyen d’arguments tortueux, de ne plus être en mesure d’exprimer ses pensées. Plus précisément, ses paroles tournent incessamment autour de lui et refusent de rester en place (περιέρχεται γάρ πως ἡμῖν ἀεὶ ὃ ἂν προθώμεθα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλει μένειν ὅπου ἂν ἱδρυσώμεθα αὐτό [11b6-7]). Socrate lui-même fait état de symptômes similaires après avoir été réfuté par Protagoras (Prot. 338e-339d) : face aux paroles de Protagoras, qui relève chez Socrate une contradiction, il a l’impression d’avoir reçu un « coup de poing d’un bon pugiliste » (ὡσπερεὶ ὑπὸ ἀγαθοῦ πύκτου πληγείς [339e1-2]). Cette réaction est accompagnée d’une description symptomatique : la vision de Socrate se trouble (σκοτόω [339e2]) et il est pris de vertige (ἰλιγγιάω [339e2]). Il est à noter que Socrate
attendu que toute proposition contradictoire ne peut être vraie 12. Les antilogiciens, dépeints comme des éristiques et des matérialistes convaincus, donnent à leur λόγοι les mêmes caractéristiques que celles du monde physique, dont la plus manifeste est son caractère contradictoire. Leur λόγοi contradictoires naissent du sentiment de misologie et provoquent ce même sentiment chez ceux qui les écoutent. Ils sont ainsi victimes et propagateurs de la haine des discours. Le passage 89c11-91c5 ne nous informe malheureusement pas en quoi consistent ces λόγοι contradictoires. Toutefois, le second passage du Phédon dans lequel nous retrouvons une occurrence d’un terme en ἀντιλογ- (101c1-102a1) – et, plus particulièrement, le passage qui précède immédiatement celui-ci – nous donne quelques indices précieux de la forme qu’ils pourraient revêtir, tout en mettant en lumière les véritables raisons qui poussent Platon à considérer l’antilogicien comme un adversaire acharné de la philosophie véritable.

Après avoir réfuté l’objection de Simmias en exposant les contradictions qu’elle recèle, Socrate fait une longue pause. Cette pause est l’occasion pour lui de nous raconter son parcours philosophique. Il nous apprend qu’il a déjà été passionné par l’étude de la nature (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορία [96a8]), mais que celle-ci l’a vite désenchanté : elle l’a rempli de doute et lui a fait perdre toutes ses certitudes. En effet, comme cette forme d’étude s’attache à des objets qui ne restent jamais fixes, elle est nécessairement porteuse de contradictions. Écorchant au passage les théories d’Anaxagore, Socrate raconte qu’il décida d’abandonner ce type d’étude pour se réfugier du côté des λόγοι (99e5). Plus précisément, il décida d’examiner les êtres en ne prenant plus comme point de départ les objets du monde matériel, mais bien les raisonnements. Ce nouvel élan (ou seconde navigation) lui permit d’atteindre les causes qu’il recherchait depuis le tout début, par exemple le Beau en soi (καλὸν αὐτὸ [100b6]), c’est-à-dire ce qui rend beaux les objets beaux. Ce type de cause, opposé aux causes dites « savantes » (τὰς ἄλλας αἰτίας τὰς σοφὰς [100c9-10]), n’est pas porteuse de contradictions. Dans un court passage qui regorge de termes évoquant une discussion de type éristique (100e8-101d2), Socrate défend sa découverte et montre que le fait de soutenir que « ce qui est plus grand est plus grand du fait de la Grandeur en soi » ou, inversement, « ce qui est plus petit est plus petit du fait de la Petitesse en soi » permet d’éviter toute contradiction. En effet, s’il avait affirmé que « tel individu est plus grand ou plus petit de la tête », on lui aurait objecté la chose suivante :

(…) en premier que c’est en raison de la même chose que le plus grand est plus grand et le moins grand moins grand, ensuite que si c’est d’une tête – c’est-à-dire d’une chose petite – que le plus grand est plus grand, on se trouve alors devant un prodige : être grand en raison de quelque chose de petit. Est-ce que tu n’aurais pas peur? (trad. Dixsaut) (πρῶτον μὲν τῷ αὐτῷ τὸ μεῖζον μεῖζον εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἐλαττὸν ἐλαττῶν, ἐπείστα τῇ κεφαλῇ σμικρῶν οὐδὲ τὸν μεῖζων μεῖζον εἶναι, καὶ τοῦτο δὴ τέρας εἶναι, τὸ σμικρῷ τινι μέγαν τινα εἶναι· ἢ οὐκ ἂν φοβοῖο τάστα; [101a7-101b2])

12 Voir, entre autres, Phédon 92c et Protagoras 333a-b, où Socrate laisse entendre qu’entre deux propositions contradictoires, une seule peut être vraie.
La méthode adoptée par Socrate lui permet de se protéger d'une objection (ἐναντίος λόγος [101a6]) qui ressemble étrangement à une objection éristique. Les formes intelligibles apparaissent ici comme un rempart à la réfutation sophistique, un genre de bouclier à contradictions. Or, faut-il s'étonner que les antilogiciens fassent leur dernière apparence tout juste après l'exposition de tels arguments éristiques? Après avoir qualifié ces arguments de subtilités (κομψεία [101c8]) qu'il convient de laisser à de plus savants (σοφωτέροι [101c9]), Socrate décrit la méthode qu'il utilise dans ses recherches (101c9-e1). Cette méthode se veut la suite logique de la démarche décrite plus tôt en 100a3-7. Il s'agit dans un premier temps de poser un raisonnement qui soit le plus solide, puis d'accepter comme vrai tout ce qui « consonne » (συμφωνεῖν [100a5]) avec lui et, inversement, de rejeter comme faux tout ce qui ne s'y accorde pas. La contradiction joue ici un rôle central : c'est en décelant des contradictions entre un raisonnement donné et l'hypothèse la plus solide qu'on parvient à déterminer la fausseté de cet argument. Dans un deuxième


14 Le passage 100e8-101d2 du Phédon permet ainsi d’apporter un argument de plus à la thèse selon laquelle les antilogiciens sont des éristiques.

15 La référence à « de plus savants » doit être entendue, selon nous, de manière ironique. De plus, il n’est pas impossible que le terme σοφωτέροι pointe ici en direction des ἀντιλογικοί de 101e2. En effet, le Sophiste 232b3-233d2 nous informe que l’antilogicien donne à ceux qui l’écoute l’impression (fausse) de tout connaître et le Lysis 216a5-b2 décrit ironiquement les « spécialistes de la contradiction » ou « dénicheurs de contradictions » (οἱ ἀντιλογικοί) comme des πάσσοφοι ἄνδρες. Nous sommes également d’avis que l’utilisation de l’adjectif σοφός en 100c10 doit être entendue de manière ironique.


17 Platon utilise à plus d’une reprise des métaphores musicales pour exprimer le résultat de l’acte de se contredire. Ainsi, quelques pages plus tôt dans le Phédon (91c6-95a4), Socrate réfute les objections de Simmias et montre qu’elles sont associées à des contradictions. En effet, Simmias soutient deux thèses mutuellement exclusives : d’un côté, la thèse selon laquelle « apprendre, c’est se ressouvenir », donc que l’âme préexiste au corps et aux éléments matériels; de l’autre, que « l’âme est une harmonie », plus précisément une « chose composée ». L’admission de ces deux thèses mène à des conséquences absurdes, entre autres que l’âme, qui préexiste au corps et aux éléments matériels, est composée d’éléments qui, eux, n’existent pas encore.
temps, lorsque l’hypothèse la plus solide est elle-même remise en question, il s’agit de vérifier si toutes les conséquences qui ont été tirées de cette dernière (τὰ ἀπ’ ἐκείνης ὁρμηθέντα [101d4]) sont mutuellement consonantes ou non (ἀλλήλοις συμφωνεῖ ἢ διαφωνεῖ [101d5]). Socrate critique précisément les antilogiciens sur ce point : les antilogiciens confondent volontairement le principe (ἀρχή [101e2]) avec ses conséquences (ἐξ ἐκείνης ὁρμημένον [101e2-3]). Cette manière de procéder ne vise pas à découvrir ce qui est (τῶν ὄντων εὑρεῖν [101e3]). De toute façon, cette découverte importe peu aux antilogiciens : ils retirent surtout de la satisfaction lorsqu’ils embrouillent la discussion et jettent leurs interlocuteurs dans la confusion. Cette manière de procéder n’est pas philosophique : si Cébès est vraiment de la race des philosophes (εἴπερ εἶ τῶν φιλοσόφων [101e6]), il ne confondra pas le principe et ce qui en découle, mais partira plutôt à la recherche d’une hypothèse supérieure, laquelle rendra compte de l’hypothèse initiale.

Ce deuxième passage sur les antilogiciens ressemble étroitement au premier : Platon répète que les antilogiciens ne s’intéressent pas à l’objet de recherche de la philosophie (ce qui est), ce qui les disqualifie du titre de « philosophes véritables ». Mais il y a plus. À la toute fin du passage, Socrate invite son interlocuteur à utiliser la méthode qu’il a décrit en 101c9-e1 si vraiment (εἴπερ [101e6]) il veut être philosophe. Cette méthode est ignorée par les antilogiciens. Grâce à leur art18, ils mélangent pêle-mêle principes et conséquences, embrouillent la conversation et se réjouissent de la confusion qu’ils ont créée. Cette manière d’agir est observée dans un cadre précis : durant les discussions (διαλέγω [101e2]). Le passage intercalé entre la méthode décrite par Socrate en 100a3-7 et 101c9-e1, de par sa teneur éristique, nous donne un exemple probant d’ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι : dans le cadre de discussion, réfuter les réponses de son interlocuteur en montrant qu’elles donnent naissance à des conséquences contradictoires, et ce, en utilisant des raisonnements sophistiques19.

Socrate remarque que les deux thèses contradictoires « ne chantent pas à l’unisson » (οὗτοι οὖν σοὶ ὁ λόγος ἐκείνῳ πῶς συνάσται [92c2-3]). Plus précisément, les paroles de Simmias ne sont pas « chantantes » ou « harmonieuses » (Ὁὗτος τοῖνυν, ἔφη, σοὶ οὐ συνῳδός [92b8]). Socrate demande alors à son interlocuteur de choisir l’une ou l’autre de ces deux thèses contradictoires, attendu qu’elles ne peuvent être tenues en même temps. De la même façon, dans le Protagoras (327b7-333e9), Protagoras se fait prendre en flagrant délit de contradiction par Socrate: d’un côté, il affirme qu’une chose ne possède qu’un seul contraire et non plusieurs; de l’autre, il soutient que la déraison possède plus d’un contraire et non un seul. Socrate l’invite encore une fois à renoncer à l’une des deux propositions contradictoires, car – littéralement – elles « ne sont pas dites de manière musicale » (οὐ μουσικῶς λέγονται [333a6-7]). Bref, elles ne sont pas en accord l’une avec l’autre ou, pour filer la métaphore musicale, elles ne chantent pas à l’unisson (οὐ συν ἁδουσιν [333a7]). En effet, les deux propositions contradictoires ne vont pas ensemble : elles ne peuvent être combinées pour former un tout cohérent (οὐδὲ συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις [333a7-8]). Pour d’autres exemples de telles métaphores, voir le Lachès 193d-e et le Gorgias 481c-482c.
L'expression ἀντιλογικὸς λόγος a donc toutes les chances de se rapporter à une réfutation (*elenchos*), plus précisément à une réfutation éristique.

Les raisons pour lesquelles Platon s'oppose aussi farouchement aux antilogiciens deviennent alors évidentes. Tout d'abord, ces derniers utilisent l'un des outils préférés de Socrate, à savoir l'*elenchos*. Or, ils l’utilisent de façon dévoyée : leur objectif est de vaincre leur interlocuteur, tandis que Socrate, lui, ne vise que la vérité. Les antilogiciens empruntent donc le masque du philosophe véritable et pervertissent ainsi la philosophie. De plus, nous avons vu plus tôt le rôle central joué par la contradiction dans la méthode de Socrate. Les arguments qui ne consonnent pas avec l’hypothèse la plus solide sont tout simplement rejetés. La contradiction révèle ainsi la présence d’erreurs dans le travail philosophique. Or, la contradiction joue également un rôle central dans la technique antilogique. Les antilogiciens visent une seule et unique chose : faire ressortir les contradictions au sein du discours de leurs interlocuteurs dans le but de les réfuter. Toutefois, les contradictions obtenues par les antilogiciens sont apparentes : elles ne reposent pas sur des oppositions véritables, mais sur des jeux de mots20, des divisions erronées21 ou des arguments superficiels22. Les antilogiciens viennent ainsi brouiller la marche philosophique de l’âme vers la vérité. En effet, si nous accordons crédit aux paroles de l'antilogicien et croyons que les contradictions qu’il soulève sont véritables, nous serons alors invariablement portés à délaier les λόγοι vrais qui apparaissent faux et, inversement, à adopter les λόγοi faux qui apparaissent vrais. Nous serons également séduits par la voie du relativisme puisque nous finirons par croire que tout ce que nous connaissons et pensons certain est en fait soumis à la contradiction23. L'antilogicien apparaît ici dans toute sa clarté : il est l'opposé total du philosophe véritable. Faisant pencher l’âme humaine du côté du même relativisme dont est empreint le monde sensible, il la dévie de sa montée vers l'intelligible en lui faisant croire qu’il n'y a rien de sain ni d’assuré dans les λόγοι. Il la prive ainsi des λόγοι qui lui permettraient de vivre la seule vie qui mérite d’être vécue, soit la véritable vie philosophique.

**Summary:** One of Plato's goal in the *Phaedo* is not only to define what philosophy is, but also to describe what “real” or “authentic” philosophy consists of. This description of “authentic” philosophy reveals a tension. Indeed, if Socrates feels the need to speak of a genuine philosophy, is it not a sign that there is another type of philosophy, which is inauthentic and fake? If Plato emphasizes the legitimacy of some philosophers, is it not because he believes that there are others, who resemble the former but are a mere imitation of them? In fact, there is in the *Phaedo* an

20 Entre autres, utilisation d'un même terme en deux sens différents (p. ex., double sens du verbe μανθάνειν en *Euthydème* 276d7-277b2).
21 Par exemple, voir la critique d’un argument de nature antilogique/éristique en *Théétète* 164c2-d8, où il est dit que l'argument repose sur un simple accord de mots (πρὸς τὰς τῶν ὀνομάτων ὁμολογίας ἀνομολογησάμενοι [164c7-8])).
22 Par exemple, que « dix soit plus que huit de deux » (101b4) ou que « la double coudée soit plus grande de la moitié que la coudée » (101b6). Même chose pour l'addition ou la soustraction : « (...) lorsqu'on adjoing une chose à une chose, que cette adjonction soit cause du fait qu’il y a deux choses, alors que si on fragmente une chose, ce soit alors la fragmentation qui soit cause de ce même fait – cela, tu te garderas bien de l'affirmer, je suppose? » (trad. Dixsaut) (101b9-c1).
implicit description of “false” philosophers, which culminates with the presentation of a precise case: the antilogician. Sometimes called a sophist, often described as an eristic, the antilogician is a perfect example of philosophy gone wrong. Criticised more than once in his dialogues, Plato condemns vivaciously the antilogician as he diverts real philosophical inquiry and immerses people in absolute relativism.

**Keywords:** antilogician, antilogic, eristic, misology, philosophy
Socrates as ‘Political Asklepios’ in the Phaedo

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[Note: - The parts included in angle brackets in grey will not be read at the conference - A French version of this text follows the English version]

As we learn in the Gorgias and the Laws, politics is the skill responsible for the care of the soul.1 There is something startling about this statement. The care of the soul—is that not the purview of philosophy? And when Socrates exhorts us to care for our souls, is that not an exhortation to practice philosophy? Is it possible to reconcile such a collective view of the care of the soul with Socrates’ views in the Phaedo, or are we confronted with an insurmountable contradiction? I will attempt to show that we are not, by advancing a political reading of the Phaedo—or at least a ‘politicizing’ one.2 I do not claim that the Phaedo is a political dialogue—an extravagant thesis—rather I simply suggest that we ought to read it in a political horizon, in light of the philosopher’s therapeutic mission.3 For Plato, this mission has a social dimension, which makes his works especially significant from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge. Furthermore, by paying particular attention to the performative aspect of Socrates’ words (i.e. what he does with what he says), my approach will enable us to see that it is possible to reconcile the views on the care of the soul specific to this dialogue with those from the rest of the Platonic corpus, taken in a unitarian understanding.

1. Mission terminated. The Phaedo’s political background

If there is one dialogue that de-politicizes our understanding of the care of the soul in the Platonic corpus, it is the Phaedo. Here Socrates praises philosophy as the “exercise of death,” which evinces an extreme form of detachment of the soul from anything bodily. This spiritual exercise seems to be highly individualistic, solitary (an “escape in solitude of the solitary” as Plotinus would say4), and therefore apolitical by definition.

There is no use ignoring the fact that politics is hardly a concern in the Phaedo.5

1 Gorg, 464b-c, 503a, 504d, Socrates is the only one to devote himself to it, 521d, Laws, 650b. Cf. Aristotle, NE, 1102a16-25. I will be using Grube’s translation of the Phaedo.

2 By which I mean a reading that is compatible with a politically oriented care for the soul and that is sensitive to the dialogue’s political context. I share Hackforth’s view (1955, 3): the main purpose of the dialogue is not to prove the soul’s immortality but “to extend and deepen (…) the essential teaching of Socrates himself, namely that man’s supreme concern is the ‘tendance of his soul’.”

3 Hence, according to Salviat, this dialogue is “free from any educational or political worries, as it is solely concerned with converting the reader to philosophy” Salviat, 1965, 32 [my translation]. Hackforth (1955, 7) goes further: “… the Phaedo is notably silent regarding political institutions and government; its ethics are wholly individualistic: every man is to be concerned with his own spiritual welfare; and the eloquent description of the true philosopher (…) contains no hint that he may be called upon to be a ‘Guardian’. Bostock (1986, 3) goes so far as to claim that the morality of the “true philosopher” is “thoroughly egocentric”.

4 The Enneads, (VI, 9), 11, 50.

5 Still, the theme is not totally absent. See 66c, a passage I will return to later, as well as 98d-99a. Ahrensford (1995, 39) also suggests reading 62b-63c as a political definition of death, the philosopher being separated from his community.
Nevertheless, we should not ignore the way that the polis, and the care that Socrates attempted to provide it, are tacitly present in the dialogue's background. Athens' anger and its tenuous relation with Socrates is the horizon of meaning that lends the dialogue its dramatic tension. Indeed Socrates will soon die under the city's orders. Isolated from it for some time in prison, Socrates is about to be permanently removed from the city, loosened from it by force. For it is not Socrates who decided to separate himself from the city; rather the city is freeing itself from him. And the care of the soul has everything to do with this violent break. As described in the Apology, Socrates is condemned to drink the hemlock to put an end to his irritating mission to convince others to care for their souls. Socrates' accusers claimed that he corrupts the social body, like a malady that especially targets the young shoots and leaves. His judges confirmed this, and here we have the political conflict and the pedagogical problem without which there would be no Phaedo.

Further, if Socrates had been content to stay in a corner and busy himself with detaching his soul from his body, or to engage in an 'escape in solitude of the solitary' under an olive tree, there would be no Socrates either, not as we know him through Plato. Socrates is not an 'individual-out-of-the-world,' embracing an ideal of solitary renunciation, an ideal which was flourishing in India at that time and which later appeared in the West in the form of Christian asceticism. According to Louis Dumont it is this type of asocial spirituality that conditioned the emergence of Western individualism: the 'individual-in-the-world' proper to modernity (an individual enamoured of "unfettered freedom") was intriguingly preceded by the 'individual-out-of-the-world' of religious ascetic practices. But this is not the sort of care for the self that Socrates promotes. Even in the Phaedo, Socrates does not fit the image of the solitary ascetic, solely preoccupied with his own salvation. If we wanted to make the comparison with Eastern wisdom, it is the spirit of the Bhagavad-Gita that comes closest, with its total devotion to a divine mission, accompanied by a detachment from the fruits of the labour and the risks involved.

Let us also note that Socrates did not spend his last days in isolation; rather he was the centre of a small community of mutual care, simultaneously caring for himself and his friends. As usual, he is surrounded by other humans. They are devoted to him and need him for the welfare of their souls. And he too, seemingly, needs them. In this respect it is interesting to note that the 'religion of the philosopher,' which Socrates enthusiastically embraces in the Phaedo, suggests that dying completes his therapeutic responsibility towards others. Socrates is not a bodhisattva who, by compassion, chooses to re-enter the cycle of incarnation, only in order to liberate every being from it. In his 'religion,' the sage, once entirely liberated, never returns. He finally lives happily, in the company of what he loves, "in the future altogether...

6 In fact, the city is physically present through 'the Eleven' 59e, 84b, 116c.
7 Socrates explicitly evokes this tenuous relationship in 98e-99a when he explains the real cause as to why his bones and muscles are not currently walking towards Megara...
8 Apol., 36d-e.
9 See Euthyph. 2c-3a, Apol. 24c.
10 Given his death sentence, this applies to the historical Socrates, though the only Socrates that concerns me here is Plato's Socrates. It seems to me that Strauss's position (1952, 138-39) on the philosopher's solitary character neglects Plato's insistence on the philosopher's therapeutic role.
13 That is, the hope for happiness after death for one who practices the separation of the soul from the body, i.e. the philosopher. This is a belief, a "hope" (ἐλπίς, 63b-c, 64a, 67b-c, 67e-68a), hence the expression 'religion.'
without a body”. By the same token, this “hope”—which has all the allure of a fantasy—implicitly reveals that it is only in the afterlife that the Socratic sage gains the privilege to solely care about himself.

The collective and political dimension of the care of the soul that Socrates metes out his whole life is thus present in the *Phaedo*: as an arrested therapeutic mission. It is a mission of care that was for a long time aimed at the city, practiced in the heart of the city, and brutally interrupted by the city. The constant allusions to the many, which Socrates could not persuade, and to his trial, serve to remind us of the political nature of his exhortation to care, and invite us to read the *Phaedo* together with its two dramatic antecedents, the *Apology* and the *Crito*, in a linear progression.

When read together, these dialogues shed much light on two central elements of the therapeutic battle that Socrates waged at the socio-political level: first over what priority to give the care of the soul (hence, a battle over the hierarchy of values) and second over the social recognition for a new expertise of care that has the soul as its central object. These two battles unfold on public terrain and the *Phaedo* plays, indirectly, a strategic role in these two battlefields. I will begin with the second battle.

2. The *Phaedo* as proof of Socrates’ therapeutic skill

A recurrent theme in the early dialogues is the search for an expert in the care of the soul. Who is this expert who is just as indispensable for the care of the soul as the physician and the trainer are for the care of the body? Where to find this individual who knows how to improve the ψυχή and to cultivate virtue within it? Socrates is not satisfied with posing this question just for his own profit, or for the profit of those who share in his curiosity. He wants all Athenians to pose this question.

Now, the *Phaedo* constitutes one element of Plato’s response to this question relentlessly posed at the heart of the city. It is a piece of evidence. The expertise in the care of the soul, this new form of care, does exist, and it is possible to develop it. The fact that such a specialist had indeed existed—Socrates—attests to this. In the *Phaedo* this evidence takes several forms, first being that of testimony.

The testimony

The fact that taking good care of the soul is an art and is not just something anybody can do is a central theme in the *Crito*, but is not discussed in the *Phaedo*. However, those who have benefited from Socrates’ care express this idea emphatically in the context of the discussion. Several commentators have noted that Socrates’

14 114b-c. See also 66e-67b, 81a, 82b-c, 83e, 84b, 95c.
15 In the *Apology* Socrates ironically suggests—almost threatens!—the possibility of continuing his examination in the afterlife to unmask the false sages. It is not necessary to see the sign of an evolution of (Plato’s) beliefs; the specificity of the context is enough to explain the different description.
16 For those interested in Socrates as a champion or expert of the care of the soul, the sequence ‘Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo’ is essential from a dramatic and thematic point of view. Concerning the allusions to the crowd and the trial, see 64b, 65a, 69e, 84d-e, 98e, 115d.
17 I qualify it as a ‘central’ object since, insofar as the soul is epimeletic and has the function of caring (Rep. 353d, *Phaedrus* 246b, *Laws* 896e-897b), prioritizing the care of the soul also implies, indirectly, taking care of everything else.
18 Apol. 24c-e, *Meno* 91b, 92d, Prot. 313a-b, *Laches* 185e, 201a-b, *Crito* 47b-48a.
19 Nevertheless Socrates identifies the lack of competence, of expertise (*atechnia*) as a central cause of the evils misanthropy and misology, 89e; 90b, d.
companions describe the deeds he performs for them as a kind of healing.\textsuperscript{20} I am thinking particularly of the scene where Phaedo tells of how Socrates diagnosed the despondency into which Cebe's counter-argument had plunged them, and knew how to cure the misology that had threatened their souls. Cebe's attack not only brought them to doubt the truth of Socrates' \textit{logoi} concerning the immortality of the soul, but indeed had the harmful effect of shaking their faith in the "healthful" (\textit{ὑγιὲς}) character of \textit{logoi} in general, a much more grievous affliction.\textsuperscript{21} (As Phaedo explains to Echecrates: "When we heard what they said we were all depressed, as we told each other afterwards. We had had been quite convinced by the previous argument, and they seemed to confuse us again, and to drive us to doubt not only what had already been said but also what was going to be said, lest we be worthless as critics or the subject itself admitted of no certainty." (88c)) Now Socrates, with his reliable art of diagnosis, not only perceived his comrades' state, but he also knew how to provide them with the appropriate remedy, as Phaedo explains:

I have certainly often admired Socrates, Echecrates, but never more than on this occasion. That he had a reply was perhaps not strange. What I wondered at most in him was the pleasant, kind and admiring way he received young men's argument, and how sharply he was aware of the effect the discussion had on us (ἡμῶν ὡς ὀξέως ἐξῆρθο διὰ τῶν λόγων), and then how well he healed us (ὡς εὖ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο)... (88e-89a, transl. Grube slightly modified)

This description of Socrates' therapeutic act (one suited to affecting the reader just as much as the characters in the dialogue)\textsuperscript{22} is particularly revealing to the extent that Phaedo emphasizes that dialectical skill is not the only quality required for taking good care of the soul. A form of benevolence is necessary, and above all a sort of psychological perceptiveness and diagnostic art are equally required—and this echoes Socrates' remarks on \textit{psychagogia} in the \textit{Phaedrus}.\textsuperscript{23} Although they are not visible, Socrates 'sees' his friends' souls; he sees the state of the soul and knows how to guide it safely at the critical moment, the \textit{krisis}.\textsuperscript{24} In fact, Socrates implicitly presents himself as an expert in these two domains when he explains to his companions that, when it comes to the affairs of \textit{logoi} and men alike, it is the lack of expertise (ἀτεχνία) and a imprudent trust that are the cause of disappointment and discouragement.\textsuperscript{25} This meta-argumentative passage not only helps to establish Socrates' therapeutic credentials, but also establishes the credibility of the care of the soul, a developing art lacking in public recognition, as evidenced by the dire situation in which Socrates now finds himself.

\textit{The final words of Socrates the Asclepiad}

\textsuperscript{20} Minadeo, 1971, 296; Santilli, 1990, 35.
\textsuperscript{21} It is Socrates who uses the imagery of health: "We should not allow into our minds the conviction that argumentation has nothing healthful about it; (ὡς τῶν λόγων κινδυνεύει οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς εἶναι); much rather we should believe that it is we who are not yet healthful (ὁτι ἡμεῖς οὔπω ὑγιῶς ἔχομεν)"
\textit{Phaedo}, 90c (trad. Grube slightly modified). See also 90c. The first appearance of the term 'healthful' in Greek literature, in Homer, does not describe a bodily state but rather the nature of a word (\textit{muthos}), \textit{The Iliad}, VIII, 524: "μῦθος δ᾽ ὃν νῦν ὑγιής ἐφύρησεν ἔστω, τὸν δ᾽ ἢος Ἱῶτα μεθ᾽ ἱπποδάμους ἄγονονο..." I will return to this question later.
\textsuperscript{22} Phaedo and Echecrates' discussion afterwards, concerning how this operation stirred their admiration, contributes to stirring a similar feeling in the reader. 88c-d.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Phaedrus}, 271a-272b. Benevolence is a condition since it is a good "touchstone" of the soul, \textit{Gorgias}, 486e-487a.
\textsuperscript{24} For parallel passages where Socrates sets about undressing his interlocutors' souls, like a doctor proceeding with an examination, see \textit{Prot.}, 352a-b, \textit{Charm}, 154d-e.
\textsuperscript{25} 89d-e, 90b-d.
We can interpret another element of the dialogue as a subtle way of establishing the seriousness of Socrates’ ‘professional’ commitment: his final words invoke a debt to Asklepios, the god (or heroic founder) of medicine. Much ink has been spilt over these words, with commentators offering a plethora of sophisticated interpretations as though they were dealing with an impenetrable enigma. Read in the light of his therapeutic mission, however, the meaning of Socrates’ final words become clear—they are spoken as a sign of devotion to the god of healers, Asklepios. Further, they help to unveil the identity of the god who, Socrates claims in the *Apology*, he has the mission of helping by calling the Athenians to care for the psyche and by continually examining their soul. If we accept this proposed reading, then Socrates’ divine ‘service’ would be aiding Asklepios and the ergon that he aims to produce would be healing, health. Of course it is not the health of the body, but of the soul, thus incarnating the moral Asklepios who can heal the mind, as Theognis had called for.

The convalescent were not the only ones in Athens to make offerings to Asklepios, as physicians also thanked their tutelary god for successful healings by making offerings to him. (We can find more textual support for this privileged connection between Socrates and Asklepios in the *Phaedo*. Let us recall that in the prologue Socrates declares he is dedicated, like the swan, to Apollo (85b) and that Apollo is the god to whom the Delphic oracle refers, the oracle that, according to the *Apology*, was the starting point of Socrates’ mission. Now Asklepios is, fittingly, the son of Apollo, receiving his therapeutic gifts from his father who is also included among the gods of the healers. Hence.)

26 For a concise overview of diverse interpretations, see Dixsaut 1991, 408, n.382. There is also Santilli, 1990, Kloss, 2001, and above all Dumézil, 1984, who takes his inspiration from a rejection of Nietzsche’s interpretation: “No, Socrates was not a Buddhist. For him, life was a time of trials and suffering, but also one of good fortune and joy. Life is certainly not an illness. It is rather a moral gymnasium, where the sage masters the muscles of his soul, and then leaves without regret, like a champion going into retirement, whether that be an eternal dreamless sleep, or whether it is to calmly take up the reflections he had begun in the tumult of life, now pursued in the peace of the Elysian fields, alongside men made famous by the use of their swords, their words, or their minds. No, for Socrates this life was not ‘dukkha,’ pure hardship, and death was no cure. Far from detaching young men from life, his teachings inspired them to be truly live.” p.133.


28 Socrates’ final words also function as a warning against ameleia: “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius; make this offering to him and do not forget (μὴ ἀμελήσητε)” (118a8).

29 Socrates uses the expression τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείαν (23c1) and τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν (30a7) to describe his service to the god in the *Apology* and the term ὑπηρετική (13d7) in the *Euthyphro* to designate the form of care, θεραπεία, that the pious man renders to the gods.

30 The question concerning the nature of the ergon that the pious man helps to produce through his service (ὑπηρετικῆς) to the gods is the challenge that the *Euthyphro’s* (13e-14a) tentative definition of piety comes up against. Yet we receive an answer to this question in the *Apology* via the description of Socrates’ divine mission: Socrates’ contribution to the work of divinity consists in convincing Athenians “to concern themselves more with their souls than with their bodies”, Brisson, 2001, 85 [my translation].

31 “If God had given the Children of Asclepius the art of healing a man’s evil nature and infatuate wit, they would receive wages much and great” Eἰ δ’ Ἀσκληπιάδαις τοῦτο γ’ ἔδωκε θεός, ἰάσθαι κακότητα καὶ ἀτηρὰς φρέαν ἀνδρῶν, πολλοὺς ἂν μισθοὺς καὶ μεγάλους ἔφερον, The Elegiac Poems, fr. 432-434 (translated by J. M. Edmonds).

32 There is no reason to believe that Socrates wanted to thank the god for having healed him of a physical sickness (which, according to Nietzsche’s reading, would be the body or life itself). It is more plausible that Socrates wanted to honour the god as a “medical specialist” in the care of the soul. See Santilli, 1990, 32, which refers to Farnell, 1921, 268.

33 On the link between Apollo and Asklepios, see Jayne, 1925, 225, 243, 252. Jayne dedicates a
We might, then, draw a parallel between Asclepius, who takes the powers of physical health from Apollo and establishes the medical profession, and Socrates who serves the god in his devotion to truth and to the health of the soul. In other words, just like Asclepius, Socrates might be taken as a son of Apollo and a new kind of healer, not of the body, but of the soul.\(^3\)

The *Apology* and the *Phaedo* can be read, then, as an attempt to give the physician of the soul something like a foundation story, an origin myth. (But then why does Plato present Socrates as addressing his final words to the son, Asklepios, rather than to the father, Apollo? According to Santilli, Plato proceeds in this way to prevent having Socrates regarded as a demi-god, as the founder of a new cult. As Santilli reminds us, ancient sources declared Pythagoras to be the son of Pythian Apollo and claimed he possessed extraordinary healing powers. Now the rapprochement between Socrates and Apollo could have given the impression that Socrates sought to be perceived as the “Apollonian successor to Pythagoras”—especially given the context of the *Phaedo*, where the discussions seem to unfold across a Pythagorean-inspired background. According to Santilli, Socrates’ final words are addressed to Asklepios rather than Apollo in order to subtly suggest the special link that unites Socrates and Apollo while avoiding an excessive aggrandizement.\(^3\) If we trust the study that W. A. Jayne made of the gods of the healers, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*, we could also maintain that what explains the privilege of Asklepios is just the different functions of these therapeutic, since he plays a concrete role in healing while Apollo rather seems to remain in the honorary position of supervisor.\(^3\)

A community of mutual care

Read as a foundation myth, the *Phaedo* is not the story of an end (namely Socrates’) but rather of a beginning. Although he is presented as an especially gifted practitioner of the care of the soul throughout the *Phaedo*, Socrates never pretends to be the sole possessor of this skill. In fact, he insists that his followers (who consider Socrates to be unique and irreplaceable)\(^3\) must begin searching for guides who are also able to provide such therapeutic ‘incantations’ after his departure, within Greece, or even beyond.\(^3\) Socrates also suggests the possibility that they could play a similar role for one another.\(^3\) These remarks seem to imply that the skill in the care lengthy section to the myth of Asclepios and everything that pertains to his cult, 224-298.

\(^3\) Santilli, 1990, 32.
\(^3\) Santilli, 1990, 37: “My suspicion is that Plato needed to link Socrates to Apollo but to avoid the suggestion of an apotheosis in his death and the loss of the philosopher in the quasi-divinity. By utilizing Asclepius rather than Apollo himself, Plato is able to intimate the connexion while warding off its possibly embarrassing consequences.” According to Santilli, since the rather prosaic offering of a rooster is, as he suggests, “anti-tragic by virtue of its vulgar and popular character”, it would also work to obstruct the tragic emotion that these final words could have evoked.

\(^3\) Jayne explains that, towards the beginning of the fifth century, Apollo “is frequently referred to as the supreme divine healer”. Nevertheless, Apollo and Asklepios would not have had the same relationship to healing: Although Apollo bore the epithets [par ex.: *iatromantis*] he does not appear as active in healing, but rather as having honorary titles and exercising a general, vague supervision over the art. Notwithstanding the popularity of the Delphic oracle, only two cases of minor illness have been found recorded as having appealed to him there. The active duty of healing the sick was performed by his son Asklepios, the Thessalian hero-physician, to whom he, as Apollo Maleates, gave his divine approval”, Jayne 1925, 225. On the relation between the cults of Apollo and Asklepios, see also 243 and 252.

\(^3\) 76b, 78a, 115a, 116a.
\(^3\) 78a, cf. *Laws*, 951b.
\(^3\) 77e-78a. On the theme of incantation, see also *Charmides* 157a.
of the soul that Plato sought to promote with his dialogues is a sort of skill being
developed within a community of research, not unlike the Hippocratic School for
the care of the body. As described in the *Phaedo*, this therapeutic expertise is first
to be practiced within a micro-society of persons who develop and experiment in this
therapeutic art together, and who provide care for one another.\(^{40}\)

Socrates takes this responsibility for mutual care very seriously. We can see
this in the way he reproaches Crito for not knowing how to keep the principles
established by their examination alive within himself, and for having rather thought
and spoken in the mode of ordinary unexamined beliefs, which do “harm to the
soul”.\(^{41}\) This brief episode, provoked by the question of funeral arrangements, is
more significant than it appears at first glance. Indeed, the tireless care that Socrates
provides for his friend Crito—who, in spite of his good intentions obviously does
not possess the necessary attention or capacity for reflection to take care of himself
without the constant support of the vigilant therapist, Socrates—hints that there
are several levels within the “love of *sophia*” and within the care that humans can
give to the affairs of the soul. Here the oft-recurring comparison with the physician
proves useful.\(^{42}\) No one would deny that one does not have to be a physician to
hold medicine in high esteem and benefit from the physician’s art by following its
recommendations in matters of diet, exercise, and lifestyle.\(^{43}\) It is no different for the
medicine of the soul that the philosopher practices at the individual level (as in the
case of the *Phaedo*) or at the social level (where he performs the task of a legislator
or political advisor, establishing a regimen for collective life).\(^{44}\) Crito may not be a
philosopher in the strong sense of the term, but through his attachment to a genuine
‘lover of wisdom,’ Socrates, he benefits from the healthful thinking (*phronesis*)
that his friend constantly practices. And Socrates, right until the very end, provides his
friend with a particular care, as the *Crito* also shows, where Socrates works diligently
to remind him of the principles of just conduct and to purify him of his erroneous
opinions. This type of *katharsis* and of participation in thought and virtue, by means
of a persuasive guide, is not to be confused with the blind civic virtue of bees and
ants, or the illusory virtue founded on the vices that Socrates denounces in the
*Phaedo*.

(Furthermore, if Socrates addresses his final words to Crito, it is perhaps
because the task of ‘healing’ for which Socrates thanks Asklepios concerns exactly
this. Indeed, what was Socrates’ task in his discussion one day earlier in prison with
his old friend, if not the attempt to heal him, one last time, of the erroneous opinions
that threaten the health of his soul? In his book *Divertissement sur les dernières
paroles de Socrate*, G. Dumézil suggests we ought to interpret Socrates’ last words
in the *Phaedo* this way, namely in the light of the therapeutic operation depicted in
\(^{40}\) The importance of collaboration, sharing, and co-examination is highlighted many times. See for example: 63c-d, 84c-d, 86d, 96a, 107b.
\(^{41}\) Socrates addresses this reproach to Crito in the *Phaedo* (115e). But in the *Crito* too, Socrates commands him to cease repeating the same mistaken *logos*: “Let’s examine the question together, my
dear friend, and if you can make any objection while I am speaking, make it and I will listen to you,
but if you have no objection to make, my dear Crito, then stop now from saying the same thing so
often” 48d-e. See also 49e where Socrates invites Crito to either give an account or content himself
with just listening.
\(^{42}\) Lach. 190a-b, *Crito* 46d-48a, *Prot*. 313c, 340d-e, *Gorg*. 514d, 517c, 519e, 522a.
\(^{43}\) Socrates uses this distinction himself in the *Prot*. 311b-c. On the benefit of being in contact with
what is better than oneself, see *Phaedo*, 62e.
\(^{44}\) For the principle at stake, see *Rep*. 590c-d, *Laws* 644d-645b, 714a. The preambles to the laws also
constitute a way for the legislator to enter into dialogue with the citizen, the way good physicians
explain the prescribed treatment to the patient, *Laws* 719-720.
the Crito. His interpretation relies particularly upon Socrates’ remark on the value of the *phronimoï*’s judgement in this dialogue (47a). Commenting on this passage, Dumézil asserts:

The sickness that causes the body to wither away is the twin sister of the false opinion that corrupts the soul. Bodily sickness cannot be treated by the ignorant crowd, but only by the specialist, the man of Asklepios, the physician; the false opinion, which more often than not comes from the unthinking acceptance of popular opinion, can only be corrected by an informed philosophical judgement, founded on certain principles. Healing is about re-establishing the mind’s balance, making it *phronimos*, which you may translate as you like, healthy, wise, ordered: it is all one. Beginning his refutation, just before comparing the care of the body with the care of the soul, Socrates had already drawn the dividing line and pronounced the few words that clarifies everything: […] *true opinions belong to the* phronimoi*, *the false ones belong to the* aphrones*; to put it otherwise, the former belong to minds that work well and the latter to minds that malfunction.*

Even if Socrates does not explicitly state he wants to ‘heal’ Crito, even if the term *nosos* makes no appearance in the text, even if the *aphrôn* is not compared to a sick person, nevertheless no Greek reader could miss these implied connections since, according to Dumézil, the parallel between sickness and erroneous thinking was common in the Greek cultural universe at this time.

That said Socrates’ therapeutic devotion is not strictly altruistic. If “there is but one way to care for anything, and that is to provide for it the nourishment and the motions that are proper to it,” as we learn in the Timaeus, then we may infer that Socrates also needs this community of care to provide his own soul with a source of constant exercise. His insistence upon the importance of repetition suggests this—a theme that is present in other dialogues as well. *Phronesis*, as the healthy thinking that ensures the healthful character of the virtues and of dialogue, is a process that must be constantly repeated, in the sense of ‘reactivated.’ This thought in motion, which heals, demands to be re-thought and the arguments re-examined,

45 Dumézil, 1984,151-152 [my translation].
46 Dumézil, 1984, 153.
47 See Sophocles’ Antigone (v. 1051-1052): “Creon: … senselessness is the greatest affliction (μή φρονεῖν πλείστη βλάβη). Teiresias: Yet you came into being full of that disease (ταύτης σὺ μέντοι τῆς νόσου πλήρης ἔφυς)”; Euripides’ Iphigenia in Aulis (v. 405-406): “Menelas: Where will you find any proof that you are sprung from the same father as I? Agamemnon: συνσωφρονεῖν σοι βούλομ’, ἀλλ’ οὐ συννοσεῖν” Dumézil concludes: “Thus Socrates did not invent the opposition between ‘thinking well’ as the health of the mind and disordered judgement, which is its sickness. Though he used the word *nosôdès* “sickly” only as a term for comparison with respect to the body, it is nevertheless the foundation of his argument, and Crito understands it as such,” Dumézil, 1984, 156-158 [my translation]. Kenny cites other passages where metaphors of sickness are applied to the mind: Aeschylus, Prometheus, I, 378 (where words are compared to a remedy for anger); The Persians (where Xerxes’ mother describe his ambitions as an “illness of the mind”); Sophocles, Ajax, 59, 186, 452; Euripides, The Bacchants, 948; Orestes 10. But according to him “The concept of mental health was Plato’s invention. (…) nothing in Greek thought before Plato suggests that the notion of a healthy mind was more than a metaphor.” Plato would have fully elaborated this idea for the first time in the Gorgias and the Republic, Kenny, 1971, 229. The most meticulous recent work on this question is Lloyd, 2003.
48 Timaeus, 90c. In the Phaedo, his incantation seems to be specifically aimed at himself. Here more than anywhere else Socrates works as a physician upon himself and admits his own needs, 91a-b, 114d. This may explain why he evokes the debt of a rooster to Asklepios in the first person plural. The offering not only celebrates a life entirely devoted to the care of the soul, but also the therapeutic success of this last, particularly critical operation on his friend Crito and himself, in the mutual care that unites them.
49 76d, 77e, 100b, 105a, 114d. The theme is also present in Gorg. 513c-d.
a process that Socrates engages in at every opportunity, in the company of others.

It would be wrong to consider this process in a strictly formal fashion since Socrates, especially in the *Phaedo*, seems to be invested in repeating certain precise *contents*, which are presumed to be true after examination and which are described as a form of “nourishment”—also a recurring metaphor. Here the food of the soul consists of, among other things, the theory of learning as reminiscence and the theory of the forms, which we chew on again in the context of a critical examination that we perform collectively. Socrates presents this form of (critical) repetition of certain contents as a form of “incantation” that is good for the soul (77e). But the foods that help take care of the soul are not limited to philosophical theories, (re-)digested by means of examination. Socrates also feeds the souls of his companions with ancient traditions and mythical tales stemming from his own imagination, as in the case of the eschatological myth where he offers a stunning description of the earth with distinct regions where the souls of the deceased go according to their past actions. The difference between the two types of “nourishment” may seem extreme, but insofar as the arguments for the immortality of the soul find their origin in ancient traditions and are always accompanied by doubt, the regime Socrates administers in the *Phaedo* is a regime that essentially consists of beliefs presumed to be true.

*The ultimate therapeutic proof*

That said, the dialogue provides for its reader at least one certainty. In a paradoxical way (given the context of the *Phaedo*) this proof does not rest on reasoning but on a fact of experience: Socrates himself. The most powerful testimony that the care of the soul he promotes does work is him, his happiness, his virtue. (The dialogue opens with astonishment at his unshakeable happiness and closes with astonishment at the superiority of his virtues.) The representative of the Eleven, who in some sense stands in as a guarantor for the non-philosophical reader, also attests: Socrates is the best man he has met under such circumstances. (115c) The state of his soul in his dying moment (cheerful, confident, calm), his attitude throughout the discussion (benevolent, patient, curious, free, persistent), his bearing in the face of condemnation (mindful of justice, courageous, pious), all contribute to creating the impression of not so much superhuman perfection but specifically human accomplishment. Thanks to the living proof that Socrates gives us, it is no longer a matter of hope but of certainty: human beings can achieve this degree of 'health', of excellence, of happiness, if not for eternity then at least *in this life*. Philosophy enables humans to attain this goal.

From a protreptic point of view, this aspect of the dialogue is crucial. The

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51 72e, 76d, 100b.
52 61d, 62b, 63c, 67c, 69c, 70c, 107d
53 91b, 91c, 107c, 114d.
54 Phaedo’s tale begins with a description of Socrates’ happiness, his serenity and bravery in both deed and word (58d), and ends with the assessment that “… a man who, we would say, was of all those we have known (ἐπειράθημεν, literally: “put to the test”) the best, and also the wisest and the most upright.” 118a. The idea of testing enhances Socrates’ status as living proof. On Socrates as ‘proof’, see Hartle, 1986, 74.
55 According to Hartle (1986, 16-17), this perfection, particularly the lack of fear in the face of imminent death is more than human, even inhuman, which leads her to suspect there is something like a ‘noble lie’ in the *Phaedo*, (Hartle, 1986, 72-74).
proofs for the immortality of the soul may well fail to convince most readers of the *Phaedo* (and to a certain extent, Socrates himself) but it is difficult to overestimate the impact of the portrait of Socrates as living proof of philosophy's therapeutic efficacy.56 A prime example is the altogether particular impression that Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, made upon a Stoic like Epictetus, in spite of his indifference to the theme of immortality.57 The possibility for humans to live, here and now, a life free from fear and trouble no matter what the circumstances, like Socrates did, will become the goal of philosophy itself, as the medicine for the soul, in diverse schools of philosophical practice, independent of the belief in immortality. The image of the soul as a “pacified sea” that philosophy progressively cleanses certainly has a proto-stoic flavour to it.58 Attaining such a (lasting) psychological state is neither the sole nor even the primary goal that Socrates claims to pursue in the *Phaedo*,59 but by vividly painting this state of cheerful serenity as a beneficial result of the soul’s detachment, achieved through philosophy, Plato heightens the attraction and credibility of philosophy as a therapeutic practice. As Socrates explains in the sample of protreptic wisdom offered in the *Euthydemus*, there is no better way to effectively convert someone to the care for virtue and love of wisdom than to show that they are the conditions that enable one to attain what one already desires: happiness.60 The crucial protreptic element in the *Phaedo* is Socrates’ happiness.

This personified proof contributes a great deal to the dialogue’s relevance to the contemporary reader, no less than to the ancient reader. For, while the idea of a therapeutic purpose of philosophy is enjoying a renewal of interest, there are few philosophers today who hold—as philosophers—that the soul is immortal (and even fewer still on the basis of arguments that entail a theory reminiscence or intelligible forms).61 As Mark Johnston aptly puts it in his recent book *Surviving Death*, the present state of research concerning the mind suggests that it was Simmias who was closer to the truth and not Socrates.62 The current dominant view of the mind is such that, if the meaning and value of the exhortation to care for the psyche were completely dependent upon the belief in its immortality, then the (non-historical) interest in the *Phaedo* would be radically diminished.63 Yet nothing in the text suggests such an absolute dependence, which entails we do no violence to the text if we consider them separately.64

56 The contrast between the effectiveness of the ‘cure’ provided by Socrates and the non-persuasive character of the proofs for the immortality of the soul is at the core of Hartle’s subtle and insightful interpretation, 1986, 59.
57 Jagu, 1946, 90-92, 95-111. Despite Epictetus’ indifference regarding the question of immortality, he cherishes especially the identification of the self with the soul and detachment from the body in the *Phaedo*.
58 84a and 88c where Phaedo explains that the care they received allowed them to escape the “trouble” that reasoning had landed them in, which evokes the Hellenistic ideal of ataraxia.
59 The goal he claims to pursue is the “truth”, 66b.
60 *Euthyd.* 280e-82d.
61 Johnston is one of the few contemporary philosophers to philosophically consider life after death, though his demonstration rests precisely on the rejection of the Platonic idea of the soul as an immaterial substance. See Johnston, 2010, 130-137.
62 “Simmias seems vindicated; for the evidence from neurophysiology suggests that the mind is just the mode of functioning of the brain and nervous system.” Johnston, 2010, 133.
63 Of course this does not at all cast doubt on the dialogue’s dramatic power, literary value, or historical significance. Without the *Phaedo*, how could we understand Platonism and its role in the history of Western philosophy, or the development of ascetic practices and religious beliefs concerning the soul in the Christian context, or, more profoundly, the Western experience that opposes the soul to the body as though they were two rival entities?
64 At the start of his eschatological story, Socrates declares there is a serious “risk” involved in not taking care of the soul, if it proves to be immortal. He does not claim that it is unnecessary to care
Regardless, Socrates/Plato’s fight for philosophy’s social recognition necessarily depends on the esteem for its privileged object of care, the soul, in the hierarchy of values. I now turn to this sensitive issue.

3. Has the political ideal of a hierarchical order of objects of care disappeared?

From the Apology up to the Laws, there is a manifest struggle in Plato’s dialogues to have a certain order of values adopted, and at the top of this order we find the soul and its virtue. Philosophy depends upon the establishment of this hierarchy for its social recognition and the philosopher depends on it… for his survival. Now in the context of this axiological fight for the priority of the care of the soul, we may ask whether the Phaedo goes to such extremes that it compromises or even negates its political significance. For, if the hierarchical ideal is well suited to a political totality, an exclusive care for the soul does not seem to be a viable foundation for a properly functioning body politic. In a city there must be a diversity of objects of care, which also demands a diversity of skills and individuals able to care for them.

Regarding the political ideal of a hierarchy of objects of care, the Phaedo then seems to be problematic. In the part of the text that I will call ‘the second apology,’ Socrates seems to promote a form of exclusion, even eradication of all other objects of care for the sake of a single one, the soul. The idea of a hierarchy of objects of care that Plato evokes so often elsewhere (subordinating the care for honours, the body, and material goods to the care for the soul) seems to have been rendered meaningless here, as only one remains. Worse still is that the body seems to have become an object of hostility; we must flee it, separate from it, and be irritated by the care it requires of us. In short, it seems Socrates does not promote a hierarchy here but rather a strict axiological division that confers value exclusively on the soul, at the expense of all other objects of care, especially the body. From a political standpoint, this contrast deserves attention and calls for closer inspection.

Taking care of the soul has different meanings for the philosopher and the non-philosopher

Let us first note that while we might have the impression that this is an acutely divergent position, one that may be irreconcilable with the rest of the corpus, this could be due to a common exegetical error that consists in fusing what Socrates says about himself—which pertains specifically to the philosopher’s situation—together with what he exhorts others to do. This confusion has many far-reaching consequences for the task of interpreting the dialogues in their unity. Let us take a closer look here.

Already in the Apology we can perceive the distinction between the orientation of the philosopher’s care and that of other men, which is crucial in the Phaedo and the Republic. Take the following passage. After the judges found him guilty, Socrates

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for the soul if it is in fact mortal, 107c-d. Furthermore, as Salviat noted, immortality as such is not sufficient to justify the importance of care, it is rather that the idea of punishment makes immortality risky for the vicious. Salviat, 1965, 31-32.


66 Another strategy for ensuring the philosopher's survival is to make him work in the shadows, as a political advisor or as educator of the legislator, a strategy adopted in the Statesman and the Laws. Cf. Pangle, 1983, 8.

67 This amalgamating tendency is characteristic of Vlastos’ interpretation; see Vlastos, 1994, 34.
attempts to defend himself one last time:

… what do I deserve to suffer or to pay because I have deliberately not led a quiet life but have neglected what occupies most people: wealth, household affairs, the position of general or public orator or the other offices, the political clubs and factions that exist in the city? (Apology, 36b)

Here we see that the objects Socrates claims not to care for are numerous and his ameleia towards them is certainly radical, just like in the Phaedo. However, to properly evaluate the scope of such a statement, we must bear in mind that Socrates is portraying himself as an atypical individual. Although he suspects some may attempt to imitate him, nothing suggests he would encourage all Athenians to follow him along such an extreme path. Socrates does indeed urge everyone to care first and foremost for something they usually neglect, something to which Socrates has dedicated his whole life, namely, the care of the soul. This does not mean, however, that he is inviting every citizen to become a philosopher, to become a ‘Socrates’ and embrace a way of life similar to his own. What would a city made up of several thousand Socrates look like? In the Apology, Socrates does not reproach his fellow citizens for failing to embrace a lifestyle totally dedicated to the care of the soul, but rather for not caring at all for the soul or for what could improve it—and that in spite of the reputation for sophia that distinguishes Athens. To explain what is unique or incomprehensible about his own way of life, Socrates explains that a god prescribed to him the existence he leads, suggesting that it is an exception and does not apply to everyone.

If my interpretation is correct, then Plato (and his Socrates) would not dream of converting every single person to philosophy, but rather desires a ‘socratization’ of the city by means of the care of the soul that consists of education, a well ordered regime, and good laws, under the guidance of a group of philosopher-legislators. If this political conversion is ever to be achieved, then the philosopher’s (‘fulltime’) sort of care of the soul must become generally respected at a civic level. Everyone must, in this sense, care for the soul (honour it, assign it the highest value) and therefore respect those whose mission it is to take care of it (and showing respect may involve providing for their subsistence). This is what Socrates means when, during his trial, he claims his—real—contribution to Athenians’ happiness ought to be valued more highly than the esteem they presently accord to Olympic champions, those sculptors of the body. In modern terms, we could say that what is at stake is the problem of the role and social recognition of a certain group of ‘intellectuals’ concerned for the public good.

Let us return to the Phaedo. The two parallel passages on the μελέτη θανάτου

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68 Apol. 39c-d.
69 A. Nehamas’ (1998, 9) opinion that Plato considered the Socratic (philosophical) way of life to be best for everyone seem wrong to me: “[Plato] tries to prove that a single type of life is best for all people”. That Plato holds the philosophical life to be the best does not mean that it is suited for everyone. In fact, this would contradict the Platonic conception of justice that aims to assign each person a role that accords with his or her nature. For a position that accords with my own, see Hartle, 1986, 77.
70 Apol. 29d. Cf. Alc. I 123d.
71 See Apol. 23b, 28e, 30d-31a, 33c.
72 According to Strauss (1980, 48-49), the awareness of this need is also present in The Clouds.
73 Apol. 36d. On the impact the Phaedo had on the philosopher’s ability to inspire respect, see Ahrensford, 1995, 2, 201-203; Pangle, 1983, 15. According to Hartle (1986, 29, 37), the emphasis on the philosopher’s real virtue has precisely the goal of justifying this social respect.
(63e-69e and 80d-84b) are particularly important for the question regarding the disappearance of the ideal of the hierarchy of care/values. Due to time constraints, I will concentrate on the first passage, which I will call 'Socrates' second apology' since Socrates presents there a defence speech in a fictional trial. Insofar as we tend to understand Socrates/Plato's care of the soul in light of this disconcerting passage that declares philosophy is exercise of death, we ought to pay special attention to it.

(The context in which this second ‘trial’ arises is a discussion on the religious ban on suicide. Faced with what he considers to be an indictment, Socrates presents his defence as though he were in court, hoping to be more persuasive than ‘the first time,’ referring to his actual trial:

I want to make my argument before you, my judges, as to why I think that a man who has truly spent his life in philosophy is probably right to be of good cheer in the face of death and to be very hopeful that after death he will attain the greatest blessings yonder. (...) I am afraid that other people do not realize that the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death. (63e8-64a6)

The 'second apology' (that follows this introduction) has three distinguishing marks that deserve our attention. First is the intended audience. While in the Apology it is the relationship between Socrates and his fellow citizens that takes centre stage (as a therapist whose treatment has irritated his beneficiaries), the present context is completely different. Socrates is not addressing himself to the public at large but to a small group of loyal companions who are united by a shared orientation of interests. He speaks in the first person plural and imagines philosophers addressing other philosophers. Those he designates here as “judges” (63e) are converts, comrades who are also, to some degree, ‘lovers of wisdom’.

Second, everything that Socrates says in this defence speech concerning the body characterizes the lifestyle of a very particular category of people: the philosopher class. What Socrates says about his own way of life in the passage from the Apology cited earlier, he now applies to all authentic philosophers, stressing their peculiarly ‘ameletic’ relation to the body. Here Socrates presents the body as an obstacle for the philosophers’ own specific existential orientation in this life (i.e. the predominant care of the soul), which founds the ‘religion of the philosophers’ that follows (i.e. the hope for future goods that await them as souls completely ‘purified’ of the body, after death). The question concerning the historical Socrates does not

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74 Although the second passage clearly echoes the first, it is distinct in three ways: 1) its tone seems somewhat bitter (even passive aggressive), whereas the first is serene, factual; 2) it evokes the possibility of a struggle between bodily desires and the priority the philosopher gives to the care of the soul (this tension is absent from the first); 3) while the first is descriptive, its objective seems to be to exhortative (not for the sake of recruiting new members but to encourage the beginning or hesitating philosopher to continue resisting bodily desires).

75 This ‘legal defence’ is a definitely circumscribed narrative entity between the prologue and the arguments for the immortality of the soul. Socrates marks the beginning of his defence speech by saying: "I want to make my argument before you, my judges…" (63e) and closes with "This is my defence, Simmias and Cebes…" (69d).

76 64c, 66b, 67b. See Hartle, 1986, 75.

77 Socrates describes this relation in a more synthetic manner further on: "those who practice philosophy in the right way keep away from all bodily passions, master them and do not surrender themselves to them; it is not at all for fear of wasting their substance and of poverty, which the majority and the money-lovers fear, nor for fear of dishonor and ill repute, like the ambitious and lovers of honors, that they keep away from them." (82c-d)
interest me here, but let us note in passing that this radically ameletic relation to the body in the Phaedo should not be chalked up to Plato becoming more ascetic than his master, since the caricature of Socrates that Aristophanes paints in the Clouds already depicts an attitude of detachment and a ‘corporeal style’ that are at once provocative, incomprehensible, and ridiculous in the eyes of the non-philosopher.78 This brings me to the final element, the style of discourse.

The style is not exhortative, but rather factual, descriptive. In response, perhaps to Aristophanes’ caricature,79 Socrates/Plato attempts to explain (and thereby legitimize) the peculiar orientation of those who are absorbed by an intense love—a form of mania, like the cicadas in the Phaedrus—that takes the form of a dominant care which contributes to the devaluation of all other objects of concern.80

Here is how genuine philosophers live, Socrates explains. Still he does not invite each and every person to make his life into a training regimen for death; here Socrates presents the mental activity that separates the soul from the body as that which distinguishes the authentic philosopher.81 He is no longer defending his public mission of urging others to care for the soul. He is simply trying to explain his confident attitude towards death, which radically sets him apart, as a philosopher, from other people.82 In short, this ‘second apology’ does not describe a way of life that Socrates wants everyone to adopt; rather he is describing the daily life of a philosopher, his own way of living. It is a different path, a misunderstood way of life (64a, 82d) which looks like death in the eyes of others (65a), and which requires, for this reason, an explanation. Hence the main consequence of the plea that this philosopher addresses to other philosophers concerning the philosophers’ existential orientation may be of allowing… the non-philosopher a glimpse into this strange way of life.

(I will digress a little to emphasize that in fact, aside from the portrait of Socrates’ happiness and perfect virtue, the only truly exhortative element in the Phaedo is the final mythical story and the customary evocation of punishments for the wicked in the afterlife. Expressing a scarcely veiled threat, Socrates tries to use fear to arouse concern for the soul’s virtues when he states, just before beginning his story, that those who do not care for their souls are “in a terrible danger”.83 The

78 Socrates endures many sorrows, walking about bare foot (Clouds, 361-363); the chorus explains to Strepsiades who wants to be admitted to Socrates’ ‘think tank’: “O mortal, who hast desired great wisdom from us! How happy will you become among the Athenians and among the Greeks, if you be possessed of a good memory, and be a deep thinker, and endurance of labour be implanted in your soul, and you be not wearied either by standing or walking, nor be exceedingly vexed at shivering with cold, nor long to break your fast, and you refrain from wine, and gymnastics, and the other follies, and consider this the highest excellence, as is proper a clever man should, to conquer by action and counsel, and by battling with your tongue.” (412-419); he then accepts in these terms: “Now, therefore, let them use me as they please. I give up this body to them to be beaten, to be hungered, to be troubled with thirst, to be squalid, to shiver with cold, to flay into a leathern bottle…” (439-443); when Socrates invites his new disciple to “catch” his ‘clever dogma about abstruse matters’, Strepsiades retorts: “Am I to feed upon wisdom like a dog?” (491).

79 Implicitly referred to in 70c-d.
80 It is what they love above all else that explains their ameleia towards the rest, Phaedrus, 259b-d.
81…τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τούτῳ ἐστὶν τῶν φιλοσόφων, λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος, 67d-8 10.
82 ἄρ’ οὖν πρῶτον μὲν ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις δήλος ἐστὶν ὁ φιλόσοφος ἀπόλολος ὅπειρα μάλιστα τὴν ψυχήν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων: 65a.
83 107c. The final eschatological tale does not line up well with the parallel passage that describes the wicked souls drifting about their graves, attaching themselves to the bodies of animals who resemble their vices, 81c-82a.
protreptic strategy Socrates uses here is not so different from the traditional stories that are the source of old Cephalus’ anxious concern for justice as he approaches death, as we read at the beginning of the Republic. Given the Phaedo’s critique of this kind of illusory appearance of virtue, we can assume Socrates is using this mode of exhortation, this therapeutic method, as a last resort. Yet precisely this strategy shows that ultimately his mission to convert others to the care of the soul is meant to make an impact on the social body, albeit in different degrees, in order to guide all souls in one direction, no matter how strong or weak their desire for truth and sophia.

There is no need then to suppose that Socrates/Plato oscillated between an extreme asceticism in the Phaedo and a more moderate, politically aware approach to the care of the soul in other dialogues. A hermeneutical perspective that is sensitive to context and to the sociology of knowledge lets us see that we are not faced with a transformation but rather a sort of complement. The difference between the philosopher’s particular situation, being entirely enamoured of the affairs of the soul, and the situation of non-philosophers who ignore and neglect this essential dimension of human life, suffices to explain this apparent contrast.

The ideal of a hierarchy of concerns is not totally absent in the Phaedo

Furthermore, we must not over-exaggerate Socrates’ pro-soul radicalism. If the exhortation to hierarchically rank the objects of care is not as evident in the Phaedo as it is in other dialogues, it is not totally absent either. We find at the end of the text a powerful, explicit reminder of the fact that Socrates remained faithful to this hierarchical ideal his whole life long. When Crito asks Socrates to dictate his will and adds “What can we do that would please you most?” The latter simply answers:

Nothing new, Crito (...) but what I am always saying, that you will please me and mine and yourselves by taking good care of your own selves in whatever you do, even if you do not agree with me now, but if you neglect your own selves, and are unwilling to live following the tracks, as it were, of what we have said now and on previous occasions, you will achieve nothing even if you strongly agree with me at this moment. (115b)

This passage nicely illustrates the main reason why Socrates suggests everyone ought to care for the soul: it is, itself, the principle of care and proper use. If we take good care of it, first and foremost, it will ensure the welfare of everything else. Aside from the soul’s epimeletic role, Socrates also invokes its hegemonic role, an apt way to help enhance its prestige in a culture that highly prizes leadership. Now, these two functions imply that the objects of concern are diverse and need to be ordered. For, if the soul ought to be the primary object of care, as a principle of governance and care for the rest, this entails that there are other objects of care that are also legitimate.

Further, if we pay careful attention to the nuances of the language employed here, we can recognize that the Socrates of the Phaedo does not differ greatly from

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84 68d-69b, 82a-b.
85 On the soul as the principle of care: Rep. 353d, Phaedrus 246b, Laws 896c-97b; on phronesis and sophia as virtues of the soul and principles of good use: Euthyd. 281b-e, Men. 88d-e, Rep. 586e, Phil. 65a.
86 80a, 94a-d.
the Socrates of the *Apology*, who, far from being entirely disinterested in the care the body requires, demands to be fed at the state’s expense in the Prytaneum. The Socrates in the *Phaedo*, just as in the *Apology*, is no proto-cynic, promoting extreme material deprivation as a means of moral development. If death appears to him in a favourable light, it is precisely because it liberated him from the burdensome service (*therapeia*) owed to the body, a task that detracts from the concern for the soul insofar as it is a considerable source of *ascholia*. This reveals, by contrast, that the philosopher in the course of his (embodied) life, like all other humans, devotes a great deal of his time to taking care of his body and its needs. (Socrates explains: “While we live, we shall be closest to knowledge if we refrain as much as possible (ὅτι μάλιστα) from association with the body and do not join with it more than we must (ὅτι μὴ πάσα ἀνάγκη).” (67a2-4) Now, this absolute necessity makes itself felt every day of our lives, because of the body’s “need for nurture” (τὸ σῶμα διὰ τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τροφήν, 66b8), because illnesses may occur if we do not give some minimal thought to maintaining our bodies, and because desires, fears, and appetites also impress themselves upon us (66b–e).

The philosopher then is not quite a cicada. We find an implicit acknowledgement of the care owed to the body, during life, in the qualifications that temper the seemingly excessive elements in the formulation of the philosopher’s dominant orientation towards the soul. By qualifying that the philosopher liberates the soul from the body “as far as he can”, “as much as possible”, that he neglects the *therapeia* of the body and the acquisition of bodily ornaments “except in so far as one cannot do without them”, that his soul “keeps away from pleasure and desires and pains as far as he can”, we see there is a clear limit on the disregard for the body. We could say that the philosopher’s own hierarchy of care is not structurally distinct from the one he urges others to adopt, but that his ranking of values is steeper, which the vocabulary here reflects. For instance, we read that the philosopher “does not value” (64d8) “the pleasures concerned with the service of the body”; that when the philosopher’s soul focuses itself and attempts to think what is, that is when “it gives the least value to the body” (65d1); and we also read that the real virtues of courage and moderation belong to “those who trouble themselves but little over their bodies and live the life philosophy” (68c12). In short, by explaining why the philosopher rejoices at the idea of separating from his body, Socrates implicitly addresses the care that all humans owe to their bodies throughout their lives, including the philosopher. Nevertheless, the limits placed upon the philosopher’s *ameleia* towards everything that does not concern

87 “Not honouring the body” meant: not giving it the first place. It did not mean: refusing it its due care. For the body had to be kept in good condition, in order to save “the soul”, that is, the thinking mind. [...] he would train the body [...] in a sense he did honour it, namely in the second place, as subservient to the soul”, de Vogel, 1973, 37; “he does not think that the care of the soul implies the neglect of the body”; “One cannot take care of one’s soul properly unless one’s body itself is healthy”, Jaeger, 1986, 46, 47.

88 For such qualified formulations, see, among others: 64e1, 64e5, 65a1 65c7, 67a3, 83b7.

89 My translations. Here it is not a matter of the mortification of the body. Rather, the philosopher is not one of those people who take the pleasures of food and drink, the *aphrodisia*, seriously (64d). He pays no great attention to the body, does not concern himself over it any more than is evidently necessary, he does not “honour” it any more than it is worthy. “The philosopher is the man who, more than anyone else, “does not honour the body” - I think this is the correct rendering of the *atimazei* (Phaed.65c8), rather than “despises” or “disdains”. “It means that he does not give it the first place”, de Vogel, 1973, 35. See Dixsaut, 1991, 78: “It is not a matter of spending his life despising or fleeing from things that nevertheless keep their powers of seduction and temptation. Instead it is about assigning a rank, while acknowledging necessity and appreciating what is possible: the evaluation is hierarchical and testifies to nobility, it is not moral” [my translation].
his soul and its *phronesis*, does not erase the profound difference—a difference of intensity—between his almost exclusive preoccupation with the soul and his exhortation to hierarchically order concerns, which he addresses and applies to all citizens, as we see in the *Apology* or the *Laws*. Further, the philosopher, the practitioner of death and detachment as Socrates describes him, may seem like a radical, but he is in fact much more moderate than the many who do not trouble themselves over practically anything except for material things. What is more, this almost exclusive care for the body is the source of that social plague we call war, as Socrates explains in one of the *Phaedo*’s few explicitly political passages: “only the body and its desires cause war, civil discord and battles, for all wars are due to the desire to acquire wealth, and it is the body and the care or it, to which we are enslaved, which compel us to acquire wealth.” (66c) In the same spirit of Socrates’ fight against *pleonexia* in the *Kallipolis*, the legislator in the *Laws* has no other task than to correct this alienating concern, which is the origin of war, by taking any means possible to promote a hierarchy of values whose summit is the soul and its virtue.90

4. The political relevance of the μελέτη θανάτου and καλὸς κίνδυνος?

By way of conclusion, I would like to put forward a riskier, more adventurous reading in order to bring the *Phaedo*’s political dimension and political relevance into sharper relief. Earlier I claimed that the ‘second apology’ and its description of philosophy as an exercise of death is not exhortative in nature. I would now like to qualify this claim. For, in the two passages that evoke the μελέτη θανάτου, there is a repeated insistence on the fact that death will not trouble those who correctly philosophize, and this sounds like a challenge, a provocation even… It is a challenge issued to the fellow philosophers gathered around Socrates at this critical moment, but also issued to the ancient reader of the *Phaedo* who is devoted to philosophy. The challenge spurs them to persist in their activities despite the hostility they will encounter. I have also held that the *Phaedo* is a testimony to the efficacy of this new sort of care directed at the soul, and attests to the competence of its practitioners, particularly Socrates, who is in some sense the founder of a new order of asclepiads. I now add that the dialogue also serves as a sort of warning against the political dangers that the pioneers of this art of care will have to face and as an exhortation to persist in the face of such threats. 

Although this reading is more speculative, it is not arbitrary since the text itself evokes the dangers of persecution to which philosophers expose themselves.91 First, the text hints at this danger in the attack that exclusively targets Anaxagoras in Socrates’ autobiography. This critique could be an attempt on Plato’s part to distinguish the Socratic tradition from the philosophical tradition represented by Anaxagoras, who also suffered persecution.92 Second, Plato explicitly refers

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90 625c-632d.
91 In his introduction to the dialogue, Schleiermacher suggests there may be a link between the *Phaedo* and the memory of what happened to Plato in Sicily, as the dialogue shows that the true disciple of Socrates would not suffer the cowardly fear of death, Schleiermacher, 2004, 353. To my knowledge, the only scholar who does full justice to this aspect of the dialogue is Ahrensrod, 1995, 15. For Stern (1993, 138) this conflict is not specific to Socrates and his relation to Athens, but stems from human plurality, a plurality that politics makes manifest and that founds political philosophy. 
92 In Anaxagoras’ case as in Socrates’, there is a political motive accompanying the accusation of impiety. Yet the emphasis that Socrates’ autobiography lays on the teleological character of his own approach in contrast with Anaxagoras’ suggests that the investigations of *physis* contributing to the ‘disenchantment of the world’ aroused suspicion and hostility. It would not be absurd to think that it is the accusation of impiety that explains, in part, the marked emphasis on Socrates’ religiousness.
to this danger right at the start of the dialogue when Simmias reacts to Socrates’ explanations of the μελέτη θανάτου by declaring, ironically, that the crowd would agree that philosophers are begging for and deserving of death.93

What could be more benign today than the ‘pursuit of wisdom’? From a political standpoint, what could be more harmless (and irrelevant) than philosophy? Reading the Phaedo and keeping the violent hostility towards Socrates, the political asclepiad, in mind demands a special effort of the contemporary reader’s imagination. Even from an Ancient perspective, we would have to ask ourselves why India, for instance, did not persecute its sages, while Greece threatened or even killed many of its own.

Seen in this light, the Phaedo is a resistance manifesto for philosophers, encouraging them to run the ‘noble (political) risk’, that their love for wisdom and their practice of the care of the soul entails—namely, the risk of an early death.94

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93 64b. The allusion to Aristophanes’ The Clouds in 70c-d, is also an indirect reminder of the threat of death that the comedy evokes.

94 Adequately justifying such an unorthodox interpretation of the kalos kinundos would require a lengthy analysis. Suffice it to say that, if we ignore the danger of political persecution associated with his care for the soul, in this life, we would be hard pressed to understand what the philosopher risks, if anything, by adhering to the ‘religion of the philosopher’ described by Socrates. As he asserts in the ‘second apology,’ the philosopher’s favourite thing to do in this life is to think and thus separate the soul from the body, having no interest in bodily pleasures. If he were to cease adhering to the belief in the philosopher’s paradise—where he will give himself completely over to his favourite activity, having been finally separated from his body for all eternity—how would that change his present life? Given the philosopher’s love for thinking and truth, would he begin living otherwise, and start looking for his happiness in food, drink, and aphrodisia? The only risk the philosopher runs by holding to this belief is that he would embrace his passion for thinking even more resolutely while having less time to devote to his favourite activity...if he is executed.
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Socrate « Asclépios politique » dans le Phédon

L’expertise responsable du soin de l’âme, apprend-on dans le Gorgias et dans les Lois, est l’art politique.95 Cette déclaration a de quoi surprendre. Le soin de l’âme n’est-il pas, plutôt, du ressort de la philosophie? Et n’est-ce pas à la philosophie que Socrate exhorte, quand il exhorte au soin de l’âme? Comment concilier une telle vision, collective, du soin de l’âme avec ce que Socrate en dit dans le Phédon? Sommes-nous face à une contradiction insurmontable? Dans ce qui suit, je tenterai de montrer que non, en offrant une lecture politique –ou en tout cas « politisante »96– du Phédon. Je ne soutiens pas que le Phédon est un dialogue politique, thèse extravagante, mais simplement qu’il doit être lu dans un horizon politique, à la lumière la mission thérapeutique qui échoit au philosophe.97 Cette mission comporte une dimension sociale chez Platon, ce qui rend son œuvre particulièrement pertinente du point de vue de la sociologie du savoir. Mon examen, attentif à l’aspect performatif des propos de Socrate (i.e. ce qu’il fait avec ce qu’il dit), permettra en outre de voir qu’il est possible de concilier le traitement réservé au soin de l’âme dans ce dialogue avec le reste du corpus platonicien, dans une perspective unitariste.

1. Mission interrompue. L’arrière-plan politique du Phédon

S’il y a un dialogue qui a pour effet de dépolitiser la compréhension du thème du soin de l’âme dans le corpus platonicien, c’est bien le Phédon. La philosophie comme « exercice de mort » dont Socrate fait ici l’éloge implique une forme de séparation, de détachement extrême de l’âme face à tout ce qui est corporel. Une telle pratique n’est-elle pas au plus haut point individuelle, solitaire (une « fuite du seul vers le seul » comme dira Plotin98), et par-là même, apolitique? Il serait vain de nier qu’il est bien peu question de politique dans le Phédon.99 Néanmoins, il serait tout aussi vain de nier que la cité, et le soin que Socrate a tenté de lui prodiguer, sont présents, silencieusement, à l’arrière-plan du dialogue.100 La colère d’Athènes et sa relation tendue à Socrate est l’horizon de sens qui confère au dialogue son relief dramatique.101 C’est sous ses ordres que Socrate va bientôt mourir. Isolé depuis un bon moment dans la prison, il s’apprête à en être définitivement

95 Gorg. 464b-c, 503a, 504d, Socrate est le seul à s’y consacrer, 521d, Lois, 650b. Cf. Aristote, EN, 1102a16-25. Dans ce qui suit, sauf mention contraire, j’utiliserai la traduction du Phédon de Dixsaut, 1990.

96 C’est-à-dire, compatible avec un souci de l’âme de nature politique et sensible au contexte politique du dialogue. Je partage l’avis de Hackforth (1955, 3) : l’objectif central du dialogue n’est pas de prouver l’immortalité de l’âme, mais « to extend and deepen (…) the essential teaching of Socrates himself, namely that man’s supreme concern is the ‘tendance of his soul’.

97 Selon Salviat, ce dialogue est « libre de tout souci éducatif et politique, visant à la seule conversion du lecteur à la philosophie». Salviat, 1965, 32. Hackforth (1955, 7) va plus loin : «… the Phaedo is notably silent regarding political institutions and government; its ethics are wholly individualistic : every man is to be concerned with his own spiritual welfare; and the eloquent description of the true philosopher (…) contains no hint that he may be called upon to be a ‘Guardian’.» Bostock (1986, 3) va quant à lui jusqu’à qualifier la moralité du « philosophe authentique » de « thoroughly egocentric ».

98 Ennéades (VI, 9), 11, 50.


100 En fait, la cité est physiquement présente à travers ‘Les Onzes’, 59e, 84b, 116c.

101 Cette relation tendue est évoquée par Socrate explicitement en 98e-99a lorsqu’il explique la vraie cause du fait que ses os et ses muscles ne sont pas présentement en train de se balader du côté de Mégare…
expurgé, délié de force. Car ce n'est pas lui qui a décidé de se séparer de la cité, c'est elle qui s'en libère. Et le soin de l'âme a tout à voir avec cette rupture violente, puisque c'est pour mettre un terme à l'irritante mission d'exhortation au soin de l'âme décrite dans l'Apologie que Socrate doit maintenant boire la ciguë. Socrate corrompt le corps social, comme une maladie affectant particulièrement ses jeunes pousses. Voilà ce qu'ont décrété ses accusateurs et confirmé ses juges, et voilà le conflit politique, le problème pédagogique, sans lesquels il n'y aurait pas de Phédon.

D'ailleurs, si Socrate s'était tenu tranquille en tâchant de détacher son âme de son corps dans un coin ou « fuyant seul vers le seul » sous un olivier, il n'y aurait pas non plus, de Socrate tel qu'on le connaît par le biais de Platon. Socrate n'est pas un individu-hors-du-monde embrassant l'idéal du renonçant solitaire, idéal florissant à cette époque en Inde et qui fera plus tard son apparition en occident dans l'ascétisme chrétien. Selon Louis Dumont, c'est ce type de spiritualité associée qui aurait préparé l'apparition de l'individualisme occidental, l'individu-dans-le-monde propre à la modernité (individu épris d'une « liberté sans entraves »), étant étrangement précédé par l'individu-hors-du-monde des pratiques ascétiques religieuses. Mais le souci de soi promu par Socrate n'est pas ce souci de soi là. Même dans le Phédon, Socrate ne correspond pas au portrait de l'ascète solitaire uniquement soucieux d'assurer son propre salut. Si on voulait le comparer à la sagesse orientale, c'est l'esprit de la Bhagavad-Gita qui s'en approche le plus avec son idéal de dévouement total à une mission divine, accompagné d'un détachement face au fruit des œuvres et aux risques encourus.

Souignons en outre que Socrate ne passe pas sa dernière journée dans l'isolement, mais plutôt au sein d'une micro-communauté de soin mutuel, prenant soin à la fois de lui-même et de ses amis, en commun. À son habitude, il est entouré d'humains. Ces humains lui sont dévoués et ont besoin de lui pour assurer la santé de leur âme. Et lui aussi, vraisemblablement, a besoin d'eux. À cet égard, il est toutefois intéressant de noter que la « religion du philosophe » embrassée avec enthousiasme par Socrate dans le Phédon suggère que sa responsabilité thérapeutique envers autrui s'achève avec la mort. Socrate n'est pas un boddhisattva qui s'engagerait, par compassion, à revenir dans le cycle de l'incarnation jusqu'à ce que le dernier être en soit libéré. Dans sa « religion », le sage, une fois entièrement délié, ne revient pas. Il vit enfin heureux, en compagnie de ce qu'il aime, « pour tout le temps à venir, absolument sans corps ». Mais justement, cet « espoir » – qui prend l'allure de fantasme – révèle implicitement que c'est uniquement dans l'au-delà que le sage socratique gagne le privilège de ne se soucier que de soi.

102 Apol. 36d-e.
103 Voir Euthyph. 2c-3a, Apol. 24c.
104 Étant donné sa condamnation à mort, cela s'applique au Socrate historique, mais le seul Socrate qui m'intéresse ici est le Socrate de Platon. La position de Strauss (1952, 138-39) sur le caractère solitaire du philosophe me semble négliger sa responsabilité thérapeutique chez Platon.
106 Voir Hartle, 1986, 72.
107 C'est-à-dire son espoir d'un bonheur post-mortem pour le praticien de la séparation de l'âme qu'il est le philosophe. Il s'agit d'une croyance, d'un « espoir » (ἐλπίς, 63b-c, 64a, 67b-c, 67e-68a), d'où l'expression « religion ».
108 114b-c. Voir aussi 66b, 67a-b, 81a, 82b-c, 83e, 84b, 95c
109 Dans l'Apologie Socrate évoque avec ironie – et presque comme une menace – la possibilité de poursuivre son examen dans l'au-delà pour démasquer les faux sages. Il n'est pas nécessaire d'y voir le signe d'une évolution des croyances (de Platon), la spécificité du contexte permet d'expliquer la différence de propos.
La dimension collective et politique du soin de l’âme prodigué par Socrate tout au long de sa vie est donc présente dans le Phédon: comme mission thérapeutique interrompue. Une mission de soin longtemps dirigée vers la cité, exercée au sein même de la cité, et brutalement interrompue par la cité. Les constantes allusions à la foule, que Socrate a été incapable de persuader, et à son procès rappellent cette nature politique de son exhortation au soin et invitent à lire le Phédon en lien étroit avec l’Apologie et le Criton, les deux dialogues qui le précèdent immédiatement d’un point de vue dramatique.110 Lus ensemble, ces dialogues jettent beaucoup de lumière sur deux éléments centraux de la bataille thérapeutique qu’a menée Socrate au niveau socio-politique: la question de la priorité à accorder au souci de l’âme (une bataille autour de la hiérarchie des valeurs, donc), et celle de la reconnaissance sociale d’une nouvelle expertise de soin ayant l’âme comme objet central.111 Ces deux batailles se déroulent sur le terrain public et le Phédon joue, indirectement, un rôle stratégique sur les deux plans. Je débute par la seconde bataille.

2. Le Phédon comme preuve de l’expertise thérapeutique de Socrate

Un des thèmes récurrents dans les premiers dialogues est celui de la recherche de l’expert en soin de l’âme. Qui est cet expert aussi précieux pour le soin de l’âme que le sont médecin et entraîneur pour le soin du corps? Où trouver l’individu qui connait la manière d’améliorer la ψυχή et de cultiver en elle la vertu?112 Socrate ne se contente pas de poser la question pour son propre profit ou pour le profit de qui partage sa curiosité. Il veut que tous les Athéniens se la posent.


Le témoignage

Le fait que bien prendre soin de l’âme est un art et n’est donc pas à la portée du premier venu, thème central dans le Criton, n’est pas discuté dans le Phédon.113 Toutefois, cette idée est exprimée par ceux qui ont bénéficié des soins de Socrate dans le cadre de l’entretien. Plusieurs interprètes ont relevé que l’action de Socrate à l’endroit de ses compagnons est décrite comme une guérison114. Je pense particulièrement à l’épisode où Phédon raconte comment Socrate a su diagnostiquer l’abattement dans lequel les avait plongés un contre-argument de Cébès et surtout les guérir de la misologie qui menaçait alors leurs âmes. Car l’opposition de Cébès les avait non seulement amenés à douter de la véracité des logoi de Socrate sur l’immortalité de l’âme, mais avait surtout eu l’effet néfaste d’ébranler leur confiance

110 La séquence Euthyphron, Apologie, Criton, Phédon s’impose d’un point de vue dramatique et thématique pour qui s’intéresse à Socrate comme champion et expert du soin de l’âme. Sur les allusions à la foule et au procès, voir 64b, 65a, 69e, 84d-e, 98e, 115e.
111 Je précise objet central puisque, dans la mesure où l’âme est épimélétique et a pour fonction de prendre soin (Rep. 353d, Phèdre 246b, Lois 896e-897b), prendre soin en priorité de l’âme implique également, indirectement, de prendre soin de tout le reste.
112 Apol. 24c-e, Meno 91b, 92d, Prot. 313a-b, Laches 185e, 201a-b, Criton 47b-48a.
113 Socrate identifie cependant le manque de compétence, d’expertise (atechnia) comme cause centrale des maux que sont la misanthropie et la misologie, 89e, 90b, d.
114 Minadeo, 1971, 296; Santilli, 1990, 35.
quant au caractère «sain» (ὑγιὲς) des logos en général, affection plus grave115. (Comme Phédon l’explique à Échécrate: «Le logos précédent nous avait fortement convaincus; or, il semblait qu’on nous avait plongés à nouveau dans le trouble, rejetés dans l’impossibilité d’adhérer non seulement aux logos précédents, mais à tous ceux qu’on pourrait tenir par la suite: comment ne pas avoir de l’inquiétude quant à la valeur de notre jugement ou quant à la possibilité même d’arriver à une conviction en cette matière?» (88c). Or) Socrate, avec son art très sûr du diagnostic, sut non seulement discerner l’état dans lequel se trouvaient ses camarades, mais y apporter le remède approprié, comme l’explique Phédon:

Je peux te dire, Échécrate, que Socrate m’a souvent étonné; mais jamais je ne l’ai plus admiré qu’à ce moment-là, et j’y étais. Qu’un pareil homme ait eu de quoi répondre, sans doute n’y a-t-il rien là de surprenant. Mais ce qui m’a le plus étonné chez lui, c’est d’abord le plaisir, la bienveillance, l’admiration avec lesquels il accueillit le langage de ces jeunes gens ensuite, sa perspicacité; il comprit fort bien quels effets ces objections avaient produit sur nous (ἡμῶν ὡς ὀξέως ἔσθετο ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων); enfin, la manière dont il sut si bien nous guérir (ὡς εὖ ἡμᾶς ἰάσατο). (88e-89a)

Cette description de l’intervention thérapeutique de Socrate (intervention propre à affecter le lecteur non moins que les personnages du dialogue)116 est particulièrement révélatrice dans la mesure où Phédon souligne que l’habileté dialectique n’est pas la seule qualité requise pour bien soigner l’âme. Une forme de bienveillance est nécessaire, et surtout–ce qui fait écho aux remarques de Socrate sur la psychagogie dans le Phèdre– une sorte de perceptivité psychologique et d’art du diagnostic sont également requis.117 Bien qu’elle ne soit pas visible, Socrate sait «voir» l’âme de ses amis, il en perçoit l’état et sait la guider correctement au moment critique, en fonction du kairos.118 En fait, Socrate se présente implicitement lui-même comme expert en ces deux domaines lorsqu’il explique à ses compagnons, qu’en matière de logos comme en matière d’hommes, c’est le manque d’expertise (ἀτεχνία) et une confiance précipitée qui sont cause de déception et de découragement.119 Ce passage méta-argumentatif contribue à établir non seulement la crédibilité thérapeutique de Socrate, mais aussi du soin de l’âme, un art en voie de développement et en déficit de reconnaissance publique comme en témoigne la situation critique dans laquelle Socrate se trouve.

Les dernières paroles, Socrate Asclépiade

Un autre élément du dialogue peut être interprété comme une façon, subtile, d’établir le sérieux de l’engagement pour ainsi dire «professionnel» de Socrate :

115C’est Socrate qui emploie l’image de la santé: «Notre âme doit se fermer entièrement au soupçon que, peut-être, les logos n’offrent rien de sain (ὡς τῶν λόγων κανόνευε οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς εἶναι); elle doit bien plutôt avoir ce soupçon-là: que c’est nous qui ne nous comportons pas encore de façon saine (ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὔπω ὑγιῶς ἔχομεν)», Phédon, 90e. Voir aussi 90c. La première apparition du terme «sain», dans la littérature grecque, chez Homère, décrit non pas un état corporel mais la nature d’une parole (muthos), Iliade, VIII, 524: « μῦθος δ’ ὃς μὲν νῦν ὑγιὴς εἰρημένος ἔστω, τὸν δ’ ἦσσος Τρῶεσσι μεθ᾽ ἱπποδάμοις ἀγορεύσω... ». Je reviens sur cette question plus loin.

116 Que Phédon et Échécrate discutent entre eux, après coup, de l’admiration suscitée par cette intervention contribue à susciter une impression similaire chez le lecteur. 88c-d.

117 Phèdre, 271a-72b. La bienveillance est une condition pour être une bonne «pierre de touche» de l’âme, Gorgias 486e-87a.

118 Pour des passages parallèles où Socrate entreprend de déshabiller l’âme de ses interlocuteurs, comme un médecin procédant à un examen, voir Prot. 352a-b, Charm. 154d-e.

119 89d-e, 90b-d.
ses dernières paroles évoquant la dette à Asclépios, dieu (ou héros fondateur) de la médecine. Ces paroles ont fait couler beaucoup d’encre, les commentateurs proposant une foule d’interprétations sophistiquées comme s’il s’agissait d’une énigme redoutable.120 Mais lues à la lumière de sa mission thérapeutique, le sens des dernières paroles de Socrate, adressées en signe de reconnaissance à ce dieu guérisseur qu’est Asclépios, s’éclaire.121 Elles contribuent d’ailleurs à dévoiler l’identité du dieu qu’il déclare, dans l’Apologie, avoir pour mission d’assister en exhortant les Athéniens au soin de la psychè et en soumettant continuellement leurs âmes à l’examen.122 Si l’on accepte cette suggestion, ce serait à Asclépios que Socrate viendrait prêter main forte par son «service» divin123 et l’ergon qu’il viserait ainsi à produire serait la guérison, la santé.124 Santé non du corps, évidemment, mais de l’âme, incarnant ainsi cet Asclépiade éthique capable de guérir l’esprit que Théognis appelaît de ses voeux125. Les malades guéris n’étaient pas seuls à faire des offrandes à Asclépios à Athènes, les médecins souhaitant remercier leur dieu tutélaire pour les guérisons accomplies en faisaient autant126.

(Le lien privilégié entre Socrate et Asclépios trouve d’autres appuis textuels dans le Phédon. Rappelons que dans le prologue Socrate déclare être consacré, comme le cygne, à Apollon (85b) et qu’Apollon est le dieu auquel se rapporte l’oracle de Delphes, oracle qui aurait été au point de départ de sa mission suivant l’Apologie. Or, Asclépios est justement fils d’Apollon, tenant ses dons thérapeutiques de son père qui lui aussi figure au nombre des dieux guérisseurs127. De sorte que,) suivant la suggestion de Santilli:

122 Les dernières paroles de Socrate constituent d’ailleurs une mise en garde contre l’améleia: «Crito, nous devons un coq à Asclépios. Payez cette dette, ne soyez pas négligents (μὴ ἀμελήσητε)” 118a8.
123Socrate utilise les expressions τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείαν (23c1) et τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν (30a7) pour décrire son service au dieu dans l’Apologie et le terme ὑπηρεσική (13d7) dans l’Euthyphron pour désigner la forme de soin, de θεραπεία, que l’homme pieux rend aux dieux.
124La question de la nature de l’ergon que contribue à produire l’homme pieux par son service (ὑπηρεσική) auprès des dieux est le point sur lequel achoppe la tentative de définition de la piété dans l’Euthyphron, 13e-14a. Mais la réponse à cette question est donnée par la description de la mission divine de Socrate dans l’Apologie : l’œuvre de la divinité à laquelle concourt Socrate consiste à convaincre les Athéniens « de se préoccuper davantage de leur âme que de leur corps», Brisson, 2001, 85.
125«Si les fils d’Asclépios avaient reçu des dieux le pouvoir de guérir l’esprit corporel et pervers, ils recevraient de nombreux et importants honoraires!” Eî δ’ Ἀσκληπιάδαις τοῦτο γ’ ἔδωκε θέος, ἰάσθαι κακότητα καὶ ἀτηρὰς φρένας ἀνδρῶν, πολλοὺς ἂν μισθοὺς καὶ μεγάλους ἔφερον., Poèmes élégiaques, fr. 432-34.
126Il n’y a pas lieu de croire que Socrate désirait remercier le dieu pour avoir été guéri lui-même d’une maladie physique (maladie que serait le corps ou la vie, selon la lecture de Nietzsche). Il est plus plausible que ce soit en tant que «médecin» spécialiste de soin de l’âme que Socrate désire honorer le dieu. Voir Santilli, 1990, 32, qui s’appuie sur Farnell, 1921, 268.
Nous pouvons donc tracer un parallèle entre Asclépios, qui hérite des pouvoirs de guérison physique d’Apollon et établit la profession médicale et Socrate, qui sert le dieu dans son dévouement à la vérité et à la santé de l’âme. En d’autres mots, tout comme Asclépios, Socrate peut être considéré comme un fils d’Apollon et comme une nouvelle sorte de guérisseur, non pas du corps, mais de l’âme.

Le Phédon peut donc être lu comme une tentative de fournir à la « médecine » de l’âme quelque chose comme un récit fondateur, un mythe des origines. (Mais pourquoi Platon nous présente-t-il Socrate comme adressant ses dernières paroles au fils Asclépios plutôt qu’au père Apollon? Selon Santilli, Platon procède ainsi pour éviter que Socrate ne soit perçu comme un demi-dieu, comme le fondateur d’un nouveau culte. Comme le rappelle ce commentateur, des sources anciennes déclarent que Pythagore était fils d’Apollon Pythien et qu’il détenait d’extraordinaires pouvoirs de guérisseur. Or, le rapprochement entre Socrate et Apollon pourrait contribuer à donner l’impression – surtout dans le contexte du Phédon où les discussions semblent se dérouler sur un arrière-plan d’inspiration pythagoricienne – que Socrate cherche à être perçu comme «le successeur apollinien de Pythagore». Suivant Santilli, c’est donc pour suggérer subtilement le lien spécial qui unit Socrate à Apollon tout en évitant une magnification excessive que les dernières paroles de Socrate sont adressées à Asclépios plutôt qu’au Père de l’âme.

Le Phédon ne peut être lu que comme un récit fondateur le Phédon n’est pas tant l’histoire d’une fin (celle de Socrate), que celle d’un début. Car bien qu’il soit effectivement présenté comme un praticien particulièrement efficace du soin de l’âme tout au long du Phédon, Socrate ne prétend pas être l’unique possesseur de cette compétence. Il insiste en effet sur la nécessité, pour ses fidèles (qui le considèrent unique et irremplaçable), de se mettre à la recherche d’hommes également capables de prodiguer de telles « incantations » thérapeutiques après son départ, en Grèce voire au-delà. Il évoque également la possibilité pour eux de jouer un rôle similaire les uns envers les autres.

Une communauté de soin mutuel

128 Santilli, 1990, 32.
129 Santilli, 1990, 37: «My suspicion is that Plato needed to link Socrates to Apollo but to avoid the suggestion of an apotheosis in his death and the loss of the philosopher in the quasi-divinity. By utilizing Asclepius rather than Apollo himself, Plato is able to intimate the connexion while warding off its possibly embarrassing consequences.» Selon Santilli, l’offrande prosaïque d’un coq qui, comme il le suggère «est anti-tragique par son caractère vulgaire et populaire», aurait également pour fonction de court-circuiter l’émotion tragique que pourraient créer ces dernières paroles.

130 Vers le début du Vème siècle, Apollon «is frequently referred to as the supreme divine healer», explique Jayne. Cependant, Apollon et Asclépios n’auraient pas le même type de rapport avec la guérison: «Although Apollo bore the epithets [par ex.: iatromantis] he does not appear as active in healing, but rather as having honorary titles and exercising a general, vague supervision over the art. Notwithstanding the popularity of the Delphic oracle, only two cases of minor illness have been found recorded as having appealed to him there. The active duty of healing the sick was performed by his son Asklepios, the Thessalian hero-physician, to whom he, as Apollo Maleates, gave his divine approval», Jayne 1925, 225. Sur le rapport entre les cultes d’Apollon et d’Asclépios, voir aussi, 243 et 252.

131 76b, 78a, 115a, 116a.
132 78a, cf. Lois 951b.
remarques suggèrent, me semble-t-il, que l'expertise de soin de l'âme que Platon cherche à promouvoir avec ses dialogues est une forme de compétence en voie de développement au sein d'une communauté de recherche, un peu à la manière de la confrérie hippocratique pour le soin du corps. Telle que décrite dans le Phédon, cette expertise thérapeutique se pratique d'abord au sein d'une microsociété formée d'humains expérimentant et développant ensemble cet art thérapeutique en se soignant les uns des autres.  

Cette responsabilité de soin mutuel est pris très au sérieux par Socrate comme l'attestent les remontrances qu'il adresse à Criton pour n'avoir pas su durablement conserver, vivants en lui, les principes établis par leur examen et pour avoir plutôt pensé et parlé en fonction de croyances ordinaires, non examinées, qui font «du mal aux âmes». Ce bref épisode provoqué par la question des arrangements funéraires est plus significatif qu'il n'y paraît. Car le soin infatigable prodigué par Socrate à son ami Criton –qui malgré ses bonnes intentions ne possède visiblement pas en lui la puissance d'attention et de réflexion nécessaire pour prendre soin de lui-même sans le support constant du vigilant thérapeute qu'est Socrate– indique qu'il existe, pour ainsi dire, plusieurs niveaux dans l' « amour de la sophia » et le soin que les humains peuvent porter aux choses de l'âme. Ici, la comparaison avec la médecine, récurrente dans le corpus, s'avère utile. Nul ne contestera que sans être soi-même médecin, on peut tenir la médecine en haute estime et bénéficier de l'art du médecin en appliquant ses recommandations en matière de diète, d'exercices, de régime de vie.  

Criton n'est peut-être pas philosophe au sens fort du terme, mais par son attachement à cet « amant de la sagesse » authentique qu'est Socrate il bénéficie de la pensée saine (la phronesis) constamment pratiquée en sa compagnie. Et Socrate, jusqu'à la toute fin, apporte au traitement de son ami un soin particulier, comme l'indique aussi le Criton où Socrate s'emploie avec zèle à lui rappeler les principes d'une conduite juste et le purifier de ses opinions erronées. Ce type de katharsis et de participation à la pensée et à la vertu, par l'intermédiaire d'un guide persuasif, n'est pas à confondre avec la vertu civique aveugle des abeilles et des fourmis, ou la vertu illusoire fondée sur le vice dénoncées par Socrate dans le Phédon.  

(D'ailleurs, si les dernières paroles de Socrate sont adressées à Criton, c'est peut-être que la tâche de «guérison» pour laquelle Socrate remercie Asclépios concerne plus précisément celui-ci. Car à quoi Socrate s'employait-il, lors de sa discussion avec son vieil ami, l'avant-veille, dans la prison, sinon à tenter de le guérir, une dernière fois, de ses opinions erronées qui menaçaient la santé de son âme? Dans son livre, Divertissement sur les dernières paroles de Socrate, G. Dumézil propose  

134 L'importance de la collaboration, du partage, de l'examen mené en commun, est soulignée à maintes reprises. Voir par ex. 63c-d, 84c-d, 86d, 96a, 107b.  
135 Socrate adresse ce reproche à Criton dans le Phédon (115e). Mais dans le Criton aussi, Socrate l'enjoint à cesser de répéter le même logos erroné: «Examinons ensemble ce qu'il en est, mon bon; et si tu as quelque objection à soulever, ne te gêne pas, j'en tiendrai compte. Sinon, cesse, bienheureux Criton, de me répéter le même discours» 48d-e. Voir aussi 49e où Socrate invite Criton à se justifier ou à se contenter d'écouter.  
136 Lach. 190a-b, Criton 46d-48a, Prot. 313e, 340d-e, Gorg. 514d, 517e, 519e, 522a.  
137 Socrate utilise cette distinction lui-même dans le Prot. 311b-c. Sur le bénéfice tiré du contact avec ce qui est meilleur que soi, Phédon 62e.  
138 Pour le principe en jeu voir Rép. 590c-d, Lois 644d-645b, 714a. Les préambules des Lois constituent également une façon, pour le législateur, d'entrer en dialogue avec le citoyen comme le font les bons médecins qui expliquent au patient le traitement, Lois, 719-720.
ainsi d'interpréter les dernières paroles de Socrate dans le Phédon à la lumière de l'intervention thérapeutique dépeinte dans le Criton. Son interprétation s'appuie tout particulièrement sur la remarque de Socrate quant à la valeur du jugement des phronimoi dans ce dialogue (47a). Commentant ce passage, Dumézil déclare:

La maladie qui fait dépérir le corps est donc la soeur jumelle de l'opinion fausse qui corrompt l'âme. La maladie corporelle ne peut être traitée par la foule des ignorants, mais par le seul spécialiste, l'homme d'Asclépios, le médecin; l'opinion fausse, qui provient le plus souvent d'une soumission irréfléchie à l'opinion de la multitude, ne peut être corrigée que par un jugement éclairé, philosophique, fondé sur des principes certains. Il s'agit vraiment de rétablir l'équilibre de l'esprit, de le rendre phronimos, que vous traduiriez comme vous voudrez, sain, sage, réglé: c'est tout un. En commençant sa réfutation, et juste avant de comparer les soins du corps et ceux de l'âme, Socrate a d'ailleurs défini la ligne de partage et prononcé le couple de mots qui éclaire tout: [...] les opinions justes sont celles des phronimoi, les erronées celles des aphrones, autrement dit, les premières, celles des esprits qui fonctionnent bien et les secondes, celles des esprits qui fonctionnent mal.139

Même si Socrate ne déclare pas explicitement vouloir «guérir» Criton, même si le terme nosos n'apparaît pas dans le texte, même si l'aphrôn n'est que comparé à un malade140, selon Dumézil c'est néanmoins ce que ne pouvait manquer de comprendre un lecteur grec, puisque le parallèle entre pensée erronée et maladie était présent, à cette époque, dans l'univers culturel grec.141

Cela dit, ce dévouement thérapeutique n'est pas strictement altruiste. Si, tel qu'expliqué dans le Timée, la therapeia de l'âme requiert mouvements et nourritures appropriées, il est permis de croire que Socrate a lui aussi besoin de cette communauté de soin pour fournir à sa propre âme une source constante d'exercice.142 C'est ce que suggère son insistance sur l'importance de la répétition, un thème présent dans d'autres dialogues.143 La phronesis comme pensée saine qui assure le caractère sain des vertus et du discours est un processus qui doit être constamment répété

139 Dumézil, 1984, 151-152.
140 Dumézil, 1984, 153.
141 Voir l'Antigone de Sophocle (v. 1051-1052): «Créon: Oui, et le mauvais raisonnement est le dommage le plus considérable μὴ φρονεῖν πλείστη βλάβη, Tirésias: C'est pourtant de cette maladie que toi tu es rempli! (ταύτης σὺ μέντοι τῆς νόσου πλήρης ἔφυς); Iphigénie en Aulide d'Euripide (v. 405-406): «Ménelas: En quoi alors me prouveras-tu que tu es mon frère? Agamenon: en voulant penser sainement avec toi et non être malade avec toi (συνσωφρονεῖν σοι βούλομ᾽, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ συννοσεῖν)!». Dumézil conclut: «Socrate n'a donc pas inventé l'opposition entre le «bien penser» qui est la santé de l'esprit et le jugement déréglé, qui en est la maladie. S'il n'a prononcé le mot nosôdès «maladif» que dans un terme de comparaison, à propos du corps, c'est pourtant bien le fond de son argument, et Criton le comprend ainsi», Dumézil 1984, 156-158. Kenny cite d'autres passages où la métaphore de la maladie est appliquée à l'esprit: Eschyle, Prométhée, I, 378 (où les mots sont comparés à un remède de la colère); Les Perses (où la mère de Xerxès décrit ses ambitions comme une «maladie de l'esprit»), Sophocle, Ajax 59, 186, 452; Euripide, Bacchantes, 948; Oreste, 10. Mais selon lui, «rien ne suggère dans la pensée grecque avant Platon que la notion d'un esprit sain (healthy mind) était davantage qu'une métaphore». Cette idée aurait été véritablement élaborée, pour la première fois, par Platon dans le Gorgias et la République, Kenny, 1971, 229. L'ouvrage recent le plus fouillé sur cette question est Lloyd, 2003.
142 Timée, 90c. Dans le Phédon, son «incantation» semble particulièrement autodirigée. Ici plus qu'ailleurs, Socrate œuvre comme médecin de lui-même et admet son propre besoin, 91a-b, 114d. Cela peut expliquer qu'il évoque la dette du coq à Asclépios à la première personne du pluriel. Iôfrande célèbre non seulement une vie entière vouée au soin de l'âme, mais également le succès thérapeutique de cette dernière intervention particulièrement critique visant son ami Criton et lui-même dans le soin mutuel qui les unit
143 76d, 77e, 100b, 105a, 114d. Thème présent dans le Gorgias, 513c-d.
au sens de réactivé. Cette pensée en mouvement, qui soigne, demande d’être repensée, les arguments ré-examinés, parcours que Socrate accomplit dans toutes les circonstances possibles, en compagnie d’autrui.

On aurait tort de voir ce processus de manière strictement formelle puisque Socrate, particulièrement dans le Phédon, semble attaché à la répétition de certains contenus précis, présumés vrais après examen, et qui sont décrits comme une forme de « nourriture », métaphore également récurrente. Ici, ces aliments de l’âme sont, entre autres, la théorie de l’apprentissage comme réminiscence et la théorie des formes qui sont re-digérées dans le cadre d’un examen critique, mené en commun. Cette forme de répétition (critique) de certains contenus est présentée comme une forme d’« incantation » bénéfique pour l’âme. Mais les aliments servant au soin de l’âme ne se limitent pas à des théories philosophiques (re)-digérées par le biais de l’examen. Socrate nourrit également l’âme de ses compagnons de traditions anciennes et de récits mythiques provenant de sa propre imagination, comme c’est le cas dans le mythe eschatologique où il offre une description étonnante de la terre et des diverses régions où se rendent les âmes des défunts en fonction de leurs actions passées. La différence entre les deux types de « nourriture » peut sembler extrême. Mais dans la mesure où les arguments en faveur de l’immortalité de l’âme trouvent leur origine dans des récits anciens et s’accompagnent toujours d’un doute, le régime administré par Socrate dans le Phédon est un régime essentiellement constitué de croyances (présumées) vraies.

L’ultime preuve thérapeutique

Cela dit, le dialogue nourrit le lecteur d’au moins une certitude. De manière paradoxale (vu le contexte du Phédon) cette preuve ne repose pas sur le raisonnement, mais sur un fait d’expérience : Socrate lui-même. Le témoignage le plus puissant du fait que le soin de l’âme qu’il le promeut fonctionne bel et bien, c’est lui, son bonheur, sa vertu. (Le dialogue s’ouvre sur l’émerveillement causé par ce bonheur inébranlable et se clôt sur l’émerveillement causé par la supériorité de ses vertus. Le représentant des Onze, qui joue en quelque sorte le rôle de garant à l’endroit du lecteur non-philosophe, en atteste lui aussi: Socrate est le meilleur homme qui lui a été donné de rencontrer dans de telles circonstances. (116c)) Son état d’âme au moment de mourir (joyeux, confiant, tranquille), son attitude tout au long de l’entretien (bienveillant, patient, curieux, libre, persistant), son comportement face à la condamnation (soucieux de la justice, courageux, pieux) tout concourt à créer une impression de perfection non pas surhumaine mais proprement humaine. Grâce à cette preuve vivante offerte par Socrate, ce n’est plus là qu’un motif d’espoir, c’est une certitude : un tel degré de perfection, un tel bonheur, sont effectivement accessibles à l’être humain, sinon pour l’éternité, du moins en cette vie. La philosophie permet

145 72e, 76d, 100b.
146 61d, 62b, 63c, 67c, 69c, 70c, 107d.
147 91b, 91c, 107c, 114d.
148 Le récit de Phédon débute avec une description du bonheur de Socrate, sa sérénité et sa vaillance, en actes et en paroles (58d), et prend fin sur le constat que l’on sait « parmi tous ceux qu’il nous a été donné d’apprécier, il a été le meilleur, et en outre le plus sage, et le plus juste. » 118a. L’idée de mise à l’épreuve accentue le statut de Socrate comme preuve vivante. Sur Socrate comme preuve, voir Hartle, 1986, 74.
149 Selon Hartle (1986, 16-17), cette perfection, particulièrement l’absence de peur face à une mort imminente est plus qu’humaine, voire inhumaine, ce qui l’amène à soupçonner la présence de quelque chose comme un ‘noble mensonge’ dans le Phédon (Hartle, 1986, 72-74).
D’un point de vue protreptique, cet aspect du dialogue est crucial. Les preuves de l’immortalité de l’âme peuvent bien échouer à convaincre la plupart de lecteurs du Phédon (et jusqu’à un certain point, Socrate lui-même), mais il est difficile de surestimer l’impact du portrait de Socrate comme preuve vivante de l’efficacité thérapeutique de la philosophie. L’affection tout particulière qu’un stoïcien tel Épictète témoigne au Phédon, malgré son indifférence face à l’immortalité, en est un bon exemple. La possibilité pour les humains de vivre, ici et maintenant, une vie exempte de peur et de trouble quelles que soient les circonstances, à la manière de Socrate, deviendra le but même de la philosophie comme médecine de l’âme dans diverses écoles, et ce indépendamment de la croyance en l’immortalité. L’image de l’âme comme « mer apaisée » progressivement assainie par l’effet de la philosophie a certainement quelque chose de proto-stoïcien. Atteindre durablement un tel état psychologique n’est pas le but unique (ou même principal) que Socrate déclare lui-même poursuivre dans le Phédon, mais en peignant si puissamment cet état de joyeuse sérénité comme une conséquence bénéfique du détachement de l’âme provoqué par la philosophie, Platon contribue à accroître l’attrait et la crédibilité de la philosophie comme pratique thérapeutique. Comme Socrate l’explique dans l’échantillon de sagesse protreptique offert dans l’Euthydème, la manière de convertir efficacement au soin de la vertu et à l’amour de la sagesse consiste à montrer qu’elles seules permettent d’atteindre ce que chacun désire toujours déjà, à savoir le bonheur. L’élément protreptique crucial du Phédon est le bonheur de Socrate.

Cette preuve personnifiée contribue grandement à la pertinence du dialogue pour le lecteur contemporain non moins que pour le lecteur ancien. Car alors que l’idée d’une finalité thérapeutique de la philosophie bénéficie d’un regain d’intérêt, rares sont aujourd’hui les philosophes qui adhèrent, en tant que philosophes, à la croyance en l’immortalité de l’âme (et encore moins sur la base d’arguments impliquant la réminiscence ou les formes intelligibles). Comme le dit si bien Mark Johnston dans son livre récent Surviving Death, l’état présent des connaissances concernant l’esprit suggère que c’est Simmias, et non Socrate, qui avait raison. De sorte que si le sens et la valeur de l’exhortation au soin de l’âme étaient complètement suspendus à la croyance en son immortalité, l’intérêt philosophique du Phédon (d’un point de vue non-historique et non méthodologique) s’en trouverait radicalement diminué. Mais rien dans le texte ne suggère une telle dépendance, de sorte qu’on


152 84a et 88c où Phédon explique que le soin prodigué leur a permis d’échapper au « trouble » dans lequel le raisonnement les avait jetés, ce qui évoque l’idéal hellénistique d’ataraxia.

153 Le but qu’il déclare poursuivre étant « la vérité », 66b.

154 Euthyd. 280e-82d.

155 Johnston est un des rares philosophes contemporain à considérer, philosophiquement, la possibilité de survie après la mort, mais sa démonstration repose précisément sur le rejet de l’idée d’âme comme substance immatérielle à la Platon. Voir Johnston, 2010, 130-137.

156 “Simmias seems vindicated; for the evidence from neurophysiology suggests that the mind is just the mode of functioning of the brain and nervous system.” Johnston, 2010, 133.

157 Évidemment, cela ne remet nullement en question la puissance dramatique, la valeur littéraire et surtout, l’importance historique du dialogue. Sans le Phédon, comment pourrait-on comprendre le platonisme et son rôle dans l’histoire de la philosophie occidentale, ou encore le développement
ne fait pas violence au texte en les appréciant séparément.158

Quoi qu’il en soit, la lutte de Socrate/Platon pour la reconnaissance sociale de la philosophie dépendait nécessairement de la position de son objet de soin privilégié, l’âme, dans l’échelle des valeurs. C’est vers cette question délicate que je me tourne maintenant.

Disparition de l’idéal politique d’une hiérarchisation des divers objets de soin?

De l’Apologie jusqu’au Lois, se fait jour, dans les dialogues de Platon, une lutte pour l’adoption d’un certain ordre des valeurs au sommet duquel se trouve l’âme et sa vertu.159 La philosophie est suspendue à l’établissement de cette hiérarchie pour sa reconnaissance sociale, et le philosophe… pour sa survie.160 Or, dans le contexte de ce combat axiologique pour la priorité du soin de l’âme, on peut se demander si le Phédon ne va pas, pour ainsi dire, si loin que la pertinence politique du soin de l’âme s’en trouve compromise, voire anéantie. Car si l’idéal hiérarchique est bien adapté à l’organisation d’un tout politique, un souci exclusif de l’âme ne semble pas une fondation viable pour le bon fonctionnement du corps politique. Une diversité de choses doit faire l’objet de soin au sein d’une cité, ce qui exige également la contribution d’une diversité d’individus aptes à s’en soucier.

Face à l’idéal politique d’une hiérarchie des objets du soin, le Phédon paraît donc problématique. Car dans la partie du texte que j’appellerai « la seconde apologie », Socrate semble promouvoir une forme d’exclusion, voire d’éradication de tous les objets de souci au profit d’un seul, l’âme. L’idée de hiérarchie des objets de souci souvent évoquée ailleurs (subordonnant le souci des honneurs, du corps et des biens matériels au souci de l’âme) semble vidée de son sens puisqu’un seul subsiste. Pire, le corps en particulier semble devenir objet d’hostilité ; il est question de le fuir, de s’en séparer, d’être irrité des soins qu’il requiert. Bref, ici, Socrate ne semble pas promouvoir une hiérarchie, mais plutôt une division axiologique stricte n’accordant de valeur qu’à l’âme en excluant tout autre objet de souci, particulièrement le corps. D’un point de vue politique, cet apparent contraste mérite l’attention et appelle plusieurs observations.

a) Prendre soin de l’âme n’a pas la même signification pour le philosophe et le non-philosophe

La première est que l’impression de faire face à une position divergente et potentiellement inconciliable avec le reste du corpus peut être due à l’erreur exégétique fréquente consistant à amalgamer ce que Socrate dit à propos de lui-même –qui décrit la situation particulière du philosophe– et ce à quoi il exhorte des pratiques ascétiques et des croyances religieuses sur l’âme dans le contexte chrétien, et plus fondamentalement encore, l’expérience occidentale qui oppose corps et âme comme s’il s’agissait de deux entités rivales?

158 En ouvrant son récit eschatologique, Socrate déclare qu’il y a un « risque » à ne pas prendre soin de l’âme si elle s’avère immortelle. Il ne dit pas qu’il n’est pas nécessaire d’en prendre soin à moins qu’elle ne soit immortelle, 107c-d. Par ailleurs, comme l’a fait remarquer Salvat, l’immortalité comme telle n’est pas suffisante pour justifier l’importance du soin, c’est plutôt l’idée de châtiment qui rend l’immortalité risquée pour le vicieux. Salvat, 1965, 31-32.


l’ensemble des hommes\textsuperscript{161}. Une telle confusion est lourde de conséquence pour l’interprétation des dialogues dans leur ensemble. Voyons de quoi il en retourne.

La distinction entre l’orientation du souci propre au philosophe et celle qui caractérise le reste des hommes, cruciale dans le \textit{Phédon} et la \textit{République}, est déjà repérable dans l’\textit{Apologie}. Prenons le passage suivant. Après que les juges l’ont déclaré coupable, Socrate entreprend, une fois de plus, de se dépeindre lui-même:

Quel traitement ou quelle pénalité puis-je bien mériter, oui, pour n’avoir pas mené une paisible existence? mais pour n’avoir eu au contraire, nul souci de ce dont justement se soucient la plupart des gens: des affaires d’argent, de l’administration de leurs biens, des charges de stratège, des succès oratoires devant l’Assemblée, de tout ce qu’il y a encore de magistratures, de cabales, de factions existant dans la Cité? (\textit{Apologie}, 36b)

On le voit, les objets dont Socrate déclare n’avoir eu nul souci sont nombreux et son \textit{ameleia} à leur endroit est certes radicale, ici comme dans le \textit{Phédon}. Mais pour bien évaluer la portée d’une telle déclaration, il faut garder en tête que c’est son autoportrait, en tant qu’individu atypique, que Socrate brosses ici. Bien qu’il souçonne que certains se mettront à l’imiter\textsuperscript{163}, rien n’indique qu’il encouragerait l’ensemble des Athéniens à le suivre sur une voie aussi extrême. Il est vrai qu’il exhorte tout un chacun à se soucier prioritairement d’une dimension habituellement négligée à laquelle il s’est pour sa part entièrement consacré, à savoir le soin de l’âme. Mais cela ne signifie pas qu’il inviterait chaque citoyen à devenir philosophe, à se transformer, pour ainsi dire, en «Socrate» et à embrasser un mode de vie semblable au sien. \textsuperscript{163} À quoi pourrait ressembler une cité composée de dizaines de milliers de Socrate ? Dans l’\textit{Apologie}, Socrate ne reproche pas à ses concitoyens de ne pas embrasser une vie entièrement consacrée au soin de l’âme, mais plutôt de n’avoir \textit{aucun} souci d’elle et de qui pourrait la rendre meilleure –et ce malgré la réputation de \textit{sophia} qui distingue Athènes\textsuperscript{164}. Pour expliquer ce que son choix de vie a d’unique, voire d’incompréhensible, Socrate déclare que l’existence qu’il a menée lui a été prescrite par un dieu, suggérant ainsi qu’il s’agit là d’une voie d’exception qui ne saurait s’appliquer à tous.\textsuperscript{165}

Si mon interprétation est juste, Platon (et son Socrate) ne rêvent pas d’une conversion de tout un chacun à la philosophie, mais d’une « socratisation » de la cité par le biais de ce soin de l’âme qu’est l’éducation, un bon régime de vie collective, et de bonnes lois, sous la conduite d’un groupe de philosophes législateurs. Or, pour qu’une telle conversion politique soit éventuellement réalisable, le type de soin de l’âme (pour ainsi dire, ‘à temps plein’) que pratique le philosophe doit faire l’objet d’un respect généralisé au niveau civique. Tous doivent, en ce sens, se soucier de l’âme (l’honorer, lui accorder la plus haute valeur) et donc, respecter (voire, prendre

\textsuperscript{161}Cette tendance à l’amalgame est caractéristique de l’interprétation de Vlastos, 1994, 34.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Apol.} 39c-d.
\textsuperscript{163}L’opinion de Nehamas (1998, 9) suivant laquelle Platon considère le mode de vie socratique (philosophique) meilleur pour tout le monde me semble erronée: «[Plato] tries to prove that a single type of life is best for all people». Que Platon juge que la vie philosophique est \textit{la meilleure}, ne veut pas dire qu’elle serait appropriée \textit{pour tous}. En fait, une telle idée contredit la conception platonicienne de la justice voulant que chacun occupe le rôle auquel le destine sa nature. Pour une position en harmonie avec la mienne, voir Hartle, 1986, 77.
\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Apol.} 29d. \textit{Cf. Alc. I} 123d.
\textsuperscript{165}Voir \textit{Apol.} 23b, 28e, 30d-31a, 33c.
soin au sens d’assurer la subsistance$^{166}$) de ceux qui ont pour mission spécifique de s’en occuper. C’est ce que signifie Socrate lorsqu’il déclare, durant son procès, que sa contribution — réelle — au bonheur des Athéniens devrait lui valoir plus d’égards qu’ils en accordent présentement à ces façonneurs du corps que sont les champions olympiques.$^{167}$ En termes modernes, on pourrait dire que ce qui est en jeu est le problème du rôle et de la reconnaissance sociale d’un certain type d’« intellectuels » soucieux du bien collectif.

Mais revenons au Phédon. Les deux passages parallèles sur la μελέτη θανάτου (63e-69e et 80d-84b) sont particulièrement importants pour la question de l’apparente disparition de l’idéal de hiérarchie du souci/des valeurs. Par contrainte de temps, je me concentre sur le premier que j’appellerai ‘la seconde apologie de Socrate’$^{168}$ puisque Socrate y présente un plaidoyer dans un procès fictif.$^{169}$ Dans la mesure où l’on a tendance à comprendre le soin de l’âme pour Socrate/Platon, à la lumière de ce passage déconcertant où la philosophie est définie comme un exercice de mort, il convient d’y accorder une attention spéciale.

(Le contexte dont émane cette seconde mise en «procès» est un échange sur l’interdiction, religieuse, de se donner la mort. Face à ce qu’il interprète comme une forme de mise en accusation, Socrate décide de présenter sa défense comme s’il était devant un tribunal, en espérant s’avérer plus persuasif que «la première fois», précise-t-il, évoquant son véritable procès:

... je veux maintenant, devant vous, mes juges, justifier cette affirmation: il me paraît raisonnable de penser que l’homme qui a réellement passé toute sa vie dans la philosophie est, quand il va mourir, plein de confiance et d’espoir que c’est là qu’il obtiendra les biens les plus grands, une fois qu’il aura cessé de vivre. (…) Car c’est bien là une chose dont les autres risquent de ne pas avoir conscience: que tous ceux qui s’appliquent à la philosophie et s’y appliquent droitement ne s’occupent de rien d’autre que de mourir et d’être morts. (63e8-64a6)

Trois aspects distinctifs de la ‘seconde apologie’ qui suit cette introduction méritent une attention particulière. D’abord, le public visé. Alors que dans l’Apologie, c’est le rapport de Socrate à ses concitoyens qui occupe le devant de la scène (comme thérapeute dont le traitement les a irrités), le présent contexte est tout autre. Socrate ne s’y adresse pas à tout le monde mais à un groupe restreint de fidèles unis par les mêmes intérêts, la même orientation du souci. Il parle à la première personne du

166 Suivant Strauss (1980, 48-49), la conscience de ce besoin est aussi présent dans les Nuées.
168 Bien qu’il fasse clairement écho au premier, le second passage s’en distingue de trois façons : 1) son ton semble quelque peu amer (voir ‘passif agressif’) alors que le premier est serein, factuel, 2) il évoque la possibilité d’une lutte entre la priorité que le philosophe accorde au souci de l’âme et les désirs corporels (tension absente du premier), 3) alors que le premier est descriptif, son objectif semble exhortatif (non pour faire de nouvelles recrues, mais pour encourager le philosophe débutant ou hésitant à persévérer en résistant aux désirs corporels).
169 Cette « défense judiciaire » est une entité narrative bien circonscrite entre le prologue et les arguments en faveur de l’immortalité de l’âme. Socrate marque le début de ce plaidoyer en disant: ‘Je veux, devant vous, mes juges, justifier cette affirmation...’ (63e), et le refermera ainsi: «Voilà Simmias et Cébès, en quoi consiste ma défense: à montrer combien, alors que je vous quitte, vous et les maîtres d’ici-bas, il est raisonnable que je le fasse sans difficulté, sans révolte, puisque je crois que là-bas non moins qu’ici je trouverai des maîtres et des compagnons qui soient bons», 69d-e.
pluriel et imagine le langage que se tiennent, « entre eux », les philosophes. Ce qu'il désigne ici comme ses « juges » (63e) sont des convertis, des proches qui sont, eux aussi, « amis de la sagesse » à divers degrés.

Deuxièmement, tout ce qui sera dit dans ce plaidoyer à propos du rapport au corps caractérise aussi le mode de vie d'une catégorie de gens particulière : la classe des philosophes. Ce que Socrate disait à propos de son propre mode de vie dans le passage de l'Apologie cité plus tôt, il l'applique ici à tous les philosophes authentiques en insistant sur leur rapport singulièrement « amélétique » au corps. Le corps est présenté ici comme un obstacle face à l'orientation existentielle spécifique du philosophe dans cette vie-ci (son souci dominant de l'âme), ce qui vient fonder la « religion du philosophe » qui en découle (i.e. l'espérance des biens futurs qui l'attendent, comme âme complètement 'purifiée' du corps, après la 'mort'). La question du Socrate historique ne m'intéresse pas ici, mais notons au passage que ce rapport radicalement amélétique au corps dans le Phédon ne semble pas à mettre sur le compte d'un Platon devenu plus ascétique que son maître, puisque la caricature de Socrate dans les Nuées d'Aristophane dépeignait déjà une attitude de détachement extrême à la fois provocante, incompréhensible et ridicule aux yeux du non-philosophe. Ce qui m'amène au dernier élément, le style du discours.

Ce style n'est pas exhortatif, il est plutôt factuel, descriptif. En réponse, peut-être, à cette caricature d'Aristophane, Socrate/Platon tente d'expliquer (et par le fait même de légitimer) l'orientation singulière de ceux qu'un amour intense, une certaine forme de mania – à la manière des cigales du Phèdre – absorbe dans un souci dominant qui contribue à dévaluer tout autre objet de préoccupation.

Voici, explique en somme Socrate, comment vivent les philosophes. Mais il n'invite pas tout un chacun à faire de sa vie un exercice de mort; l'activité mentale qui sépare l'âme du corps est présentée comme ce qui distingue le philosophe authentique. Il ne cherche pas non plus ici à défendre sa mission publique d'exhortation au soin de l'âme. Il tente simplement d'expliquer l'attitude de confiance

170 64c, 66b, 67b. Voir Hartle, 1986, 75.
171 Ce rapport est décrit de manière synthétique plus loin : "Ceux qui philosophent droitement se tiennent à l'écart de tous les appétits du corps, sans exception, leur résistent et refusent de s'y abandonner. Concernant la perte de leurs biens ou la pauvreté, ils n'éprouvent autant dire aucune crainte, à la différence de la plupart des gens qui, eux aiment l'argent. Ils ne redoutent pas davantage l'absence d'honneurs et de célébrité liée à une situation médiocre comme le font ceux qui aiment la puissance et la gloire..." (82c-d)
172 Socrate endure de nombreux maux, se promenant pieds nus (Nuées, 361-363); le Choeur explique à Strepsiade qui désire être admis au «pensoir» de Socrate : «Ô toi qui as désiré apprendre de nous la grande sagesse, comme tu vas être heureux parmi les Athéniens et les Hellènes, si tu as de la mémoire, un esprit méditatif, et une âme endurante; si tu ne te lasses ni de rester debout ni de marcher; si tu ne souffres pas trop du froid, et si tu sais te passer de repas de midi; si tu t'abstiens de vin, de gymnase, et de toutes les autres insanités, considérant comme le bien suprême, ce qu'il est juste qu'un homme intelligent tienne pour tel...» (412-419); celui-ci accepte en ces termes : «...qu'ils fassent de moi absolument tout ce qu'ils voudront; je leur cède mon corps pour qu'ils le livrent aux coups, à la faim, à la soif, à la malpropreté, au froid, et qu'ils l'écortent...» (439-443); lorsque Socrate invite son nouveau disciple à «saisir au vol» ce qu'il pourra lui enseigner sur les principes célestes, celui-ci rétorque : «Que dis-tu donc là? Me nourrirai-je de science à la façon d'un chien qui happe un morceau?» (491)
173 Implicitement évoquée en 70c-d.
174 C'est ce qu'ils aiment par-dessus tout qui explique leur ameleia à l'égard du reste, Phèdre, 259b-d.
175...τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τούτῳ ἐστιν τῶν φιλοσόφων, λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος, 67d8-10.
face à la mort qui le distingue radicalement, comme philosophe, des autres hommes.\footnote{176} Bref, cette 'seconde apologie' décrit non pas un mode d'existence auquel Socrate tenterait de convertir tout un chacun, mais la réalité quotidienne du philosophe, sa manière à lui d'être en vie. Une voie différente, un mode de vie incompris (64a, 82d) qui aux yeux des autres ressemble à la mort (65a), et qui requiert, pour cette raison, une explication. De sorte que ce plaidoyer adressé par le philosophe à d'autres philosophes à propos de l'orientation existentielle du philosophe a peut-être surtout pour résultat de permettre au (lecteur) non-philosophe d'avoir un aperçu, comme de l'intérieur, sur ce mode de vie étrange.

(J'ouvre ici une parenthèse pour souligner qu'en fait, mis à part le portrait du bonheur et de la vertu parfaite de Socrate, le seul élément réellement exhortatif dans le Phédon est le récit mythique final et l'évocation coutumière des châtiments postmortem réservés aux vilains. Exprimant une menace à peine voilée, Socrate tente de susciter le souci des vertus de l'âme par le biais de la peur lorsqu'il déclare, juste avant de débuter son récit, que l'âme de celui qui n'en a pas pris soin court « un risque redoutable »\footnote{177}. La stratégie protreptique utilisée ici n'est pas bien différente des récits traditionnels qui sont à la source du souci anxieux du vieux Céphale pour la justice à l'approche de sa mort, au début de la République. Étant donné la critique de ce genre de vertu en trompe-l'œil, dans le Phédon\footnote{178}, on peut supposer que Socrate utilise ce mode d'exhortation comme méthode thérapeutique de dernier recours. Mais justement, cela montre bien qu'ultimement, sa mission de conversion au soin de l'âme cherche à affecter l'ensemble du corps social, à différents degrés, de différentes manières, le but étant d'orienter toutes les âmes dans une même direction, aussi faible que soit, en elles, le désir de vérité et de sophia.)

Il n'est donc nul besoin de postuler que Socrate/Platon aurait oscillé entre un ascétisme extrême dans le Phédon et une approche du soin de l'âme plus modérée et soucieuse du politique dans d'autres dialogues. Une perspective herméneutique attentive au contexte et à la sociologie du savoir permet de comprendre que nous ne sommes pas face à une transformation mais plutôt face à une forme de complémentarité. La différence entre la situation particulière du philosophe, entièrement épris des choses de l'âme, et celle des non-philosophes qui ignorent et négligent, par le fait même, cette dimension essentielle de la vie humaine, suffit à expliquer l'apparent contraste.

\emph{L'idéal de hiérarchie des soucis n'est pas totalement absent du Phédon}

Par ailleurs, il ne faudrait pas exagérer le radicalisme pro-âme de Socrate. Si l'exhortation à hiérarchiser les objets de soin n'est pas aussi présente dans le Phédon que dans d'autres dialogues, elle n'est pas totalement absente. On trouve vers la fin du texte un puissant rappel, explicite, du fait que Socrate est resté fidèle, sa vie durant, à cet idéal hiérarchique. Lorsque Criton demande à Socrate de lui faire part de ses dernières volontés, celui-ci, refusant d'offrir des instructions précises, répond simplement:

\begin{quote}
Ce que je vous ordonne? (…) Exactement, Criton, ce que je ne cesse pas de
\end{quote}

\footnote{176 ἄρ′ οὖν πρῶτον μὲν ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις δήλος ἐστιν ὁ φιλόσοφος ἀπολύων ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων; 65a.}
\footnote{177 107c. Le récit eschatologique final cadre mal avec le passage parallèle où les mauvaises âmes sont décrites comme errant autour des tombes et s'attachant à des corps animaux semblables à leurs vices, 81d-82a.}
\footnote{178 68d-69b, 82a-b.}
dire, et rien de plus nouveau : que vous ayez, vous, souci de vous-mêmes, et ainsi, pour moi, pour ce qui est mien, pour vous-mêmes, vous ferez par amour tout ce qu’il vous arrivera de faire, quand bien même, à présent, vous ne vous y seriez pas engagés. (trad. Robin, 115b)

Ce passage illustre bien la raison principale pour laquelle Socrate suggère à tous d’accorder leur priorité au soin de l’âme : elle est le principe du soin et du bon usage. Si l’on prend bien soin d’elle, d’abord et avant tout, le bon état du reste s’en trouve assuré. Outre son rôle épimélétique, Socrate évoque aussi le rôle hégémonique de l’âme, manière habile de contribuer à en accroître le prestige dans une culture où le leadership est hautement valorisé. Or, ces deux fonctions impliquent que les objets de soin sont divers et doivent être ordonnés. Car si l’âme doit être le premier objet de soin en tant que principe de direction et de soin du reste, cela présuppose qu’il existe d’autres objets de soin, eux aussi légitimes.

De plus, si l’on prête attention aux détails du langage employé, on se rend compte que le Socrate du Phèdon ne diffère en rien de celui de l’Apologie qui, loin de se désintéresser entièrement des soins requis par le corps, demandait à être nourri aux frais de l’état dans le Prytanée. Le Socrate du Phèdon, pas plus que celui de l’Apologie, n’est un cynique avant l’heure qui promouvrait un dénuement matériel extrême comme outil de perfectionnement moral. Si la mort (au sens courant de décès physique) lui apparait sous un jour favorable, c’est précisément parce qu’elle le libère, enfin, du lourd service (therapeia) dû au corps, soin qui entrave le souci de l’âme en tant que formidable source d’ascholia. Ceci montre bien, par contraste, que d’ici là, au cours de la vie, la situation est bien différente et que le philosophe consacre, comme les autres humains, une grande part de son temps à prendre soin du corps et de ses besoins: («Et tout le temps que nous vivons, nous nous approchons au plus près du savoir lorsque, autant qu’il est possible (ὅτι μάλιστα), nous n’aurons ni commerce ni association avec le corps, sauf en cas d’absolue nécessité (ὅτι μὴ πάσα ἄναγκη),»), explique Socrate (67a2-4). Or, cette absolue nécessité se fait sentir quotidiennement tout au long de la vie, puisque «il est obligatoire de se nourrir» (τὸ σῶμα διὰ τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τροφήν, 66b8), que les maladies risquent de survenir si l’on n’accorde pas un soin minimal à l’entretien du corps, que les désirs amoureux, les peurs, les appétits se font également ressentir (66b-e).

Le philosophe n’est donc pas tout à fait une cigale. La prise en considération du souci à accorder au corps durant la vie est implicitement reconnue par toutes ces formules de restrictions qui viennent tempérer ce que l’expression de l’orientation dominante du philosophe vers l’âme pourrait avoir d’excès. En précisant que le philosophe délègue l’âme du corps «autant qu’il en est capable», «autant que possible», qu’il néglige la therapeia du corps «pour autant qu’il n’est pas absolument obligé d’en prendre sa part», que son âme «se tient autant qu’elle le peut à l’écart des plaisirs, des appétits, des peines, des craintes», une limite claire est tracée au non-souci du corps.

179 L’âme comme principe de soin: Rép. 353d, Phèdre 246b, Lois 896c-97b; la phronesis et sophia comme vertu de l’âme qui sont principe de bon usage Euthyd. 281b- e, Mén. 88d-e, Rép. 586e, Phil. 65a.

180 80a, 94a-d.

181 “Not honouring the body” meant: not giving it the first place. It did not mean: refusing it its due care. For the body had to be kept in good condition, in order to save “the soul,” that is, the thinking mind. [...] he would train the body... in a sense he did honour it, namely in the second place, as subservient to the soul», de Vogel, 1973, 37; «he does not think that the care of the soul implies the neglect of the body»; «One cannot take care of one’s soul properly unless one’s body itself is healthy», Jaeger, 1986, 46, 47.

182Pour de telles formules restrictives, voir entre autres: 64e1, 64e5, 65a1 65c7, 65c7, 67a3, 83b7.
On pourrait dire que la hiérarchie du soin propre au philosophe n'est pas différente, dans sa structure, de celle qu'il exhorte autrui à adopter, mais que son échelle des valeurs est en quelque sorte plus à pic, ce qui est reflété dans le vocabulaire utilisé. Par exemple, il est dit que le philosophe « n'accorde pas de prix à tous les autres soins qui concernent le corps» (64d8); que quand l'âme du philosophe se concentre en elle-même et aspire à penser ce qui est, c'est alors qu'elle accorde le moins de valeur au corps (65d1); que les vertus réelles de courage et de modération appartiennent à ceux qui font peu de cas du corps et passent leur vie dans la philosophie (68c12).

Bref, en expliquant pourquoi le philosophe se réjouit à l'idée de se séparer de son corps, Socrate met implicitement en évidence les soins qui sont dus au corps par tout homme au cours de la vie, philosophe compris.) Néanmoins, cette limite tracée à l'ameleia du philosophe envers tout ce qui ne concerne pas l'âme et sa phronesis, n'annule en rien la différence fondamentale – différence d'intensité– entre le souci quasi unique dont l'âme est naturellement l'objet chez lui et l'exhortation à une hiérarchisation des soucis qui s'adresse et s'applique à l'ensemble des citoyens comme on le voit dans l'Apologie ou les Lois. De plus, le philosophe 'adepte de mort' et de détachement tel que dépeint par Socrate peut sembler excessif, mais il est en fait beaucoup plus modéré que la foule, qui n'accorde de souci et ne prend soin pratiquement de rien d'autre que des choses corporelles. C'est d'ailleurs ce souci quasi exclusif du corps qui se trouve à la source du fléau social qu'est la guerre, comme l'explique Socrate dans un des rares passages explicitement politiques du Phédon: « Prenons les guerres, les dissensions, les conflits: rien d'autre ne les suscite que le corps et ses appétits. Car toutes les guerres ont pour origine l'appropriation des richesses. Or, ces richesses, c'est le corps qui nous force à les acquérir, c'est son service qui nous rend esclaves.» (66c) Dans le même esprit que la lutte menée par Socrate contre la pleonexia dans la Kallipolis, le législateur des Lois n'aura pas d'autre mission que de corriger ce souci aliénant, à l'origine de la guerre, en promouvant, de toutes les manières possibles, une hiérarchie des valeurs au sommet duquel se trouve l'âme et sa vertu.

4. Signification politique de la μελέτη θανάτου et du noble risque?

En terminant, j'aimerais ouvrir une piste de lecture plus aventureuse, plus risquée, afin d'accentuer encore un peu plus la dimension et la pertinence politique du Phédon. J'ai affirmé plus tôt que la 'seconde apologie', et sa description de la philosophie comme exercice de mort, n'est pas de nature exhortative. Je souhaite maintenant tempérer cette assertion. Car l'insistance répétée, dans les deux passages évoquant la μελέτη θανάτου, sur le fait que celui qui philosophe droitement ne sera pas irrité par la mort sonne un peu comme un défi, voire une provocation… Un défi adressé aux compagnons philosophes qui l'entourent en ce moment critique, mais aussi au lecteur ancien du Phédon adepte de philosophie, les invitant à persister dans leur activité malgré l'hostilité dont ils font l'objet. J'ai également soutenu que le

183 Il n'est pas question ici de mortifier le corps. Simplement, le philosophe ne fait pas partie de ceux qui prennent au sérieux les plaisirs de la nourriture, de la boisson, les aphrodisia (64d). Il n'accorde pas au corps une grande attention, ne se donne pas pour lui plus de peine que ce qui s'avère strictement nécessaire, il ne l'«honne» pas plus qu'il ne le mérite. «The philosopher is the man who, more than anybody else, "does not honour the body" - I think this is the correct rendering of the atimazei (Phaed.65c8), rather than "despises" or "disdains". It means that he does not give it the first place», de Vogel, 1973, 35. Voir aussi Dixsaut, 1991, 78: «Il ne s'agit ni de mépriser, ni de passer sa vie à fuir ce qui garderait pourtant son pouvoir de séduction et de tentation. Il s'agit d'assigner un rang, tout en faisant la part de la nécessité et en appréciant ce qui est possible: l'évaluation est hiérarchique, elle témoigne de la hauteur prise, elle n'est pas morale».

184 625c-632d.
Phédon constitue un témoignage visant à attester de l'efficacité d'un nouveau type de soin visant l'âme, et de la compétence de ses praticiens, Socrate en particulier, en tant que fondateur de quelque chose comme un nouvel ordre d'asclépiades. J'ajouterai maintenant que ce dialogue est également une sorte d'avertissement face aux dangers que courent les pionniers de cet art de soin, de même qu'une exhortation à persister malgré la menace.

Bien qu'hardie, une telle lecture n'est pas arbitraire puisque le danger de persécution auquel s'exposent les philosophes est évoqué dans le texte. Implicitement, d'abord, puisque l'attaque –étrangement ciblée– visant Anaxagore dans l'autobiographie de Socrate peut s'expliquer comme une tentative de distinguer la tradition socratique de celle représentée par ce philosophe ayant lui aussi fait l'objet de persécution. Mais surtout, ce danger est explicitement évoqué, au tout début du texte, lorsque Simmias réagit aux explications de Socrate sur la μελέτη θανάτου en déclarant, ironiquement, que la foule serait tout à fait d'accord pour dire que le philosophes réclament et méritent la mort.

Quoi de plus bénin, pensons-nous aujourd'hui, que l'« amour de la sagesse »? Quoi de plus inoffensif (et non pertinent), d'un point de vue politique, que la philosophie? Lire le Phédon en gardant en tête cette violente hostilité envers l'Asclépios politique qu'était Socrate demande un effort d'imagination spécial pour le lecteur contemporain. Et même d'un point de vue ancien, il faudrait se demander pourquoi l'Inde, par exemple, n'a pas persécuté ses sages, alors que la Grèce a menacé ou tué plusieurs des siens.

Vu sous cet angle, le Phédon est un manifeste de résistance adressé aux philosophes les encourageant à courir le « noble risque », politique, qu'implique leur amour de la sagesse et leur pratique de soin de l'âme, à savoir : le risque d'une mort prématurée.

185 Dans son introduction au dialogue, Schleiermacher suggère qu'il pourrait y avoir un lien entre le Phédon et « le souvenir chez Platon de ce qui lui était arrivé en Sicile et le souhait de montrer que la peur poltronne de la mort ne peut habiter le véritable disciple de Socrate ». Schleiermacher, 2004, 353. À ma connaissance, le seul commentateur à faire pleinement justice à cet aspect du dialogue est Ahrens, 1995, 15. Pour Stern (1993, 138) le conflit n'est pas spécifique à Socrate et son rapport à Athènes, mais émane de la complexité humaine, complexité que reflète la politique et qui fonde la philosophie politique.

186 Dans le cas d'Anaxagore comme dans celui de Socrate, l'accusation d'impétie s'accompagnait sans doute d'un motif politique. Mais l'insistance sur le caractère téléologique de l'approche de Socrate par rapport à celle d'Anaxagore dans l'autobiographie de Socrate suggère que les recherches sur la physis contribuant au « désenchantement du monde » suscitaient méfiance et hostilité. Il n'est pas interdit de penser que c'est l'accusation d'impétie qui explique, en partie, l'insistance marquée sur la religiosité de Socrate dans le Phédon.

187 64b. L'allusion aux Nuées d'Aristophane en 70c-d, rappelle aussi indirectement cette menace de mort évoquée dans la comédie.

188 Justifier adéquatement cette interprétation non-orthodoxe du kalos kindunos exigerait une longue analyse. Je me contenterai de dire qu'à moins de considérer le danger de persécution politique associé au soin de l'âme, en cette vie, on comprend mal en quoi le philosophe risque quoi que ce soit en adhérant à la « religion du philosophe » décrite par Socrate. Comme il le fait valoir dans la 'seconde apologie', penser et séparer ainsi l'âme du corps est ce qu'il préfère faire en cette vie-ci, n'ayant pas d'intérêt pour les plaisirs du corps. S'il cessait d'adhérer à la croyance en un paradis du philosophe où il pourrait s'adonner à son activité préférée enfin séparé du corps pour l'éternité, en quoi sa vie présente s'en trouverait-elle altérée? Étant donné son amour de la pensée et de la vérité, se mettra-t-il à vivre différemment et à chercher son bonheur dans le boire, le manger, les aphrodisia? Le seul risque qu'il court en adhérant à cette croyance est de renoncer sa passion pour la pensée plus résolument et de pouvoir s'adonner à son activité préférée moins longtemps... si on l'exécute.
Let us start by giving a rough sketch of the structure of the dialogue. Following Paul Friedländer we may divide the dialogue proper into three main parts. The first part (62c9-69e4) contains Socrates’ initial defense of his way of life, more precisely his defense of the claim that philosophers – himself included – are ready and willing to die (cf. 62c8-e7 and 63a4-9), the second part (69e5-84b7) contains the first three proofs of the immortality of the soul, while the third part (84c1-115a9) contains the fourth and final proof. The first part is introduced by objections (62c9-63a10) raised by Cebes and Simmias against Socrates’ claim that the man of sound mind (cf. 61b8-9) will wish to die, just as the second part is introduced by an objection leveled by Cebes against Socrates’ initial defense (69e6-70b4) and the third part is introduced by objections formulated by Simmias and Cebes against Socrates’ first three proofs (84d4-88b8). Likewise, the three parts end in parallel fashion. The first part ends with Socrates linking his account of the true philosopher’s attempt to acquire truth and wisdom (alêtheian te kai phronêsin; 66a6, cf. also 66d7-e4, 68a2, 69a9-c3) with the account of the fate of the souls given by those who “instituted the mystic rites” (69c3-d3, see also 62b2-6). In line with this, the second part ends by a longer discussion of the fate of both unpurified and purified souls that clearly draws on procedures from the mysteries, Orphic and Eleusinian (80d5-84b7, see in particular 81a8-9, 82b10-c1 and 82d5-7, see also 70c5-8), and the final part ends with an account of the afterlife that draws on the motif of choosing the right path when entering the house of Hades, known from the Orphic mysteries (107d2-114c9, see in particular 108a5-6).

It has been suggested that the Phaedo proceeds from a more naïve to a more refined account of the philosopher’s search for wisdom and truth so that the break, described by Socrates in his “autobiography”, with the philosophical tradition before him – more precisely, with the type of wisdom called inquiry into nature (peri physeôs historian; 96a7) – also signals a break in the dialogue, a shift from one level of discussion to another. But while there is probably something to this suggestion, it also seems evident that Plato wanted us to see that the different sections of the Phaedo form a complex unity where each section builds and elaborates on the previous section. This is suggested both by the structural similarities of the sections

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2 All translations are from Brann, Kalkavage and Salem [1998]. The translation has at some points been slightly modified without notice. The Greek text consulted is the OCT, ed. Duke, Hicken, Nicoll, Robinson and Strachan.
3 See Friedländer [1960], 43
4 See Warrior [2009] 192-193. See also Proclus’ commentary to Plato’s Republic (Teubner, ed. Kroll) 85, lines 1 to 12.
5 According to Friedländer [1960], the final part of the dialogue thus moves away from a line of inquiry (Fragestellung) characteristic of natural (or Pre-Socratic) philosophy (38, 41-42) to an entirely new beginning, characterized by a shift in point of view away from the matters considered (den Sachen) to the “Logoi: thoughts, concepts, definitions or however one will attempt to convey the Greek word” (47-48). In a similar spirit, Burger [1984] suggests that the “fundamental intention of the Phaedo” is to “reverse the Pythagorean position”, a position according to which the ideas or first principles are not separate from the things for which they are principles, which at the same time assumes “the separability of the psychê from the body” (7). This intention is carried out in such a manner that the “second half of the dialogue”, that is, what I have termed the third part, “serves as a corrective for the first” (12).
just sketched as well as by the fact that each section revolves around the same themes or motifs – in particular the motif that rational inquiry into the essence of things is a kind of purification leading to wisdom or phronêsis, the requirement for true virtue.

I thus suggest that the first part of the dialogue may be regarded as equivalent to an overture in an opera introducing the leitmotif of the dialogue – the striving for wisdom characteristic of the philosopher –, the second part as equivalent to a first act that plays this motif through in a number of variations and the third part as equivalent to a second act – the culmination – that unfolds the motif in its full range and depth. Pursuing this motif, let us therefore turn to the questions what picture of philosophy emerges from the first part, what the second part adds to the first and, in particular, what the third adds to the second.

As has been noted by several scholars, the Phaedo can be regarded as Socrates’ second defense speech, a speech delivered to philosophical friends, as opposed to the public defense before the “men of Athens” (cf. 63b4-5, 69d7-e4). And in contrast to what we find in a number of so-called Socratic dialogues where Socrates tests an interlocutor supposed to possess some virtue – moderation (Charmides), courage (Laches) or piety (Lysis) –, a test that according to Nicias culminates in Socrates forcing his interlocutor to give an account of his life (cf. Lach, 187e6-188a3), it is Socrates who is forced to give an account of himself in the Phaedo. Consequently, it could seem, it is Socrates and his wisdom – phronêsis – that is being tested.

The philosophical inquiry into wisdom or thoughtfulness is set off by the questions whether “we consider that there’s such a thing as death?” (64c1-2) and whether this is anything else other than the “freeing of the soul from the body?” (64c4-5). Curiously, Socrates’ posing of these questions does not raise the further question “what is soul?” Instead, Socrates proceeds to give a sketch of the attitude toward the body and soul said to characterize certain “true philosophers” (64b9-c1, 64e2-3, 68b2-3, see also 64a4-5, 66b2, 67b4, 67d8, 67e5 and 69d2-3).

These philosophers are convinced that if we ever reach anything of what is real, it is in reasoning (en tôi logizesthai, 65c2-3), and that this reasoning is carried out best when the soul is herself by herself (autê kath’ hautên, 65c7) as much as possible, wherefore the soul of the philosopher holds the body in dishonor (attimazein; 65d1). Socrates illustrates what he means by “anything of what is real” (ti tôn ontôn) by asking, first, whether they, i.e. he and his interlocutors, assert that there is a just in itself (dikaion auto; 65d4-5), and a beautiful and a good (kalon te kai agathon; 65d7), whereupon he widens the perspective to include “the being of all the rest, what each happens to be” (hapantôn tês ousias ho tyngchanei hekaston on; 65d13-e1). The being of each thing – itself, by itself – is according to Socrates’ report, hunted down by the use of thought (dianoia) itself, by itself (66a1-3), and when the hunt is successful the soul acquires truth and wisdom (66a6, see also 66e1-4). Since wisdom is what the philosophers strive for, they make dying, i.e. the release of the soul from the

7 Brann, Kalkavage, Salem [1998] 6 remark: “Simmias and Cebes bring charges against Socrates. They require Socrates to give an apologia or defense why anyone who was truly wise would be as willing as Socrates seems to be, to get free of a good and divine master – of why Socrates is willing to die. The analogy with Socrates’ trial and the charges brought against him by Athens for impiety and corruption of the youth inform the entire conversation as it is related by Phaedo. Socrates is not only compelled to give an account in the theoretical sense: He must also give an account of himself before the court of Simmias and Cebes.”
9 Dorter [1982] 27 rightly observes that Socrates’ apparent disdain for the body is not, as is often claimed, in conflict with his being the father of a small child at the age of 70, a detail Plato has chosen to include in the dialogue, since what he urges is “not abstinence but only that we refrain from taking them seriously”.

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body, their care (67e5-6). Byproducts of this care are virtues (cf. 68c5-12) that, in the philosopher’s case and in contrast to the case of other people, are real, since virtues depend on *phronēsis* to be real virtues (cf. 69a6-69c3).

This initial sketch, while qualified in the ensuing discussion, remains in force throughout the rest of the dialogue. However, from the start it becomes clear that Socrates’ account operates at two different levels, a literal and a metaphorical one. On the one hand it may be read so as to say that the true philosophers are convinced that they will only gain wisdom in the afterlife, since they will not be freed from, or purified from (cf. 67c5-d2), the body until they die. On the other hand it may be read so as to say that it is only when the soul uses thought in separation from the senses that it acquires real insight and hence wisdom – in this life.

This difference corresponds to Socrates’ reinterpretation of the Homeric notion of Hades, the house containing the souls of the dead; the real Hades, we learn later, is the invisible “realm” of forms to which the soul is said to be akin (see 80d5-7 with 79d3). It also has a correspondence in Socrates’ rather vague definition of death as the separation of soul from body, since this may be understood literally, as the soul’s separation in death, and metaphorically, as the withdrawal of the soul from the body (cf. 67c5-d2) in life.

These considerations are important to bear in mind when interpreting the challenge that initiates the second part of the dialogue. As a critique of Socrates’ defense of his own willingness to die, Cebes now states that the notion “that the soul is when the human being dies and holds onto some power (*dynamis*) and wisdom (*phronēsis*)” (70b3-4) requires no little persuasive talk and assurance. Read in the light of the previous considerations, we may take this to mean that Cebes wants Socrates to prove that the soul remains somewhere and retains some power and wisdom after we die. And at the dramatic level, this is surely what Cebes wants. On the other hand, it could mean that Socrates needs to prove that the soul has power and wisdom, as well as its own “space” or region, when it withdraws from the body. And this, I submit, is all he really presents a proof for, a fact that may become apparent to us, as readers, if not to the *dramatis personae* of the *Phaedo*.

It is not possible to substantiate this claim in relation to the second part of the dialogue in this presentation. To put it very briefly, the first argument for the immortality of the soul inscribes death and life into a greater cosmic constellation, which “proves” that the soul, or rather the principle of life, is immortal, without considering the power and wisdom of the soul. The second argument, in contrast, focuses on the power of the soul, through the notion that learning is recollection, while the third treats of the *objects* of thought that secure wisdom and makes a radical distinction between the invisible or intelligible and the perceptible, positings

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10 See Friedländer [1960] 37; Dorter [1982] 9, 20 and 34; Zehnpfennig [2007] xxi-xxii. See also Burger [1984] 37-50, who argues that Socrates deliberately distinguishes himself from the true philosopher, so that the first part of the dialogue contains two different ideals of philosophy. In arguing this Burger draws, among other things, on the fact that Socrates, at 67b9-10, describes *phronēsis* as something they (he and, presumably, the circle around him) have worked hard for *in their past life*, which seems incompatible with the true philosophers’ understanding of *phronēsis* as something one can only acquire after death. She acknowledges, however, that Socrates, at 69d3-4, claims to have tried, to the best of his ability, to come to be among the true philosophers. As I see it, Socrates’ introduction of the true philosophers in the *Phaedo* should be regarded as analogous to his description of the ideal philosopher in books five to seven of the *Republic* and the “leading philosophers” in the *Theaetetus* (172c2-177c2) who, on the one hand, embody many of Socrates’ own character traits, but, on the other, are comical portraits in so far as they borrow traits from popular prejudice against philosophers as expressed in for instance comedy. The various portraits of philosophy we find in Plato that, at times, seem fantastic, can be regarded as part of Plato’s playful manner of writing and should not be pressed too hard. Plato adopts such traits taken from common prejudice as, to borrow a term from F. M. Cornford (See Cornford [1960] 176), left-handed compliments.
them as two distinct kinds of beings (cf. 79a6-7). Together the second and third proofs thus elaborate on Socrates' initial account of the philosopher's striving for wisdom, first from an epistemological, and then from an ontological point of view, and thereby illustrate how the soul may be said to possess power and wisdom on its own, in separation from the body. But the question – what is the soul? – is not explicitly raised in this part of the dialogue either.

It does turn up as an explicit question, however, when Simmias and Cebes, at 84d4-88b8, level a new set of objections at Socrates' defense that result from their respective ways of understanding the soul, both of which seem to exclude its immortality. But in the light of the previous suggestions about the intent of Socrates' defense, a question presents itself: is it only the immortality of the soul that is at stake? Could it not also be the power and wisdom of the soul, in isolation from the body?

That this is the case with Simmias' objection (85e3-86d3) is easy to see, since it is based on the view that the soul is but a harmonious “blend or tuning” of “the warm and the cold, the dry and the wet” (86b7-c2). This view obviously does not leave room for the soul to have any power in isolation from the body, as Socrates points out, since according to this view the soul is a mere byproduct of the body, unable to “suffer” (paschein) anything on its own (see 92e5-93a7). We note that Simmias, interestingly, suggests that Socrates is well aware (enthymêsthai) that they – presumably he means himself and the circle of philosophers to which he and Cebes belong – in fact suppose that the soul is such a harmony. This suggests that Cebes' view, even if it in contrast to Simmias' view see the soul as tougher and longer lasting than the body (cf. 87a5-8), has a certain kinship to that of Simmias.

And indeed it has. Simmias' objection is directed at Socrates' third argument, according to which the soul is invisible and divine, and hence more like the Forms (79b1-c1): the objection is that a harmony may also be said to be invisible and divine, but that this does not make it immortal (cf. 85e4-86a1, 86c5-8). Cebes' objection is likewise directed at the third argument, but it targets another aspect of it. Socrates had argued that, if the soul is more like the divine and deathless, i.e. the Forms, it will be “altogether indissoluble or something close to this” (80a10-b11). Cebes' objection is that, even if it should be true that the soul is stronger than the body and hence “closer to the divine” in this respect, and that it therefore lives longer, this would still not guarantee that it lives forever (87d3-88a1). Cebes thus suggests that the soul may be like a weaver “weaving” the material components of our body anew as long as we are alive (see 87d8-e1), but that it nevertheless perishes when death comes. Both objections thus question the connection between soul and Form established in the third argument by offering alternative accounts of the soul. And both accounts regard the soul as essentially linked to the body: it is either a harmony resulting from the bodily components or a “something”, the main task of which is to

11 See Dorter [1982] 41, 44-46 for some thoughts on how Socrates' three arguments progressively respond to the task set by Cebes at 70b3-4. See also Dorter [2011] 97.

12 Regarding the proofs for the immortality of the soul Gadamer [1999] 194 thus remarks, to my mind correctly, that ‘deren tieferen Sinn nicht die Unsterblichkeit ist, sondern daß Seele in ihrem eigentlichen Sein, das heißt: nicht in ihrem möglichen Tot- und Unsterblichsein, sondern in ihrem wachen Selbstverständnis und Seinsverständnis herauskommt.”


14 Cebes has two different interpretations of his image of the soul. According to the first, which seems to be his preferred view, the soul uses many bodies during a single lifetime in the sense that it continually re-weaves the changing material components of the body into a unity (87d6-e5), a scientific view of the body we also see expressed in the Symposium (207d2-e1). According to the second, which he introduces as something that would result if one were willing to confer even more to someone who claims the same as Socrates (88a1-2), the soul is reincarnated in many bodies but eventually dies (88a2-b6). For discussion, see Gadamer [1999] 195.
keep the body alive.\textsuperscript{15} Socrates’ replies to Simmias and Cebes can therefore be read as a restatement of the view of soul emerging from the third argument, intended to spell out in greater clarity the ontological difference between soul and body. For the present purpose, however, I will have to limit myself to some observations about Socrates’ reply to Cebes and how it also serves as an answer to Simmias.

The reply to Cebes begins with Socrates’ famous autobiography. More precisely, it begins with Socrates’ claim that what Cebes is looking for – an argument or \textit{logos} that will overcome his own objection or appease it (cf. 95a5-6) – requires a thorough examination of the cause of generation and destruction as a whole (95e10-96a1). It is important to see that the entire section 96a2-107b10 is about causes, and also that Socrates is not just discussing causes for generation and destruction in nature, but rather for \textit{any} kind of generation and destruction. We should also keep in mind that to Plato, to be a cause for something means to be responsible for that thing.\textsuperscript{16}

With these considerations in mind, let us now take a brief look at Socrates’ autobiography. To begin with, Socrates explains how his youthful infatuation with the “wisdom that is called inquiry into nature” (\textit{tes sophias hên dê kalousi peri physeôs historian}; 96a6-7) eventually led him into perplexity, making him unable to understand why anything came into being or perished (cf. 96a7-97b5). In consequence of this, he goes on, he was pleased when he heard that, according to Anaxagoras, mind (\textit{nous}) was the cause of everything (97b8-c4), but his high expectations were frustrated. For, as he famously puts it, upon reading the book of Anaxagoras, he saw that the “man made no use of (his) mind” (98b8-9). Explaining his complaint, Socrates draws the following comparison:

“to me his condition seemed most similar to that of somebody who – after saying that Socrates does everything he does by mind and then venturing to assign the causes of each of the things I do – should first say that I’m now sitting here because my body’s composed of bones and sinews, and … since bones swing in their sockets, the sinews, by relaxing and tensing, make me able, I suppose, to bend my limbs right now – and it’s through this cause that I’m sitting here with my legs here” (98c2-d6).

The problem with this account is that it neglects to mention the true cause, that “since Athenians judged it better to condemn me, so I … have judged it better to sit here and more just to stay put” (98e1-4).

If we compare this statement with Socrates’ earlier statement regarding the manner in which he thought a man like Anaxagoras would discover the cause for something, namely by discovering “in what way it’s best for it either to be or to suffer (\textit{paschein}) or do (\textit{poiein}) anything whatsoever” (97c6-d1), we see that Socrates’ discussion of causes is intimately linked with the fact that he is now facing death. As Socrates sees it, neither the “traditional” inquiry into nature nor Anaxagoras’ teaching about mind is able to explain his present conduct, since they do not acknowledge

\textsuperscript{15} As Friedländer [1960] 45 puts it, both arguments show “daß die Seele nicht in ihrer radikalen Körperfremdheit anerkannt ist, und daß man die Betrachtung nur mit physikalischen Motiven zu vergleichen braucht, um das reine Anders-Sein der Seele sicher zu verkennen.” Dorter [2011] 97, on the other hand, suggests that the objections raised by Simmias and Cebes answer to the analogical reasoning that, according to Dorter, characterizes the third argument. The problem with this kind of reasoning, he submits, is that arguments “from analogy” cannot “be more than suggestive because it is always possible to find a different analogy… The objections by Simmias and Cebes will cleverly undermine Socrates’ analogical reasoning by proposing alternative analogies.”

\textsuperscript{16} Sedley [1998] 115 remarks: “To give the “cause” (\textit{aitiōn}) of \textit{x} is to point to the thing responsible (\textit{tò aitia}) for \textit{x}, and thereby to assign to that thing the responsibility (\textit{aitiā}) for \textit{x} – much in the way that a lawcourt seeks to determine the person responsible for a crime, or to attribute the responsibility.” See also Heidegger [1954] 12-14
anything as causes except what is material. In this sense, they face the same problem
as Simmias’ account of the soul, namely that they cannot account for the fact that
soul is, after all, able to “suffer” (paschein) something on its own, in isolation from
the body (see 92e5-93a7) – for instance to become just by considering what justice
is in itself. This is at least one major, if not the only, point of Socrates’ famous second
sailing (99c9d1), his hypothesis that the Forms are causes (100b1-9).

I will not comment on this much-discussed part of the dialogue in any detail.
But I believe it is worth pointing out that we must understand Socrates literally
when he claims that the method he developed as an alternative to Anaxagoras –
taking refuge in logoi (99e4-6) and positing as a hypothesis the logos that seems
strongest (100a3-4) – is really nothing new (100b1-3). The logos that Socrates has set
down as a hypothesis is that there are Forms, and this hypothesis has indeed been
accepted from the very beginning of the Phaedo by both Cebes and Simmias. What
is new in Socrates’ final argument is not the positing of Forms but only the fact that
they are to be regarded as causes.

Let us recall that when Socrates first introduced the Forms in his initial
defense (65d4-e1), the first Form mentioned was justice, followed by the good and
the beautiful. We now see that these Forms are causes, that is, things responsible for
something, and in the present situation, Socrates’ conduct. The reason Socrates stays
in prison is that the Form of justice has a causal power, making Socrates himself act
justly. In short, Socrates’ soul is able to “suffer” something, to be affected by a Form
that is not given to the senses, but only to reason. The fact that these Forms are only
reached through reasoning (65c2-3), i.e. by taking refuge in logoi, shows that they
are only able to exert their causal power on us when we actively “reach out” for them
with our intellect (dianoia; cf. 66a1-3). Paradoxically, it is our responsibility to make
the Forms responsible for our conduct. This is, in a way, the final proof that the soul
has power, and also wisdom, in isolation from the body. That power is the power
to act freely in the precise sense of letting what appears to reason, rather than to
the senses, determine us. To do so is wisdom.17 It is thus fully appropriate that the
Phaedo ends with Phaedo’s statement that Socrates was “the best, and also the most
wise and the most just (aristou kai allôs phronimótatou kai dikaiotatou; 118a17) of
all whom Phaedo and his companions came to know in those days.

But is Socrates’ answer an adequate answer to Simmias and Cebes? As Simmias
says toward the end of the argument, he is not fully convinced that Socrates has
proved the immortality of the soul, both because of the magnitude of the matters the
argument is concerned with and because of the weakness of human beings (107a9-
b2). Still, before he delivered his critique of Socrates’ third argument, he claimed
that, if one should prove unable to learn the truth about the afterlife, one “must sail
through life in the midst of danger, seizing on the best and least refutable of human
accounts, at any rate, and letting [one]self be carried upon it is a raft” (85c7-d2).
Upon consideration, we may come to see Socrates’ hypothesis, the account he has
found to be the strongest – that certain Forms are, and that they are intelligible or
eidetic causes we can grasp through reasoning – as a raft he offers to Simmias, so
that he mail sail through the dangers of life on it. Indeed, it is a raft Plato’s Socrates
has offered to all of his readers through almost two and half millennia.

17 If we take one step back from the Platonic text, we can see a structural parallel between Socrates’
account of causality through Forms and what in Kantian terms is called causality through freedom,
a causality where the mind is determined by ideas or ideals of reason, rather than by nature; see e.g.
Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten 408-410 and 412-413 (page numbers refer to the Akademie
Ausgabe) together with Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird
auftreten können, §53. Gadamer [1999] 200 thus remarks that for “Kant, freedom was the (only) fact
of Reason. Plato only named it differently: Ideas.” For a discussion of Forms as causal powers, see
Larsen [2015], 305-317.

Literature

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Socrates’ Comparison Between Μισολογία and Μισανθρωπία
(Plato’s Phaedo 89c11-90d8)

Lima, Paulo

1. Introduction: Theme and Structure of the Paper

In this paper, we intend to analyse the comparison made by Socrates in the Phaedo (89c11-90d8) between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία. Socrates uses this comparison to clarify the nature of μισολογία, its causes and the right way to eradicate it. Our paper will try to follow the sequence of Plato's text. Accordingly, it will be divided into five parts:
– the analogy between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία;
– the cause of μισανθρωπία;
– the experience involved in μισολογία and μισανθρωπία;
– the difference between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία: the cause of μισολογία;
– the error involved in μισολογία and how to correct it.

2. The Context of the Phaedo Section on Μισολογία

Up to the section on μισολογία, Socrates had been presenting a few arguments for the immortality of human soul:
– the cyclical argument (70c4-72d10), according to which the dead come from the living and vice versa;
– the recollection argument (72e1-77a5), according to which human soul, since it possesses a kind of innate knowledge, must have existed elsewhere before coming to this life;
– the affinity argument (78b2-80b8), according to which human soul, due to a greater affinity between it and the realm of intelligible forms, shares the forms’ indestructibility.

However, both Simmias and Cebes have doubts about these arguments, or rather about the survival of human soul after death that Socrates’ first three arguments were supposed to be able to prove. Therefore, each one of them will raise an objection to Socrates’ arguments:
– Simmias will present the soul-harmony theory (85b10-86e5), according to which human soul consists in the harmony of bodily parts, on which the soul’s existence depends.
– Cebes will object to Socrates’ arguments by presenting a theory of the body as human soul’s garment (86e6-88b8); according to him, the fact that human soul outlives a great number of garments does not necessarily entail that the soul will outlast all of them.¹

The details of all this should not concern us here. However, to be aware of the exchange of arguments between Socrates and his two companions is absolutely decisive for understanding the context of the Phaedo section on misology. For, from the perspective of the audience, Simmias’ and Cebes’ objections had a tremendous impact on the validity of Socrates’ arguments and could have given rise to hatred.

¹ For a more detailed summary of Socrates’ first three arguments and Simmias’ and Cebes’ objections to them, see David Sedley and Alex Long, eds., Plato: Meno and Phaedo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xxiv-xxv, xxvi-xxxi.
of arguments in the souls of the listeners of the conversation. Indeed, up to that point Socrates’ arguments had been convincing at least to the majority of those who were with him in his last moments. Socrates’ friends, with the exception of Simmias and Cebes, were persuaded by his arguments that human soul is immortal and will survive bodily death. However, Simmias’ and Cebes’ objections have shaken their confidence in Socrates’ arguments. Socrates’ companions, as well as Echechocrates, have become persuaded of the strength of Simmias’ and Cebes’ objections. In other words, all listeners of the argument exchange between Socrates and his two friends are being thrown back and forth between opposite arguments. The back-and-forth movement between opposite arguments is confusing for those who are listening to the conversation. What is more, this back-and-forth movement will cause deep uncertainty in the minds of the listeners, not simply about which series of arguments is true, but about the validity of arguments as such and the very intelligibility of reality (cf. 88c1-d3).²

The Phaedo section on μισολογία begins at this point⁴. We will not consider the entire section, but merely one of its subsections, namely the comparison between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία. By comparison we mean the identification of the similarities and the differences between both phenomena; but whenever we speak of analogy, we will be calling attention only to the similarities between them.⁴

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² From Socrates’ use of the second person plural in 89d1 (Μὴ γενώμεθα...) it is clear that, as a result of Simmias’ and Cebes’ objections, also he and his two interlocutors – and indeed the readers of the Phaedo – run the risk of becoming μισόλογοι.


On the singularity of the intermezzo on μισολογία in comparison with those of other Platonic dialogues, cf. Dorothea Frede, Platon ‘Phaidon’. Der Traum von der Unsterblichkeit der Seele (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), 85. Studies will be listed in chronological order.

⁴ When drawing the comparison between misology and misanthropy, Socrates/Plato must have had in mind the paradigmatic figure of Timon of Athens – see Sylvie Ballestra-Puech, “Misanthropie et ‘misologie’: de l’analogie philosophique à la rencontre dramaturgique,” Loxias 19 (2007) [URL: http://revel.unice.fr/loxias/index.html?id=1975], 2: “(…) Platon lui-même construit son analyse à partir de la figure de Timon, bien connue des Athéniens et à laquelle le lecteur du Phédon serait implicitement renvoyé.” According to A. M. Armstrong [“Timon of Athens – A Legendary Figure?”, Greece & Rome 34 (1987), 6] Timon was “treated as the epitome of a misanthropic way of life.” The fact that “misanthropy is clearly not acceptable in Athenian society” [K. Haegemans, “Character Drawing in Menander’s Dyskolos: Misanthropy and Philanthropy”, Mnemosyne 54 (2001), 680] must definitively have helped Socrates/Plato in making their warnings against misology more convincing. Also, the Socratic/Platonic condemnation of misanthropy may have functioned as way of countering a certain image of the philosopher as a hater of ordinary men; this image was particularly attached to Heraclitus – cf. e.g. Georges J. D. Moyal, “On Heraclitus’ Misanthropy”, Revue de philosophie ancienne 7 (1989), 131-148.

3. The Analogy Between Μισολογία and Μισανθρωπία

In 89c11-e3, Socrates draws an analogy between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία (“hatred of arguments” and “hatred of men”):

“But first let's make sure that a certain thing doesn't happen to us.” “What sort of thing?” I asked. “Becoming haters of arguments [μισόλογοι],” he said, “like those who come to hate people [μισάνθρωποι]. Because there's no greater evil [κακόν] that could happen to one than hating arguments. Hating arguments and hating people come about [γίγνεται] in the same way [ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ τρόπου]. For misanthropy sets in as a result of putting all one's trust in someone and doing so without expertise [ἄνευ τέχνης], and taking the person to be entirely truthful, sound and trustworthy, and then a little later finding him to be wicked and untrustworthy – and then again with someone else. When this happens to someone many times [πολλάκις], particularly with those whom he would take to be his very closest friends [οἰκειοτάτους τε καὶ ἑταιροτάτους], and he has been falling out with people again and again, he ends up hating everyone [μισεῖ τε πάντας] and thinking that there is nothing sound in anyone at all [καὶ ήγεῖται οὐδενὸς οὐδὲν υγιές εἶναι τὸ παράπαν].”

According to Socrates, μισολογία and μισανθρωπία are born in the same way. Socrates establishes an analogy between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία in terms of their γένεσις (“generation” or “coming-to-be”). First of all, Socrates tries to give an account of how μισανθρωπία arises. Μισανθρωπία, Socrates says, arises out of – an exaggerated, inexperienced belief in someone's truthfulness and trustworthiness; – a subsequent revelation that in fact it is the exact opposite which is true – that the person whose truthfulness and trustworthiness one believed in is in fact a wicked and un trustworthy person; – the frequency with which the belief in someone's truthfulness and trustworthiness changes into its exact opposite – into disbelief in such person’s truthfulness and trustworthiness; – the fact that this also happens with one’s closest friends.


6 In Phlb. 26d8, Plato suggests that γένεσις is the process through which something comes into existence (…γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν…). As in other passages of Phd. (e.g. 71a9-10: …ὅτι πάντα ὄντω γίγνεται, ἐκ ἐναντίων τὰ ἐναντία πράγματα…), where γένεσις means coming-to-be from opposite phenomena, so the γένεσις of both μισολογία and μισανθρωπία is equivalent to coming-to-be from their opposites (namely, excessive φιλολογία and excessive φιλανθρωπία). Cf. also Édouard des Places, Lexique de la langue philosophique et religieuse de Platon, vol. 1 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964), s.v. γένεσις, a.

7 On the relevant role played in the Phaedo by the notions of πίστις, πειθώ and δόξα, see Kenneth Dorter, Plato’s Phaedo: An Interpretation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 94; Dalfen, “Philologia”, 38, 46.

8 Socrates’ point here may be twofold. On the one hand, it is a question of intensity: the fact that this
– a sort of induction, the result of which is that one ends up hating everyone else for their supposedly false truthfulness and trustworthiness (for their supposedly unsound character).

4. The Cause of Misanthropy

Next (89e6-90a2) Socrates focuses on what he takes as the real cause of misanthropy – the aitia that unleashes the whole constituting process of misanthropy referred to above:

“Now this is deplorable”, he said, “and obviously someone like that was trying to deal with people without having expertise in human qualities [ἄνευ τέχνης τῆς περὶ τἀνθρώπου], wasn’t he? For surely if he had been doing so with expertise he’d have viewed matters as they really are: he would have recognized that both the very good and the very wicked are few in number [ὀλίγους], and that those in between [μεταξύ] are the most numerous [πλείστους].”

According to Socrates in this passage, the real cause of misanthropy consists in a lack of τέχνη on the part of the misanthropoi – namely, a τέχνη concerning happens with one’s closest friends increases the degree of disappointment. On the other hand, it is a matter of generalization: if this happens with one’s closest friends, it will also happen with the rest of mankind. The two aspects are decisive in terms of the coming-to-be of misanthropy and are deeply interconnected, so much so that without the presence of the former aspect, the generalization that characterizes misanthropy could not have taken place, for the continuous trustworthiness of one’s dearest friends prevents one from drawing the conclusion that all men are hateful.


10 ὡσς, ἦ δ’ ὅς, αἰσχρόν, καὶ δῆλον ὅτι ἄνευ τέχνης τῆς περὶ τἀνθρώπου ὁ τοιοῦτος χρῆσθαι ἐπεχείρει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις; εἰ γάρ που μετὰ τέχνης ἔχει ἂν ἡγήσατο, τοὺς μὲν χρηστοὺς καὶ πονηροὺς σφόδρα ὀλίγους εἶναι ἑκατέρους, τοὺς δὲ μεταξὺ πλείστους.


On the concept of τέχνη in Plato’s works, see also F. Heinimann, “Eine vorplatoni
τανθρωπεια (”human qualities” or “human affairs”). What kind of skill concerning human qualities or human affairs is at stake here? Socrates indicates that such lack of τεχνη corresponds to a lack of insight into the nature of human beings – into how human qualities are distributed among human beings. Men are liable to become μισανθρωποι when they are unable to see the difference between the nature of the great majority of human beings and that of a very little minority of them. As Socrates states, only very few men can be adequately labelled as either very good or very wicked. The majority of men are situated in between the very good and the very bad. Socrates’ words suggest that the majority of men are both good and bad – that they have a mixed nature.12 The misanthropist’s lack of τεχνη (“skill” or “insight”) has to do with his mixing up what is a feature of only very few men – namely, extreme goodness – with the nature of mankind as such. Men can become misanthropists because they attribute to all human beings what is a characteristic of only a few (because all human beings appear to them as being extremely good when in fact they are not). To put it slightly differently, men can become misanthropists because their point of view is usually dominated by δοξα (in the sense of “illusion” or “appearance of something as being true when in fact it is not”)13 as to what human


12 The point made by Socrates is connected with the question of opposites as presented by Plato in the Phaedo. The fact that human beings have a mixed nature means that they are composed of opposite qualities (i.e. goodness and wickedness). Cf. e.g. Phd. 90a4-10: Ὅσπερ, ἢ δ’ ὅς, περὶ τῶν σφόδρα σμικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων· οἴει τι σπανιώτερον εἶναι ἢ σφόδρα μέγαν ἢ σφόδρα σμικρὸν ἐξευρεῖν ἄνθρωπον ἢ κύνα ἢ ἄλλο ὁτιοῦν; ἢ αὖ ταχὺν ἢ βραδὺν ἢ αἰσχρὸν ἢ καλὸν ἢ λευκὸν ἢ μέλανα; ἢ οὐχ ἔσθησαι ὅτι πάντων τῶν τοιούτων τὰ μὲν ἄκρα τῶν ἐσχάτων σπάνια καὶ ὀλίγα, τὰ δὲ μεταξὺ ἄρθρων καὶ πολλὰ; On μεταξύ, μεῖξις and the relationship between the two phenomena, see notably Mário Jorge de Carvalho, ”Do Belo como constituinte do Humano segundo Sócrates/Diotima”, Revista filosófica de Coimbra 38 (2010), 392-394 (nn. 35 and 36), 406-407 (n. 55), 452-455. 13 As with the term αἰτία (cf. n. 9 above), the term δοξα does not occur in 89e6-90a2 but in 90c8-d7 (and again in the form of a verb: δοκεῖν). Nevertheless, if the analogy between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία is to be taken seriously, we need to assume that both the search for an αἰτία and the effect of δόξα are already implied when Socrates speaks of the coming-to-be of μισανθρωπία. As we shall see better below, δοξα involves a judgement about the nature and reality of its object. Hence, insofar as δοξα constitutes a decisive factor in the coming-to-be of μισανθρωπία and μισολογία, when Socrates presents both phenomena as πάθη (cf. respectively 89c11-e3 and 90c8-d7), he is not pointing to an irrational element in their γένεσις but to something that is of an intellectual nature. The release from these πάθη is therefore dependent on persuasion by means of rational arguments. On δοξα, δοκείν, δοξάζειν and the like, see A. Murray, “On a Use of Δοκα”, Classical Philology 5 (1910), 488-493; C. A. Viano, ”Il significato della doxa nella filosofia di Platon”, Rivista di filosofia 43 (1952), 167-185; P Huart, Le vocabulaire de l’analyse psychologique dans l’œuvre de Thucydide (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968), 250-263; Elfriede Tielsch, Die platonischen Versionen der griechischen Doxalehre (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1970); Wolfgang Schadewaldt, Die Anfänge
nature is.

5. The Experience Involved in Μισολογία and Μισανθρωπία

In 90b4-9, Socrates completes his analogy between μισολογία and μισανθρωπία:

“All the same, arguments do not resemble people in that way (I was following your lead just now), but in the following way: when someone without expertise in arguments [ἄνευ τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης] trusts an argument to be true, and then a little later thinks that it is false, sometimes when it is [ἐνίοτε μὲν ὄν], sometimes when it isn't [ἐνίοτε δ' οὐκ ὄν], and when he does the same again with one argument after another [καὶ αὖθις ἕτερος καὶ ἕτερος].”

In the passage quoted, Socrates begins by pointing to the fact that a difference exists between misology and misanthropy. Only afterwards does Socrates finish his analogy between misology and misanthropy, which he had begun in 89d1. For the sake of convenience, however, we will proceed in the reverse order. First of all, we will call attention to the similarities between the constituting process of μισολογία and that of μισανθρωπία. Thereafter, we will focus on the difference between the two phenomena, which Socrates referred to at the beginning of 90b4-9.

Socrates’ account of the constituting process of μισολογία in the context of the aforementioned analogy is not difficult to pin down in the light of what we have pointed out above with respect to the constituting process of μισανθρωπία. According to Socrates in 90b4-9, μισολογία arises out of

– a lack of τέχνη with respect to λόγοι;
– a change from the belief that a given argument is true to the belief that in fact it is false (due to the aforementioned lack of τέχνη);
– the fact that such change is sometimes justified and sometimes not;
– the frequency with which such change occurs and because of which the μισόλογοι form the conviction that no argument is trustful.

15 Socrates’ formulation in 90b6-9 (ἐπειδάν…ἐνίοτε δ' οὐκ ὄν) suggests that the crucial point is the change in what appears to be the truth value of an argument (and not merely the fact that an argument which first seemed to be true turns out to be false). For if one thinks that an argument is false when it really is false, this should prevent one of becoming a μισόλογος: one's assessment of the truth value of the argument would then be correct. The following references to ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι (90b9-c1) and the Euripus Strait (90c4-6) point to the fact that a constant change – and indeed a lack of definition as to the truth value of arguments – is meant by Socrates. See also n. 24 below.

16 The number of occurrences of μισολογία/μισόλογος in Plato is limited to six: cf. La. 188c6, e4;
The several phases of the constituting process of misology, which Socrates has pointed out in 90b4-9, are very similar to those which he had already indicated in 89c11-e3 with respect to misanthropy. The only noticeable difference between the two accounts is that in the case of the constituting process of misology, the disbelief in the truth of the argument under scrutiny is only sometimes justified. However, the existence of this difference between the two accounts does not mean that they are essentially different at least insofar as they are accounts of the similarity between the experience of misanthropy and that of misology.\(^\text{17}\) In both cases, an experience of transition occurs from a positive experience, which is that of the truthfulness of a given person or the truth of a given argument, to a negative experience: that of the untruthfulness of that same person or the untruth of that same argument. In other words: both in the case of misanthropy and in the case of misology, disbelief and disappointment arise in one's mind.

6. The Difference Between Μισολογία and Μισανθρωπία: The Cause of Μισολογία

Let us now consider the difference between the two constituting processes. In the beginning of 90b4-9, Socrates stated that in a certain respect arguments are not like people. As Socrates indicates, arguments do not have a mixed nature. In other terms, they are not true and false at the same time. Instead, they are either true or false. Socrates' statement implies that the transition referred to above (that is, the transition from the positive experience of belief in the truth of an argument to the negative experience of disbelief in the truth of that same argument) is caused not by the argument itself – for the argument is either always true or always false\(^\text{18}\) – but by the very person who judges the truth or falseness of the argument.

In 90b4-9, Socrates merely states that arguments differ from people (although


The opposite of μισολογία is of course φιλολογία; we should nevertheless be aware that Socrates'/Plato's conception of φιλολογία is opposite not only to the μισόλογος' disbelief in arguments but also to his excess (i.e. the excess that is involved both in his earlier belief in arguments and in his later disbelief in them). Therefore, Socrates'/Plato's conception of φιλολογία involves moderation, which should rest on τέχνη as regards the nature of arguments (cf. e.g. 89c11-e3, 89e6-90a2, 90b4-9, 90c8-d7).


\(^{17}\) The difference does not refer to the phenomena themselves but to the Socratic description of them; it can be safely inferred from Socrates' descriptions that disbelief in human beings is also sometimes justified.

\(^{18}\) Cf. Rehn, "Zur Bewertung der Sprache", 427; Frede, \textit{Platons ‘Phaidon’}, 85-86; Ebert, \textit{Platon: Phaidon}, 301. The point is not sufficiently emphasized by \textit{Phaedo} scholars. However, it is an absolutely crucial element of what Socrates'/Plato's claim in the misology section is (namely, that the αἰτία of μισολογία does not lie in the arguments themselves but in human beings' lack of capacity for knowing which arguments are true and which ones are false).
already suggesting that arguments are different from people because they do not possess a mixed nature in terms of truth and falseness\(^{19}\). We need to wait for the passage in 90c8-d7 to have Socrates’ full account of the αἰτία of μισολογία:

“No, Phaedo”, he said, “it would be a lamentable fate if there really were some true and firm argument that could be understood, and yet from associating with arguments of another sort – the very same ones seeming true at some times but not at others [τοῖς αὐτοῖς τοτὲ μὲν δοκοῦσιν ἀληθέσιν εἶναι, τοτὲ δὲ μὴ] – someone were to blame not himself or his own lack of expertise [μὴ ἑαυτὸν τις αἰτιῷτο μηδὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀτεχνίαν], but instead because of his agitation were to end up gratefully transferring the blame from himself to the arguments [ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν αἰτίαν ἀπώσαιτο], and from that point to spend the rest of his life hating and belittling arguments, deprived of both truth and knowledge about things.”\(^{20}\)

In this passage, Socrates describes the above-mentioned experience of transition in quite the same terms as Phaedo in 88c1-7 and Echechrates in 88c8-d3 – namely as an experience of hesitation, oscillation, confusion or loss as to what the truth value of a given argument is:

PHAEDO: Now when we all heard them say this our mood took an unpleasant turn [ἀηδῶς διετέθημεν], as we later told each other, because we had been firmly persuaded [σφόδρα πεπεισμένους] by the earlier argument, but then they seemed to have disturbed us all over again and sent us plummeting into doubt [ἡμᾶς πάλιν ἐδόκουσαν ἀναταράξαι καὶ εἰς ἀπιστίαν καταβαλεῖν], not just about the arguments given before, but also about what we might be worthless as judges [μὴ οὐδενὸς ἄξιοι εἶμεν κριταί], or even that the very facts of the matter might merit doubt [καὶ τὰ πράγματα αὐτὰ ἀπώσαιτο].\(^{21}\)

19 The difference is suggested by the fact that Socrates, right after pointing out that human beings have a mixed nature, refers to the nature of λόγοι as an unmixed one: sometimes λόγοι are false (…ἐνὶοτε μὲν ὤν…) and sometimes they are not (…ἐνὶοτε δ’ οὐκ ὤν…). Cf. 90d3-2, where Socrates says that the same λόγος is true and false for a human being’s point of view (…δοκοῦσιν…) – not in itself. However, this does not mean that λόγοι do not suffer from limitations in terms of knowledge even when they are true. For Plato, in fact, true λόγοι are always partial, incomplete. In other words, Socrates’/Plato’s ideal of knowledge involves direct vision of the forms. Cf. Dam. in Phd. §391 (Westerink).


20 Οὐκοῦν, ὦ Φαίδων, ἔφη, οἰκτρὸν ἂν εἴη τὸ πάθος, εἰ ὄντος δή τινος ἀληθοῦς καὶ βεβαίου λόγου καὶ δυνατοῦ κατανοῆσαι, ἐπειτὰ διὰ τὸ παραγίγνεσθαι τοιούτως τις λόγος, τοῖς αὐτοῖς τοτὲ μὲν δοκοῦσιν ἀληθέσιν εἶναι, τοτὲ δὲ μὴ, μὴ ἑαυτόν τις αἰτιῷτο μηδὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀτεχνίαν, τελευτῶν διὰ τὸ ἀλγεῖν ἅσμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν αἰτίαν ἀπώσαιτο καὶ ἤδη τὸν λοιπὸν βίον μισῶν τε καὶ λοιδορῶν τοὺς λόγους διατελοῖ, τῶν δὲ ὄντων τῆς ἀληθείας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης στερηθεί.

At the end of the passage, Socrates indicates that the μισόλογος will “spend the rest of his life hating and belittling arguments” (...τὸν λοιπὸν βίον μισῶν τε καὶ λοιδορῶν τοὺς λόγους διατελοῖ,...). Socrates appears to be saying that misologia is an irreversible phenomenon. Cf. Dorion, “La misologie”, 611: “(...) la misologia del Phèdon a un caractère définitif: une fois que l’on est devenu misologue, on l’est pour de bon, jusqu’à la fin de sa vie.” Dorion also maintains that the post-Platonic uses of misologia/μισόλογος involve the idea of irreversibility (618). According to him, this is a characteristic of μισ- compounds: “En fait, la radicalité et l’ irréversibilité ne sont pas exclusives à la misologia, puisqu’elles sont le propre de tous les composés en μισ-.” (618 n. 22) Ballestra-Puech (“Misanthropie et ‘misologie’”, 4) endorses Dorion’s position and argues that in Men. Dysc. Knemón’s transformation does not amount to a complete turning back from μισανθρωπία. On this see also Haegemans, “Character Drawing”, 684-685. Our view, however, is different from Dorion’s. For, in fact, Socrates is presenting a worst-case scenario and not pointing to what necessarily happens with the μισόλογος.

In 89b4-c1, for instance, Socrates suggests the possibility of reviving the λόγος in case it dies (...ἐάνπερ γε ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τελευτήσῃ καὶ μὴ δυνώμεθα αὐτὸν ἀναβιώσασθαι…). 21 Πάντες οὖν ἄκοιναντες εἰπόντων αὐτῶν ἄνδρας διετέθημεν, ὡς ὑστερον ἐλέγομεν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔμπροσθεν λόγου σφόδρα πεπεισμένους ἦμας πάλιν ἔδοκον ἀναταράξα
Echeclus: Heavens, Phaedo, I quite sympathize with you. Now that I too have heard you, it makes me too say something like this to myself: "What argument will we still trust now? "Τίνι οὖν ἔτι πιστεύσομεν λόγῳ;" How utterly persuasive ὡς γάρ σφόδρα πιθανός the argument was that Socrates was giving, yet now it has been plunged into doubt [νὸν εἰς ἀπιστίαν καταπέπτωκεν]!"22

Let us go back to 90c8-d7. According to Socrates in this passage, the experience due to which one might become a misologist is the experience both of – a transition from the belief in the truth of a given argument to the disbelief in the truth of that same argument and23
– a transition from the disbelief in the truth of a given argument to the belief in the truth of that same argument.

To put it briefly, it is the experience of a back-and-forth movement of perspective as to what the truth value of a given argument is. Hence, the experience because of which one might become a misologist is not the experience of the universal falseness of arguments: it is rather the experience of the instability of how the truth value of arguments appears to one. Thus, the experience out of which μισολογία might arise has to do with the fact that human perspective is usually dominated by δόξα, that is, by the fact that human assessment of the truth value of arguments is always dependent on how their truth value appears to the human subject and – always determined by the limitations of such appearance in terms of adequate and full knowledge of its truth value.24

22 Νη τοὺς θεούς, ὦ Φαίδων, συγγνώμη γε ἔχω τοῖς προειρημένοις λόγοις ἔχω τοιοῦτον ὑμῖν τι λέγειν πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἐπέρχεται. "Τίνι οὖν ἔτι πιστεύσομεν λόγῳ; ὡς γάρ σφόδρα πιθανός ὁ, ἐν τῷ ἰστότητι ἐλεγές λόγῳ, νόνε ἐν ἀπιστίαν καταπέπτωκεν;

23 In his account of μισολογία, Socrates places the emphasis on the moment when λόγοι, which were previously held as true, reveal themselves as false, for the context of such account is one in which three λόγοι in favour of the immortality of the soul, which were previously taken as true, turn out to be considered as possibly being false. However, the crucial point in the Socratic account of μισολογία is the fact that the μισόλογος’ judgement about the truth value of λόγοι is constantly changing.

Loriaux (Le Phédon, 39) makes an interesting point when he reads καὶ αὖθις ἕτερον in 89d8 and καὶ αὖθις ἕτερος καὶ ἕτερος in 90b8-9 as referring to a "renouvellement d’un va-et-vien dans les jugements;" but, in our view, producing a definitive negative judgement (namely, about the character of human beings) is a fundamental trait of μισανθρωπία, though not of μισολογία. In the latter case, two references following 90b8-9 are extremely relevant, since they point to the back-and-forth to which Loriaux calls our attention:
– Ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι in 90b-9c1 may be interpreted as referring to the so-called Διασοντεικο λόγοι, a rhetorical exercise showing that the same speaker can make contradictory discourses about the same subject.
– Ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι in 90c4-5 amounts to a proverbial expression denoting inconstantia, for the Euripus is said to change its current seven times in a single day.


For the proverbial use of the Euripus Strait image in its connection with the phrase ἄνω κάτω στρέφεται, cf. Wytenbach, Phaedo, 236-237; Wohlrab, Phaidon, 99; Burnet, Phaedo, 89-90; Rowe, Phaedo, 213-214.

24 The Platonic understanding of δόξα, in its connection with δοξέω and δοξάζειν, involves three fundamental elements, which in the section of the Phaedo at issue are present in Socrates’ explanation of μισολογία:
– the idea of appearance as such, regardless of the truth value of what appears (cf. e.g. Philb. 37a11-b4,
Socrates’ account of this phenomenon by means of the notion of δόξα makes clear that the two different senses of the notion can be integrated into a unified and coherent explanation of its function in the context of the miosis section. For the experience of truth as appearance, as a limited and partial access to it, might turn out to be that of an illusion, of the appearance of a given argument as true when in fact it is false or vice versa.25

7. Conclusion: The Error Involved in Μισολογία and How to Correct It

According to Socrates in 90c8-d7, the real cause of μισολογία has to do with the fact that the μισόλογος blames the arguments, not himself, for the instability of how the truth value of arguments appears to him. However, Socrates says that at the very heart of the coming-to-be of μισολογία lies an error on the part of the μισόλογος. The μισόλογος should blame himself, not the arguments, for the instability of how the truth value of arguments appears to him. Socrates adds that the μισόλογος makes this error because he lacks τέχνη with respect to the nature of arguments.26 The μισόλογος would know that arguments do not suffer from instability in terms of their real truth value, if he were a τεχνίτης with respect to the nature of arguments.27

In the same passage, Socrates suggests that the μισόλογος also lacks τέχνη with regard to the nature of human knowledge. Socrates’ words imply that if the μισόλογος were a τεχνίτης with respect to the nature of human knowledge, he would be aware of the fact that it is human knowledge, insofar as it is usually impregnated with δόξα, which is in fact unstable. Socrates’ advice is that in order not to become μισόλογοι, one needs to acquire τέχνη with respect to the nature of human knowledge. This is a form of knowledge that is not subject to the instability of δόξα, as is the case of the μισόλογος. By acquiring τέχνη, one would be able to judge the true nature of human knowledge, which is not subject to the instability of δόξα.

The back-and-forth movement now described takes place within the realm of δόξα itself, for in both cases what changes is the particular judgement one makes at a given time about the truth value of an argument. The fact that δόξα may reveal itself as an illusion does not mean that the latter cannot be overcome. For Plato, δόξα has the possibility of correcting itself. Furthermore, even when it is true, δόξα is conceived by Plato as perfectible – as something that has yet to pave its way towards clear knowledge (cf. e.g. 107b4-9). As M. Guéroult puts it, “(...) aussi longtemps que nous naurons pas saisi l’άνυπόθετον, le λόγος, confirmant la δόξα, sera lui-même δόξα (...)” [“La méditation de l’âme sur l’âme dans le ‘Phédon’”, Revue de métaphysique et de morale 33 (1926), 478]. On the perfectibility of δόξα sc. λόγος, see also Shipton, “A Good Second-Best”, 51 n. 17, 52 n. 22; Menkhaus, Eidos, 122-123; Mário Jorge de Carvalho, “Μέθοδος e ὑπόθεσις – o problema do pressuposto na fundação platónica da filosofia”, in Método e métodos do pensamento filosófico, ed. Diogo Ferrer (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2007), 39-52, 63-69.

25 The back-and-forth movement now described takes place within the realm of δόξα itself, for in both cases what changes is the particular judgement one makes at a given time about the truth value of an argument. The fact that δόξα may reveal itself as an illusion does not mean that the latter cannot be overcome. For Plato, δόξα has the possibility of correcting itself. Furthermore, even when it is true, δόξα is conceived by Plato as perfectible – as something that has yet to pave its way towards clear knowledge (cf. e.g. 107b4-9). As M. Guéroult puts it, “(...) aussi longtemps que nous naurons pas saisi l’άνυπόθετον, le λόγος, confirmant la δόξα, sera lui-même δόξα (...)” [“La méditation de l’âme sur l’âme dans le ‘Phédon’”, Revue de métaphysique et de morale 33 (1926), 478]. On the perfectibility of δόξα sc. λόγος, see also Shipton, “A Good Second-Best”, 51 n. 17, 52 n. 22; Menkhaus, Eidos, 122-123; Mário Jorge de Carvalho, “Μέθοδος e ὑπόθεσις – o problema do pressuposto na fundação platónica da filosofia”, in Método e métodos do pensamento filosófico, ed. Diogo Ferrer (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2007), 39-52, 63-69.

26 The τέχνη λόγων that Plato has in mind is the method of dialectic sc. the method of hypothesis (cf. 101d1-102a3); see also Wohlrab, Phaidon, 98-99; Gustav Schneider, Die Weltanschauung Platos dargestellt im Anschluss an den Dialog Phädon (Berlin: Weidmann, 1898), 72; Hackforth, Plato’s Phaedo, 110 (n. 1); Shipton, “A Good Second-Best”, 38, 42; Joly, Le renversement, 106; Carvalho, “Μέθοδος e ὑπόθεσις”.

27 Because usually human beings are not τεχνίται as regards the nature of λόγος, they form the judgement (δόξα) that λόγοι are unstable and should be held responsible for such instability. Cf. 90c1-4, where Socrates indicates that those who say there is nothing stable in λόγοι think they have become most wise (…οἴονται σοφώτατοι γεγονέναι…), i.e. that they have made an adequate assessment of the nature of λόγος. In other terms, viewing arguments as unstable does not amount to being in a situation of absolute lack of definition about their nature; it means rather that one forms the judgement (δόξα) that they are not stable and therefore cannot be used as a means of attaining knowledge. In this sense, cf. also Cra. 440c1-d3. Socrates’ proposal in 90c8-d7 is that such δόξα should be revised and that we should become aware that λόγοι do not have an unstable nature.
human beings should strive to know not only the nature of arguments, but also the nature of their own knowledge capacity. Given the intrinsic correlation between the truth value of arguments and the human subject to whom it appears, human beings cannot become real τεχνίται as regards the nature of arguments without becoming at the same time τεχνίται as regards the nature of human knowledge and vice versa.\(^{28}\)

\(^{28}\) To put it in the same terms as in the previous note, Socrates is implicitly saying that
- there is also a usual δόξα as regards the nature of human capacity for knowledge, according to which such capacity is not limited or defective;
- this δόξα should be revised, in order for us to become aware that human capacity for knowledge has limits and defects (cf. 66b4, 85b4, 99d1, where images of human life's fragility are presented; also 63b7, 69c7, 81a4-10, in which references to divine knowledge as an unreachable ideal in earthly existence can be found);
- the revision of the usual δόξα about the nature of λόγοι and that of the usual δόξα about the nature of human capacity for knowledge are interdependent, also in the sense that one will necessarily lead to the other and that to a certain extent both amount to the same thing.
Dans cette communication, nous avons l'intention d'analyser la comparaison faite par Socrate dans le Phédon (89c11-90d8) entre μισολογία et μισανθρωπία. Socrate utilise cette comparaison pour clarifier la nature de la μισολογία, ses causes et la bonne façon de l'éradiquer.

Dans 89c11-e3, Socrate établit une analogie entre μισολογία et μισανθρωπία. Selon lui, μισολογία et μισανθρωπία sont nées de la même manière. Tout d'abord, il considère les circonstances de la γένεσις de la μισανθρωπία.

Ensuite (89e6-90a2), Socrate se concentre sur ce qu'il prend comme l'αἰτία de la μισανθρωπία. Selon lui, μισανθρωπία et μισολογία sont nées de la même manière. Tout d'abord, il considère les circonstances de la γένεσις de la μισανθρωπία.

Socrate indique que cette absence de τέχνη correspond à un manque de compréhension de la nature des êtres humains. Les paroles de Socrate suggèrent que la majorité des hommes sont à la fois bons et mauvais, qu'ils ont un caractère mixte. Le manque de τέχνη du misanthrope est dû à une confusion entre ce qui est une caractéristique de seulement très peu d'hommes (à savoir, l'extrême bonté) et la nature de l'humanité en tant que telle. Les hommes sont susceptibles de devenir misanthropes parce qu'ils attribuent à tous les êtres humains ce qui est une caractéristique de seulement quelques-uns.

En 90b4-9, Socrate achève son analyse de l'analogie entre μισολογία et μισανθρωπία. Les différentes phases du processus constitutif de la misologie sont très semblables à celles que Socrate avait déjà indiquées dans 89c11-e3 par rapport à la misanthropie. La seule différence visible entre les deux explications de Socrate est que, dans le cas de la misologie, l'incrédulité quant à la vérité des arguments est seulement quelquefois justifiée. Cependant, les deux explications socratiques soulignent la similitude entre l'expérience de la misanthropie et celle de la misologie. Dans les deux cas, une transition se produit d'une expérience positive (la vérité d'une personne ou la vérité d'un argument) à une expérience négative (le manque de vérité de cette même personne ou la fausseté de ce même argument). Tant dans le cas de la misanthropie que dans le cas de la misologie, l'incrédulité surgit dans l'esprit de l'être humain.

Au début de 90b4-9, Socrate déclare que les arguments ne sont pas comme les gens. Les arguments ne possèdent pas de nature mixte: ils ne sont pas vrais et faux en même temps; ils sont vrais ou faux. La déclaration de Socrate implique que la transition mentionnée ci-dessus est causée non par l'argument lui-même (dans la mesure où un argument est toujours vrai ou toujours faux), mais par le sujet qui juge de la vérité ou fausseté de l'argument.

En 90c8-d7, Socrate achève son identification de l'αἰτία de la μισολογία. Dans ce passage, Socrate décrit l'expérience de transition indiquée ci-dessus comme une expérience d'hésitation quant à la valeur de vérité d'un argument. Ainsi, l'expérience à cause de laquelle on pourrait devenir misologue n'est pas celle de la fausseté universelle des arguments: elle est plutôt l'expérience du fait que la façon dont la valeur de vérité des arguments apparaît à un sujet, se révèle instable.

Selon Socrate dans 90c8-d7, l'αἰτία de la μισολογία a à voir avec le fait que le μισόλογος blâme les arguments à cause de leur prétendue instabilité. Cependant, Socrate dit que, au cœur même de la genèse de la μισολογία, il y a une erreur de la part du μισόλογος. Le μισόλογος doit se blâmer lui-même à cause de la prétendue instabilité des arguments. Socrate ajoute que le μισόλογος fait cette erreur parce qu'il manque de la τέχνη par rapport à la nature des arguments. S'il était un τεχνίτης par rapport à la nature des arguments, le μισόλογος saurait que les arguments ne souffrent pas d'instabilité quant à leur valeur de vérité. Socrate suggère que le μισόλογος manque également de la τέχνη par rapport à la nature de la connaissance.
humaine. Les paroles de Socrate impliquent que, si le μισόλογος était un τεχνίτης à cet égard, il serait conscient du fait que c'est la connaissance humaine, dans la mesure où elle est généralement impregnée de δόξα, qui est instable, et non pas les arguments en tant que tels. Le conseil de Socrate est que les êtres humains devraient chercher à connaître, non seulement la nature des arguments, mais aussi la nature de leur propre capacité de connaître. Compte tenu de la corréléation intrinsèque entre la valeur de vérité des arguments et le sujet humain auquel cette valeur apparaît, les êtres humains ne peuvent pas devenir véritables τεχνίται en ce qui concerne la nature des arguments sans, en même temps, devenir τεχνίται en ce qui concerne la nature de la connaissance humaine, et vice versa.
Il canto del cigno di Socrate. Una celebrazione della morte?

de Luise, Fulvia

Nel *Fedone* compare un curioso e denso riferimento simbolico, che Socrate applica a se stesso, difendendone il senso con insistenza da possibili erronee interpretazioni: è un “canto del cigno” il suo ultimo dialogo nell’imminenza della morte. Evocando l’immagine sacra del cigno, Socrate si appropria di due cose, la mitica bellezza che la tradizione attribuisce al suo ultimo canto e il potere divinatorio che all’animale si associa, in virtù del suo legame con Apollo; ma soprattutto rivendica a se stesso, insieme a tutti gli uccelli canori, un sentimento di gioia come fonte di ispirazione, sostenendo che questo spieghi anche la bellezza del suo ultimo canto (*Phaed*. 84d4-85b9). Questo saggio si propone di indagare in forma analitica le componenti simboliche e i riferimenti testuali interni che si addensano nell’immagine, sciogliendo alcune ambiguità relative al rapporto del filosofo con la morte.

1. *Dal silenzio aporetico alla gioia del canto*

La rivendicazione di gioia del filosofo, condotta in registro poetico e sul filo leggero dell’auto-ironia, risolleva il clima in quello che appare il momento di più alta tensione drammatica del dialogo. Un silenzio meditativo ha accolto la conclusione del discorso di Socrate sul destino immortale che attende l’anima del filosofo dopo il distacco dal corpo, ed è evidente che quest’ultimo e più complesso tentativo di dimostrazione1 non è riuscito a dissipare i dubbi sul fondamento della speranza di eternità:

> Quando Socrate ebbe finito di parlare, ci fu silenzio per qualche tempo; e anche Socrate, come si vedeva bene a guardarlo, era tuttavia assorto nel suo precedente ragionamento; e così la maggior parte di noi. Solamente Simmia e Cebete discorrevano tra loro a bassa voce (84c).

Quel parlottare trattenuto mette in mora il valore dimostrativo del ragionamento con cui il filosofo ha inteso rassicurare i suoi più fedeli discepoli. Ed è chiaro che, se una parte degli interlocutori non manifesta le sue perplessità, è solo per pudore, di fronte alla solennità del momento e all’altezza della lezione morale che il maestro esprime con il suo impegno a parlare fino all’ultimo respiro. Ma quando Socrate spinge Simmia e Cebete a uscire allo scoperto circa le pecche eventualmente note nel ragionamento (84c4-d3), con ciò non dà soltanto prova di disponibilità e di umiltà: esprime una precisa scelta di rigore sperimentale nella ricerca, riaffermando la volontà di condurla alle stesse condizioni di serietà che ha sempre preteso quando aveva più tempo per discutere. La preoccupazione di Simmia, che intende usargli un riguardo astenendosi dal sollevare obiezioni in un momento simile, è accolta con disappunto dal filosofo, quasi si sentisse sottovalutato nella sua fedeltà a se stesso e al canone zetetico di dedizione alla verità. È in questo contesto che il riferimento mitico e simbolico al cigno acquista quella straordinaria densità simbolica che ha sempre attratto l’attenzione degli interpreti e affascinato ogni lettore:

> Ahimé, o Simmia! Davvero ha da esser difficile ch’io riesca a persuadere gli altri che non reputo sventura questo mio caso, se neanche riesco a persuadere voi, i quali avete timore che io mi trovi ora in una disposizione d’animo più difficile (dyskoloteron ti nyn diakeimai) che non nella vita

1 Si tratta del cosiddetto argomento dell’«affinità», secondo cui la natura dell’anima si rivela nella sua stabile realtà quando un individuo pratica un rapporto di separazione rispetto al corpo e così ne acquisita il dominio, in virtù dell’intelligenza e del sapere che collegano l’anima «tutta sola con se stessa» (*aute kath’hauten*) a ciò che è sempre vero e immortale, prefigurando la sua sussistenza oltre la vita (78b-81a).
passata. E anche, si direbbe, io devo sembrarvi nell’arte della divinazione assai da meno dei cigni; e appena si accorgono di dover morire, benché anche prima non tralascino di cantare, cantano allora il loro canto più lungo e più bello, giunti come sono al momento in cui sono sul punto di andare di fronte al dio di cui sono devoti. E gli uomini, per la paura che hanno della morte, dicono il falso anche dei cigni: e dicono che, cantando essi il loro canto di morte, così cantano appunto per il dolore della morte; e non pensano che nessun uccello canta quando ha fame o freddo o altro male patisce, neanche l’usignolo, né la rondine, né l’upupa, che pur sono gli uccelli di cui si dice che cantino lamentele di dolore. Dunque né questi uccelli pare a me che cantino per dolore né i cigni; e anzi, i cigni, credo, come sacri ad Apollo, sono indovini (mantikoi), e, presentando quali beni troveranno nell’Ade, cantano in quel giorno in modo differente rispetto ai giorni precedenti. Ora anch’io credo di essere compagno di servizio coi cigni e sacro al medesimo dio e di aver avuto dal dio signore non meno di loro l’arte della divinazione (mantiken); e perciò credo di potermi allontanare dalla vita con animo non meno lieto (oude dysthymoteron) del loro (84d8-85b7).

Presentare la morte sembra dunque, per il cigno, motivo di un canto di gioia. Ma forse non siamo autorizzati dal testo a pensare che sia l’attesa della fine, o dei premi dell’aldilà, a generare letizia: il presentimento che Socrate assegna al cigno appare piuttosto il motivo per cui l’animale si affretta a concludere, con una prova più bella e più degna, il servizio al suo dio. Che cosa significa allora appropriarsi del canto del cigno? Se la gioia del filosofo dipendesse dal lasciarsi alle spalle la vita, sarebbe difficile scagionarlo dall’accusa di farsi persuasore di morte. Il percorso che seguiamo prende invece per guida l’ispirazione gioiosa del canto e la continuità della gioia che Socrate legge in ogni prestazione melodica; quindi, per quanto lo riguarda, in tutte le ricerche condotte in vita per porsi al servizio del dio della divinazione, che offre però solo segni alla ricerca di verità. Si cercherà di mostrare che, applicando a se stesso l’immagine del cigno canoro, Socrate offre una via d’uscita imprevedibile ai dilemmi che continuano a riproporsi sul vero significato della morte: una sorta di “euporia performativa” (per dirla con un’espressione rubata a Michael Erler) che vieta al discorso di soccombere alle sue difficoltà e di perdersi nei vicoli ciechi dell’aporia. Preludio all’euporia sarà allora attribuire a questo canto la gioia di una divinazione felice, allontanando l’oscurità del destino alle porte.

2. Gioia del canto e fiducia nel discorso

Colpisce, nel rapporto di identificazione che Socrate stabilisce con gli uccelli canori, la negazione del dolore come condizione incompatibile con la produzione melodica e soprattutto con l’eccellenza della prestazione: in nessun caso, neppure in quello dell’usignolo, della rondine e dell’upupa (tre uccelli che la tradizione unisce in un disgraziato mito d’amore e morte)\(^2\), il canto può essere considerato espressione di sofferenza, giacché la sua bellezza comunica e celebra una gioiosa armonia. Perché Socrate insiste sul fatto che il canto degli uccelli non può darsi senza gioia?

Per ogni lettore dei dialoghi platonici il canto di Socrate non può essere altro che la pratica dialogica con cui il filosofo si identifica e viene identificato: la pratica che nel Fedone ha prodotto un reiterato e incompiuto tentativo di dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima, lasciando incerta la promessa di salvezza dalla morte 2 Cfr. Erler (2016), che formula un’ipotesi interpretativa a largo raggio sui meccanismi che determinano la produzione dei significati filosofici nella rappresentazione platonica, mostrando come in alcuni casi a una elenctic aporia venga accostata a una performative euporia.

3 Il mito racconta un caso di violenza sessuale, perpetrata da un uomo nei confronti di sua cugina Filomela, il cui nome significa amante del canto. La vittima, privata della lingua perché non possa riferire ciò che ha subito, riesce tuttavia a comunicare con la sorella Progne, che si vendica in modo atroce del marito Tereo, suscitando il suo desiderio di vendetta. La metamorfosi risolve il groviglio passionale mutando Filomela in usignolo, Progne in rondine e Tereo nella lugubre upupa, lasciando quindi a ciascuno la possibilità di esprimere il suo canto.
e dubbia la rassicurazione sul significato della morte. Il canto del cigno di Socrate è una dimostrazione fallita, che resterà tale fino alla fine del dialogo. Ciò rende impossibile supporre che la gioia rivendicata da Socrate sia giustificata dalla riuscita dimostrativa già realizzata o dalla previsione (divinatoria?) che essa si realizzerà in seguito, visto che questa è appunto l’ultima occasione per Socrate e il lettore è avvertito dalla persistenza dei dubbi che sarà un’occasione mancata.

Ciò nonostante, questo dialogo, che ci consegna come un lascito testamentario l’ultima apparizione del filosofo, è anche quello dove più tenace appare la sua dedizione al discorso. Se la musa del canto di Socrate è la filosofia e il suo esercizio è la pratica del dialogo, in nessun altro contesto il dialegesthai di Socrate appare così eroicamente assunto come fine supremo e ultimo della vita del filosofo. La rappresentazione concorda con la solenne dichiarazione pronunciata di fronte ai giudici dal Socrate dell’Apologia che nega di poter assegnare valore a una vita priva della pratica filosofica; e analoga è la motivazione che sostiene nel Critone il rifiuto a salvarsi la vita fuggendo, cioè sottraendosi alla comunità politica che è il referente più ampio del dialegesthai di Socrate. Ma tutto ciò che è possibile cogliere nei dialoghi direttamente connessi al contesto drammatico del Fedone trova in questa rappresentazione dichiarazioni più argomentate e più profonde sul senso della pratica discorsiva.

L’orchestrazione scenica dispone con cura il lettore ad attendere la risposta di Socrate, lasciando che le voci dei personaggi della scena narrata e della cornice narrativa si mescolino per esprimere un unico sentimento: un ansioso timore per la possibile perdita di fiducia nel discorso. Simmia, che nella scena narrata è il primo a manifestare i suoi dubbi sulla dimostrazione, è anche il primo a esprimere compiutamente lo sconcerto generato in lui dalla constatazione del fallimento, animato com’è dall’impegno a cercare soluzioni certe sulle questioni più complesse e sempre disposto comunque ad «accogliere quello dei ragionamenti umani che sia non altro il migliore e il meno confutabile». Suo è l’immagine del discorso come «zattera», su cui è necessario imbarcarsi, per «attraversare così, a proprio rischio, il mare della vita» (85c-d). Cosa accadrà allora se neppure quella zattera è in grado di offrire soccorso? La narrazione dà spazio agli argomenti confutatori di Simmia


5 Pur dubitando di poter essere creduto, Socrate sostiene che, per quanto riguarda lui, il dialogo è oggetto di una missione divina, ma anche che in generale «proprio questo è per l’uomo il bene maggiore, ragionare ogni giorno della virtù e degli altri argomenti sui quali m’avete udito disputare e far ricerche su me stesso e sugli altri, e che una vita che non faccia di cotali ricerche non è degna d’essere vissuta» (Apol. 38 a2-6).

6 Cfr. il preciso richiamo interno all’Apologia nel Critone, dove Socrate si fa richiamare dai nomoi personificati la sua dichiarata impossibilità di scegliere l’esilio, preferendo piuttosto la morte (Crit. 52b6-8).
... e poi a quelli serissimi di Cebete, che scuotono alle radici i supporti logici della dimostrazione socratica, finché dalla cornice erompe la voce di Echecrate, piena di empatica solidarietà con i sentimenti di angoscia riferiti da Fedone e da lui stesso vissuti mentre era nel cuore della scena:

«A quale ragionamento d'ora in avanti potremmo credere? Era così profondamente persuasiva la dimostrazione di Socrate! E ora, ecco, è caduta nell'incertezza. Ed è meraviglioso come anche ora e sempre mi prenda e mi vinca codesto argomento che la nostra anima sia una specie di accordo; e sentendomelo ripetere mi ha fatto in certo modo tornare a mente che già anch'io ero di questo parere. E così ho grande bisogno ancora, come se si riconciliasse da capo, di un'altra dimostrazione, la quale mi persuada che, morto l'uomo, non muore l'anima insieme con lui. Dimmi, dunque, per quale via Socrate seguì il suo ragionamento? E dimmi, forse, anche lui, come mi dici di voi, dette a vedere di essere un poco turbato, oppure no, e serenamente venne in aiuto al proprio discorso? E l'aiuto fu sufficiente o manchevole?» (88d1-e3)

La risposta di Socrate è affidata ai gesti, prima ancora che alle parole. Fedone riferisce con ammirazione dello sguardo del filosofo, mentre con «dolcezza», «benevolenza» e «deferenza» ascoltava le argomentazioni contrarie alle prove dell'immortalità, senza smettere di accarezzare i suoi lunghi capelli; e di come, avvedendosi dello «smarrimento» generato nell'anima di chi ascoltava, si sia impegnato a guarirli da quel turbamento, richiamando alla vita il discorso che pareva colpito a morte (88e-89b). Le sue parole si concentrano in primo luogo sul rischio di perdere la fiducia nel ragionamento logico, diventando «misologi come si diventa misantropi» (89d1), cioè per effetto di singole esperienze di delusione nell'amicizia, così come di fallimento nella pratica dimostrativa. Significativamente Socrate non affida la salvezza alla sua abilità nel concludere con successo le dimostrazioni, evitando l'aporia, ma insiste nell'invito a «non lasciare che si faccia strada nel nostro animo il pensiero che non ci sia nulla di sano nei ragionamenti» (90e1-2). Sarà la persistenza pratica della fiducia nella ricerca condotta attraverso i logoi a garantire per tutti un guadagno certo, ed è su questo che Socrate impegna interamente la sua persona:

Io non mi darò pensiero che sembrino vere a voi le cose che dico – se così avviene, tanto meglio! – ma che sembrino vere a me prima che a ogni altro. Perciò faccio bene i miei conti, amico mio; e vedi tu se ne avrò un guadagno! Se quello che dico risulterà vero, è chiaro che è un bene persuadersene; se poi, per chi è morto, non c'è più niente…allora, se non altro, per tutto il tempo che precede la mia morte non avrò dato fastidio ai presenti con le mie lamentele (91 a-b).

7 Simmia contrappone all'immagine di un'anima immortale, in quanto separabile dal corpo, una teoria che la interpreta invece come «armonia» (harmonia) generata da un corpo, allo stesso modo in cui la musica è generata da uno strumento fatto di legni e corde, che costituisce il supporto materiale necessario alla musica stessa. L'ambiguità di questa teoria, attribuita da Macrobio (Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis, I, 14, 19 – frr. 44 a22 e 23 DK) al pitagorico Filolao, sta nella sua somiglianza con la teoria fisiologica e medica della krasis, secondo cui l'anima è contempera-mento e armonia tra le qualità e gli elementi che mantengono in salute il corpo e generano condizioni ottimali per la vita. Il ragionamento di Simmia, senza distinguere tra i due possibili riferimenti, mostra la pericolosità del concetto di armonia, che, applicato all'anima, la lega indissolubilmente al suo supporto corporeo, impedendo di pensarla separabile e immortale. Su questo problematico sfondo culturale cfr. Vegetti (1985). Sulla logica interna dell'argomento al concetto di armonia e sulla sua impegnativa e complessa confutazione da parte di Socrate (91e2-95 a2), cfr. Trabattoni (1988).

8 Cebete confuta la possibilità di evincere dalla dimostrazione della preesistenza dell'anima (in virtù della presenza in lei di idee non dipendenti dall'esperienza) la sua continuità nel tempo, mentre, pur accettando l'ipotesi di una lunga vita dell'ani-ma, trascorsa attraversando diversi corpi, non crede sia possibile escludere che essa si distruggia in seguito al distacco da un ultimo corpo.

Come nell’*Apologia*\(^{10}\), Socrate lascia aperta una doppia possibilità sul destino effettivo dell’anima, mostrando che l’incertezza non gli impedisce di conservare fiducia in una possibile soluzione veridica del dilemma. La perseveranza nella ricerca avrà in ogni caso (e indipendentemente dal suo esito dimostrativo) una ricaduta etica significativa, fosse anche soltanto il guadagno minimale di conferire forza e dignità a chi si accinge ad affrontare l’oscuro passaggio tra vita e morte: senza certezze tecniche, ma sorretto da ragionevoli speranze.

La morte suggella dunque il valore assoluto che Socrate assegna al discorso, benché *questo* ragionamento sull’anima, qui accitamente ripreso e arricchito di nuovi argomenti, non riesca a dirimere l’*impasse* a carico del suo destino. Che la morte sia un bene o un male per l’individuo, è quesito che si ripropone, ricevendo risposte ugualmente dubbie sull’immortalità, ugualmente assertive sul valore della vita spesa in dialogo.

La rappresentazione non lascia invece alcun dubbio sullo stato di felicità di Socrate, che non viene soltanto affermato perentoriamente in questo punto cruciale del dialogo, sotto la maschera del cigno morente, ma sottolineato con insistenza fin dall’inizio da parte del narratore-testimone Fedone\(^{11}\), confermato infine dalla sobrietà anti-tragica degli ultimi gesti del filosofo, che mostrano, almeno in Socrate, la realtà di quel beneficio minimale dovuto a una seria pratica discorsiva. Risolutezza serena e ironia sdrammatizzante si concentran nella frase «il destino mi chiama» (115a5-6): espressione solenne di congedo, pronunciata parodiando un eroe tragico, per annunciare che andrà ora in bagno a lavarsi, nel tempo che gli resta, allo scopo gentile di evitare alle donne il fastidio di pulirlo da morto.

Siamo autorizzati a pensare che tanta tranquillità sia il frutto di un’intima e inverificabile certezza, che fortunatamente non avrà modo di dimostrarsi fallace (nel caso in cui la coscienza di Socrate si spegnesse nel nulla) e che basterà al più a ispirare commozione pietosa agli spettatori della scena, come esempio di eroica fede in una semplice speranza? Ciò potrebbe anche rispondere all’intenzione celebrativa di Platone, ma non farebbe di Socrate quel sublime maestro di intelligenza e di virtù morale che la rappresentazione platonica vuole che sia.

3. *Sul valore divinatorio del canto*

Torniamo alla seconda delle pretese espresse da Socrate con l’immagine del canto del cigno: l’assunzione in proprio di capacità divinatorie, come quelle attribuite all’animale sacro ad Apollo. In altri dialoghi platonici (principalmente nel *Fedro* e nell’*Apologia*, come vedremo, ma con intenti diversi anche in altri dialoghi)\(^{12}\), il personaggio platonico attribuisce a se stesso qualità mantiche in forma minore e limitata, ma sempre intensamente veridiche. Nel *Fedro* il tema della divinazione viene evocato fin dalle prime battute del dialogo e resta sotteso a un confronto che

\(^{10}\) Parlando ai giudici dopo la condanna, Socrate aveva spiegato la mancanza di paura per il suo destino, configurando due possibili modi di intendere la morte, nessuno dei quali gli appariva tale da escludere l’idea che la morte possa essere un bene: «Una di queste due cose è il morire: o è come un non essere più nulla, e chi è morto non ha più nessun sentimento di nulla; o è proprio, come dicono alcuni, una specie di mutamento e di migrazione (*apodemia*) dell’anima da questo luogo quaggiù a un altro luogo» (*Apol*. 40c5-9)

\(^{11}\) L’impressione dal vivo è riportata come qualcosa di inatteso e sorprendente, perciò tanto più credibile: «Felice egli era o Echecrate, e nei modi e nelle parole, tanto intrepidamente e nobilmente mori; e mi dava immagine come di uno che, pur andando nell'Ade, non vi andasse senza un divino fato, e che, anche colà giunto, egli sarebbe stato felice come nessun altro mai» (*Phaed*. 58e3-59 a1).

coinvolge figure tradizionalmente considerate tramiti dell'ispirazione divina (come l'indovino, il guaritore e soprattutto il poeta) e figure nuove di maestri dell'arte della parola, che sembrano sostituire le antiche nel ruolo di fonti di orientamento per l'azione. L'aspetto più interessante è il lavoro che Socrate svolge su entrambi i fronti per trasferire le loro prerogative più potenti al filosofo: una figura alternativa del tutto inedita, tecnicamente attrezzata per produrre il controllo dialettico del discorso, ma vicina alle figure sacre dei mediatori divini per la «mania» che con essi condivide. Follia ispirata (secondo i canoni arcaici che permettono a Platone di attivare un nesso etimologico tra manike e mantike)13, è quella che sospende il filosofo a praticare la dialettica con un incontenibile desiderio di matrice divina per la bellezza e la verità. È questa, dunque, al più alto livello, la capacità divinatoria di cui Socrate intende appropriarsi, anche con lo scopo non dichiarato di negarla o porla in dubbio per altre figure, dotate di prestigio e fascino antico e nuovo.

A sciogliere l'ambiguità connaturata al modello arcaico della divinazione (e alle sue forme più o meno autenticamente ispirate), intervengono molte indicazioni cautelative, ma soprattutto l'applicazione apparentemente modesta, che il personaggio platonico fa a se stesso di questa prerogativa sacra, suggerendo i limiti entro cui essa può operare a livello umano. A sostegno della sua intenzione di pronunciare un nuovo discorso su Eros, del tutto opposto al biasimo che ha appena pronunciato, Socrate dice di essere un indovino (mantis), ma non del tutto capace, anzi, come i mediocri in fatto di lettere, quanto basta solo per me» (242c3-5); e aggiunge che questa sua pur limitata attitudine gli è stata sufficiente per “divinare” l’errore14 compiuto e convincersi a comporre una «palinodia». La divinazione consiste dunque in un’intuizione e in un’assunzione personale di responsabilità, indotta dal solito segno demonico (daimonion), che, agendo sempre per negare, determina la necessità di aprire nuovi percorsi.

Nel resto del dialogo (ma più esplicitamente nell’ultima parte, in cui Socrate e Fedro valutano gli effetti dimostrativi e persuasivi dei tre discorsi sulferos presentati nel dialogo), il significato di questa intuizione si approfondisce, diventando un avvertimento a condurre con ogni accortezza, e disposizione a tornare indietro, quel gioco pericoloso che appartiene a ogni discorso, perché impegna chi lo pronuncia in un corpo a corpo con la verità e con la possibilità di offenderla, sostenendo con sicumera cose false15. Il dubbio su se stessi era apparso d’altra parte compagno inseparabile della ricerca, fin dalle prime battute del dialogo, indicando la direzione prioritaria in cui impiegare le poche risorse “divinatorie” a disposizione, lasciando perdere l’analisi razionalizzante di ciò che dicono i poeti: «io non ho per niente tempo libero per tali cose. Il motivo, mio caro, è questo: non sono ancora in grado, seguendo il precetto delfico, di conoscere me stesso. E io trovo ridicolo che, ignorando ciò, si possa indagare ciò che è estraneo» (229e3-230a1).

Per mantenersi fedele all’impegno di cercare la verità a partire da se stesso, il Socrate dell’Apologia si vede costretto a lavorare addirittura contro l’oracolo delfico, pur di mantenere saldo il riferimento privilegiato alla sua coscienza e insieme l’impegno a dire il vero. Com’è noto, il filosofo sottopone a prova il vaticinio che lo

13 Cfr. il gioco di parole condotto in Phaedr. 244b6-c5, allo scopo di valorizzare le forme di follia che rimandano a un’autentica ispirazione divina, tra cui si inserisce la novità della mania erotike, propria del filosofo.

14 «Chiaramente (saphos) dunque già intendo (manthano) la mia colpa (amart-e- ma)» (242c5-6): questa la frase con cui Socrate afferma la sua certezza con linguaggio divinatorio, riferendosi all’intuizione ricevuta attraverso il segno demonico.

15 Per questa interpretazione del Fedro platonico, che assume l’uso delle parole come tema chiave del dialogo, rimando al commentario realizzato in de Luise (1997), da cui sono tratte anche le citazioni in traduzione italiana.
indicava come «il più sapiente degli uomini», in nome di un sapere che condivide solo con se stesso (synoia, che gli dà alcune certezze inconfutabili sullo stato in cui si trova, guidandolo ad approfondirne la verità 16.

L’evocazione del cigno nel Fedone porta avanti con continuità (se pensiamo alla progressione drammatica del tempo dei dialoghi) il tema divinatorio, mantenendo in primo piano il filo della verità discorsiva e appena celato quello del riferimento a se stessi, che è tuttavia al centro della rappresentazione, in quanto spiega l’impegno di Socrate a concludere bene la prova in cui è in gioco il bilancio dell’intera sua vita. Veridico sarà il vaticinio di Socrate se egli potrà col discorso salvare il senso della scelta di dedicare l’esistenza alla pratica della filosofia.

Considerata nella sua specificità, l’immagine del cigno divinatore si presta anche a riattivare il confronto con un’altra figura, evocata nel Fedro come diversa e rivale sul piano dell’ispirazione divina, e presa di mira con più esplicito intento polemico e competitivo nella Repubblica. Il riferimento è al confronto tra filosofi e poeti, che, dopo l’articolata conflutazione pedagogico-politica dei libri II e III, viene definito «un’antica contesa» nel contesto del libro X. Si tratta di un dettaglio, per la rappresentazione della Repubblica, ma significativo per il nesso che permette di stabilire con la rappresentazione del Fedone, dove forse si recita l’ultimo atto della nobile tenzione del filosofo per strappare ai poeti il ruolo di tramiti sacri di verità.

Nel contesto escatologico del racconto di Er in Repubblica X (un mito rettificato, che si vuole verace, sul passaggio vita-morte-vita) 17, è il poeta Orfeo a scegliere per il suo ciclo esistenziale futuro il bios del cigno. Ciò conferma il nesso simbolico che Platone stabilisce tra canto ispirato e tentativo di dominare il passaggio di confine tra vita e morte, istituendo un confronto a distanza tra i due ‘cigni’ Orfeo e Socrate: diversamente attrezzati per il vaticinio, essi appaiono entrambi interessati a forzare le porte dell’Ade, entrambi a rischio di fallire nell’impresa, entrambi impegnati nella gioia del canto. Se restiamo nell’ambito simbolico del mito orfico, trovare il cammino sicuro di andata e ritorno dal mondo dei morti appare impossibile (almeno per quanto riguarda l’obiettivo di riportare indietro Euridice). La gioia del canto è però una certezza: un potere attivo che Orfeo possiede e usa efficacemente con le divinità infere; lo stesso che diversamente Socrate ripropone sostenendo, con la sua serenità assoluta, il valore in sé del dialectesthai.

L’immagine del canto del cigno va così a completare l’indicazione che domina l’introduzione al dialogo nel Fedone: il desiderio di morte del filosofo, esplicitato come desiderio dell’anima di restare «tutta sola con se stessa», completando quel distacco dalla sensibilità e dall’urgenza dei desideri situati nel corpo, in cui consiste la possibilità della vita intellettuale e della scelta morale. Come nessun uccello canta mentre prova dolore, come il mitico Orfeo sceglie di tramutarsi in cigno per continuare il suo canto, così il filosofo si impegna con gioia nel dialogo di fronte alla morte. In ogni parola e in ogni gesto della sua ultima apparizione scenica Socrate esprime un’inalterabile fiducia nel senso della vita spesa in un ambito di synousia filosofica; e questo basta a spiegare la sua esplicita volontà di negare spazio al sentimento tragico che si accompagna al trapasso nel modo di sentire comune.

4. Il desiderio di morte del cantore: una prospettiva di immortalità che convive

17 Per i significati morali del mito rimando al lavoro analitico svolto in de Luise (2007). Cfr. anche de Luise (2009) per la complessità dei riferimenti discorsivi e simbolici che legano il Fedone a Repubblica X in relazione alle forme di cura dell’anima e all’impegno richiesto per guidarla al suo destino.
Il canto del cigno del filosofo di fronte alla morte consente di rivisitare da un punto di vista non più vincolato all'efficacia dimostrativa delle prove alcune questioni, generate dal ruolo di persuasore di morte che Socrate si assegna nelle prime battute del dialogo, inviando ad Eveno e «a chiunque altro partecipi degnamente di questo nostro filosofare» (61c8-9) l'ambiguo messaggio di disporre a seguirlo al più presto, se è davvero fedele all'intendimento di ogni vero filosofo, «il quale è che di nient'altro essi si curano se non di morire e di esser morti» (64a5-6). La frase stupisce e fa ridere Simmia, che la trova curiosamente corrispondente a ciò che la gente comune pensa dei filosofi, considerandoli moribondi e in fondo consapevoli di meritare la morte (64b3-6). L'osservazione spinge Socrate a darne paradossale conferma, con un'indicazione che resta enigmatica:

«E direbbero proprio la verità, Simmia; solo, non è vero che se ne rendano conto. Infatti non sanno né perché siano come moribondi, né perché siano degni di morte e di quale morte, quelli che sono veramente filosofi» (64b7-9).

Il seguito del dialogo non dà una risposta diretta che scioglia l'enigma e spieghi in che senso il distacco del filosofo possa essere inteso come suo fine ultimo, se questo fine coincida con la morte fisica del corpo, se ciò che caratterizza il filosofo debba essere inteso come un desiderio di abbandonare la vita, dimenticando tutto quanto appariva rilevante in relazione all'esistenza. La tesi che qui si propone è che la pratica filosofica (come forma di esercizio intellettuale e morale che realizza un reiterato distacco dalle pressioni legate ai bisogni del corpo) sia un candidato migliore a rappresentare la morte cui Socrate dichiara di aspirare, esprimendo il bisogno dell'anima di trovare in sé sola la sua consistenza e il fine ultimo di una vita da filosofo. Spostando dunque l'attenzione sulla pratica che il Fedone lega indissolubilmente alla figura di Socrate, non sarà più necessario cercare nell'esito delle dimostrazioni la conferma che il suo desiderio di morte è razionalmente fondato: pur restando difettose e incompiute, e opponendosi prima facie alla certezza del filosofo di star concludendo la vita nel modo migliore, esse non impediscono di ribadirne il valore della certezza morale di una scelta di vita che induce a persistere nell'attività più degna, come se essa rendesse realmente immortali.

Come si è detto, il comportamento di Socrate fornisce un esempio teatrale di eccelsa sobrietà, dichiaratamente anti-tragico, con dense suggestioni eroiche e “stoiche” ante litteram. A ciò si aggiunge la gioia, tratto emotionale che non sarebbe stato necessario nel contesto psichico iper-razionale cui darà vita lo Stoicismo, ma fortemente espressivo nel quadro dell'eudaimonismo platonico. Non l'attesa del trapasso sembra giustificare la gioia del canto, ma l'effetto finale, vissuto e consolidato, della vita buona, che ha condotto la mente del filosofo a raggiungere senza impedimenti di ribadire il valore del dialegesthai, quale che sia il destino dell'anima oltre la vita. Tra l’Apologia e il Fedone, il Socrate platonico mantiene ferma la certezza morale di una scelta di vita che induce a persistere nell'attività più degna, come se essa rendesse realmente immortali.

Come si è detto, il comportamento di Socrate fornisce un esempio teatrale di eccelsa sobrietà, dichiaratamente anti-tragico, con dense suggestioni eroiche e “stoiche” ante litteram. A ciò si aggiunge la gioia, tratto emotionale che non sarebbe stato necessario nel contesto psichico iper-razionale cui darà vita lo Stoicismo, ma fortemente espressivo nel quadro dell'eudaimonismo platonico. Non l'attesa del trapasso sembra giustificare la gioia del canto, ma l'effetto finale, vissuto e consolidato, della vita buona, che ha condotto la mente del filosofo a raggiungere la sua massima lucidità, rendendo ragione e testimonianza di uno stato di indistruttibile felicità interiore. Il suo canto del cigno sarebbe in questo senso vaticinio veritiero sul senso della vita e sul modo di impiegarla, mentre persiste l'incertezza sul destino dell'anima individuale e l'oscurità del passaggio tra vita e morte, che Socrate, fallendo, ha esplorato tuttavia con mezzi migliori rispetto al poeta Orfeo. Il vaticinio resterebbe vero anche se l'individuo si perdesse nel nulla, perché il “bel rischio” di credere nell'eternità consiste nell'attribuire valore all'unica forma di stabilità sperimentata a livello umano: l'identità intellettuale e morale.

5. L’esecuzione perfetta del filosofo e il superamento delle favole sapienziali

di ciò che un filosofo è in grado di fare con la pratica ininterrotta del *dialegesthai* e la fiducia nel valore del discorso di fronte al dubbio che la dimostrazione dell’immortalità, come ogni altra dimostrazione, possa rivelarsi fallace. Se tale fiducia deve persistere anche quando (soprattutto quando) si manifestano i suoi limiti (come suggerisce Simmia con l’immagine della «zattera del discorso»), potremmo trarre un paradosso: Socrate diventa immortale nell’atto che lo caratterizza come filosofo, mentre fallisce la sua dimostrazione dell’immortalità. In questo senso l’euporia performativa si sovrappone e in qualche modo risolve le carenze che hanno condotto a un’aporia dimostrativa. Nel canto del cigno di Socrate si fissa l’immagine di una pratica eccellente, in cui è racchiusa la solidità di una virtù che è in se stessa felicità.

Ciò segna la definitiva distanza del filosofo dalle figure sapienziali simili agli sciamani, cui si attribuivano poteri demonici, legati a credenze nella persistenza e trasmigrazione delle anime e a pratiche di distacco dal corpo, simili agli esercizi di concentrazione attribuiti a Socrate19. Ma nel *Fedone* il distacco è rappresentato come pratica intellettuale e morale che istituisce un presidio di controllo – il giudizio dell’anima – al di sopra di tutto ciò che l’anima avverte e fa con il tramite del corpo; ed è questa pratica a garantire che da ultimo l’anima filosofica possa raggiungere realmente lo stato perfetto della completa autonomia20. Lo sfondo salvifico di matrice orfico-pitagorica, chiaramente presente nel *Fedone*21, lo è come oggetto di aperta contestazione critica, da parte del filosofo, su punti di evidente insufficienza dottrinaria, come la teoria dell’anima-armonia (sostituita appunto con l’idea di preminenza del giudizio dell’anima su quanto essa vive in congiunzione naturale col corpo). Il solo punto in cui Socrate si appropria in prima persona del vocabolario simbolico orfico-pitagorico, è quello in cui dà vita al mito finale della «vera terra»: un’immagine che ha un evidente ruolo retorico-persuasivo e che per molti motivi dovrebbe essere considerata una «bella menzogna».

Bibliografia


20 Può essere interessante osservare che l’operazione platonica (istituire un dominio interno attraverso la sola componente psichica, intesa come separabile all’interno di un modello dualista anima-corpo) può essere giustificata sul piano scientifico come ipotesi descrittiva, su base fenomenologica, di quanto accade nella mente. Legrenzi e Umiltà (2014) segnalano e motivano in questa chiave il persistente dualismo che il linguaggio conserva e induce nel modo di pensare la mente, accreditando un separatismo “bene inteso” come modello operativo e euristico. In Platone la scelta di mantenere l’autonomia dell’anima rispetto al corpo si conferma strategica, riproposta negli stessi termini dal *Fedone al Filebo*, arricchendosi di implicazioni dinamiche e mantenendo un ruolo di garanzia nella costruzione della soggettività virtuosa.

Dans le Phédon nous voyons apparaître une curieuse et profonde allusion symbolique que Socrate relie à soi-même et en défend fortement la signification contre toute interprétation éventuelle erronée : le chant du cygne, auquel le philosophe rapproche sa propre manière de s'exprimer face à la mort imminente en soutenant qu'il se laisse inspirer d'un sentiment de joie et non pas de douleur (Phéd. 84d4-85b9). En reconduisant à soi-même l'image sacrée du cygne, Socrate s'approprie de deux éléments, c'est-à-dire de la beauté mythique de son dernier chant et du pouvoir divinatoire que l'on attribue à l'animal en vertu de son lien avec le dieu Apollon.

Ce travail se propose de rechercher analytiquement les composantes symboliques et les renvois internes qui, à travers le dialogue, vont s'amorcer dans cette image, en dissipant ainsi quelques ambiguïtés relatives au rapport du philosophe avec la mort.

L'analyse portera en particulier :
1. Sur le sentiment de joie qu'inspire la beauté du chant

Ainsi, nous allons enquêter sur le rapport que Socrate établit avec les oiseaux chanteurs (inclus ceux que la tradition relie à un mythe malheureux d’amour et de mort : le rossignol, l’hirondelle et la huppe), afin de nier que l’excellence mélodique soit le fruit de la douleur pour soutenir au contraire que le chant est toujours l’expression d’une joie extrême. On se demandera pourquoi Socrate a voulu appliquer le schéma du chant du cygne à son dernier dialogue, en tenant compte du fait que le chant de Socrate (normalement une pratique dialogique) s’exprime dans le Phédon dans une tentative réitérée et inachevée de démontrer l’immortalité de l’âme, ce qui laisse d’un côté incertaine la promis du salut contre la mort et, de l’autre, douteuse l’assurance sur la signification de la mort.

2. Sur la valeur divinatoire du chant

En se représentant comme le cygne sacre de Apollon, Socrate exprime confiance dans ses capacités divinatoires. Dans d’autres dialogues de Platon (Le Phèdre et L’Apologie de Socrate) le philosophe s’attribue des qualités mantiques en mineure forme et limitées à la recherche de la vérité sur soi-même, mais soutenues avec certitude, même contre l’oracle de Delphes, en invoquant une voie d’accès privilégiée (synèidesis ou synnoia) à la vérité de la conscience. En attribuant à Socrate le pouvoir divinatoire du cygne, Platon rappelle une forme de vie qui semble devenir ailleurs l’objet d’une confrontation spécifique entre le philosophe et le poète : dans le contexte eschatologique du mythe d’Er, dans le dixième livre de la République (un mythe rectifié, que l’on veut vérifié, sur le passage vie-mort-vie), c’est le poète Orphée à choisir pour son propre cycle existentiel futur le bios du cygne, ce qui confirme le lien symbolique que Platon établit entre le chant inspiré et la tentative de dominer le passage au-delà de la mort. Cela met en œuvre une confrontation à distance entre les deux « cygnes », Orphée et Socrate, qui sont différemment équipés pour la vaticination, mais intéressés les deux à forcer les portes de l’Hadès même au risque d’êchouer l’affaire ainsi que bien engagés dans la joie du chant.

3. Sur le désir de mort du chanteur

L’image du chant du cygne va compléter l’indication qui domine l’introduction au dialogue dans le Phédon : le désir de mort du philosophe explicité comme étant le désir de l’âme de rester « toute seule avec soi-même ». L’engagement dans le dialogue ainsi que chaque geste de sa dernière apparition scénique font de Socrate l’icône d’une forme de vie entièrement consacrée à la synousia philosophique et au déni du sentiment tragique qui accompagne le transfert dans la façon commune de sentir. L’image se propose en tant que moyen pour revisiter certains sujets : 1) si et en quel sens le détachement du philosophe peut être vu comme la fin suprême et si cette dernière concerne la mort ou pas ; 2) si ce qui caractérise le philosophe est le désir de quitter la vie dans le sens de rejoindre une vie meilleure, tout en oubliant ce qu’apparaissait important relativement à l’existence vécue ; 3) si la pratique de la philosophie (en tant qu’exercice intellectuel et moral qui réalise un détachement réitéré des pressions liées aux besoins du corps) n’est pas un candidat meilleur pour représenter le besoin de l’âme de retrouver en soi-même sa propre consistance ainsi que la fin suprême d’une vie consacrée à la philosophie.

4. Sur le désir d’immortalité qui cohabite avec l’incertitude

Les thèses de Socrate à propos de l’immortalité de l’âme, en tant que démonstrations défectueuses et inachevées, s’opposent prima facie à la certitude du philosophe d’être en train de conclure au mieux sa vie. En remontant à la confrontation avec la solution que l’on trouve dans l’Apologie (qui laissait ouverte l’alternative sur
le futur au-delà de la vie, en gardant inaltérée la valeur du *dialegesthai* face à la mort), nous allons soutenir que dans le Phédon aussi l'on voit proposée la renoncée à la vérité démonstrative, unie à la certitude morale du choix qui invite à persister dans l'activité la plus digne, comme si cette dernière pouvait véritablement donner l'immortalité. Le comportement de Socrate en attente de la mort (un exemple de sobriété sublimé et théâtrale, ouvertement anti-tragique), pourrait sembler stoïque *ante litteram* si seulement l'on n'introduisait pas l'élément de la joie, trait émotionnel qui semblerait n'avoir aucune incidence dans le contexte psychique hyper-rationnel auquel le Stoïcisme donnera vie, mais qui résulte fortement expressif dans le cadre de l'eudémonisme platonicien. Ce n'est pas l'attente du transfert qui semble justifier la joie du chant, mais l'effet final, vécu et consolide, de la vie bonne, qui a conduit l'esprit du philosophe à rejoindre sa plus grande lucidité, en témoignant d'un état de bonheur intérieur indestructible. En ce sens, son chant du cygne serait la vaticination véridique sur le sens de la vie et sur la manière de l'engager, alors que persiste l'incertitude sur le destin de l'âme individuelle ainsi que l'obscurité relative au passage entre la vie et la mort. Le « beau risque » de croire dans l'éternité consisterait alors dans le fait d'attribuer une valeur à la seule forme de stabilité expérimentée au niveau humain : l'identité intellectuelle et morale.

5. *Sur l'exécution parfaite de Socrate et le dépassement des fables sapientiales*

Le chant de Socrate dans le Phédon est une exécution parfaite. Elle fournit un exemple de ce qu'un philosophe est capable de faire à travers la pratique ininterrompue du *dialegesthai* et la confiance dans la valeur du discours face au doute que la démonstration de l'immortalité soit fallacieuse. S'il est vrai qu'une telle confiance doit persister aussi quand (et surtout quand) se manifestent ses limites (renvoi au thème du « radeau du discours »), nous pourrions en tirer un paradoxe : Socrate devient immortel dans l'acte qui le caractérise en tant que philosophe, alors qu'il échoue sa démonstration de l'immortalité. Dans son chant du cygne se fixe l'image d'une pratique parfaite, dans laquelle est recelée la solidité d'une vertu qui est en elle-même le bonheur. Cela marque sa distance définitive des figures sapientiales telles que les chamans, auxquels l'on attribuait des pouvoirs démoniaques, liés aux croyances dans la persistance et dans la migration des âmes, aux pratiques de détachement du corps similaires aux exercices de concentration attribués à Socrate. Mais dans le Phédon le détachement est représenté comme étant une pratique intellectuelle et morale qui constitue une défense de contrôle – le jugement de l'âme – au dessus de tout ce que l'âme avertit et fait à travers le corps. L'arrière-plan salvateur de matrice orphique-pythagoricienne, évidemment présent dans le Phédon, devient l'objet d'une contestation ouverte et critique de la part du philosophe, à partir de points d'insuffisance doctrinale évidente telle que la théorie de l'âme-harmonie (remplacée justement avec l'idée de la prééminence du jugement de l'âme sur ce qu'elle vit en conjonction naturelle avec le corps). Le seul passage dans lequel Socrate s'approprie en première personne du vocabulaire symbolique orphique-pythagoricien est celui où il donne vie au mythe final de la « vraie terre » : une imagine qui joue un rôle rhétorique-persuasif évident et qui, pour plusieurs raisons, devrait être considérée une « belle mensonge ». 
Univocalising sumphwnein in the Deuteros Plous explanation

MacKenzie, Hugh

Understanding univocally the inference of sumphwnein (SP) in both its Deuteros Plous cognates has proved difficult. This is because the relation uses the hypothesis as the premise at 100a, but just supports it (or not) at 101d. So the relation’s terms include the hypothesis at Phaedo 100a but not at 101d where the terms are just the hypothesis’ “consequences” (hormethenta).

In 100a SP holding directly justifies a logical deduction (or ‘entailment’1) from the hypothesis. The hypothesis sumphwnei a conclusion. SP failing to hold means its terms are inconsistent, and the other (non-hypothesis) term is taken as false. But at 101d SP holding between consequences of the hypothesis supports the hypothesis. A disharmony (diaphwnei) between the consequences fails to give such support.

So if we are to make the two SPs univocal we have a tricky logical puzzle, a solution to which eludes virtually all commentators, without changing the terms as set by Plato’s text.

Broadly speaking I think scholars work hard (but without complete success!) to interpret one of the SPs faithfully to the text and somewhat give up on the other. Sayre and Benson are helpful with 100a seeing there the method of geometrical analysis, as Menn has shown conclusively was being applied in the Meno’s virtue argument2. But in 101d they have to lose the link and conclude that it is intrinsically “vague”3.

Bailey I think is one of the best with 101d, though he fails (along with Gentzler, following the explicit denials of Robinson and Bluck4) to see the relevance of geometrical analysis here. Further he just seems to assume the re-reading of 100a by Gentzler and Hackforth as dealing with contraries not the contradictories which the text actually affirms. This handicaps his otherwise helpful use of the musical analogy.

We want to harvest the respective good emphases, synthesising them with the help of a quasi-metaphysical key. This is the explanatory relationship between particular sense objects and simple Forms.

My solution to the SP puzzle boils down to this: any two such particular-Form relationships will harmonise in the perceiver like two of the notes of a Greek tetrachord in the hearer (that is according to Plato’s Timaean understanding of human hearing). Any imposter relationship will disharmonise with a true one just like a musical disharmony.

I conclude that the Deuteros Plous is the application of the method of geometric analysis to Plato’s harmonic world. In such a context the SP texts, taken as written, can be interpreted consistently.

1 We will use ‘entailment’ for that procedure which is formally articulated (by logoi) as syllogistic deduction (as gleaned from the geometry of the day) the results of which are logical consequences: sumbainonta, but not hormethenta. This formal process is a specification of “inference”.
2 Menn, 2002, p.215-219
3 Both actually use the same word: Benson loc6551, Sayre p.39.
4 Robinson, 1953, p.121
The key texts

**Phaedo 100a3-7:**

“But anyhow this was how I proceeded: hypothesising on each occasion the logos I judged most robust, I posit as true (tithame ws alethe) whatever things seem to me (a men an moi doke … onta) sumphweiv with it – both about aitias and about everything else that is (ontown); and whatever [seems] not (a d’an me) as not true (ouk alethe).”

**Phaedo 100d-101c:** Illustrations of the above.

**Phaedo 101d3-5:**

“But if someone challenged/clung to the hypothesis itself, you would bid him farewell and you wouldn't answer until you had examined its results (ormethenta), [to see] if to you (soi), they sumphwnei or diaphwnei with one another (allelois).”

To solve the problem we must satisfy the logic of the 100a and 101d texts concerning 1. The meaning of the relation Sumphonein, by a musical analogy, 2. The specific hypotheses it deals with, 3. The methodology it applies – geometrical analysis. We will deal only with the first in this paper, with brief allusion to the other two.

<Table slide> SITUATIONS WHERE CONSISTENCY OF TWO TERMS OF A RELATION RESULTS IN AN ENTAILMENT

Arithmetic and Geometry

There's little doubt that the Meno's geometry is a background to the Phaedo's method – but that is my third issue, and not for this paper. However we begin our discussion with the fact that basic arithmetic analysis, and by extension the geometrical form, well illustrates a way to make 100a coherent, as Sayre and Benson have recognised.

A special case of the derivation of mathematical theorems from others, axioms and postulates, is where the same variables appear in all the relevant statements. This is to affirm arithmetical equivalence or geometrical congruence. They are convertible, mutually reducible propositions. In such a situation, with one “equation expressed in the same terms” as another to former either entails it, or is inconsistent.

5 The translation issue here does not affect the interpretation I give below. All I need is that the “safe part” of the hypothesis, the ‘reduced’ (according to geometrical analysis) “Forms Cause” is better supported (i.e. by a range of examples) than the “hypothesis itself” “Forms Exist”, which has only been defended by the equal sticks example, see below. Therefore it's weaker, and hence the contrast between “clinging” to the former with answers (d2), and “clinging to”, or challenging, the latter without immediate answers (d3).

6 It is reasonable to assume that Pythagorean maths and dualistic metamathematics was in the minds of Socrates' interlocutors. They are Pythagoreans of a “doubtful” Sedley, 2011, p.xxiii, and “mathematical” nature, Sayre, p.21 n.25

7 “This is the feature which made the process of analysis a method of discovering proofs”, Sayre, p.24:
with it.\textsuperscript{8} This is precisely the property we need to make 100a coherent. If the two terms of the relation SP are themselves equations or diagrams “in the same terms” as each other then SP can mean “consistency” because such consistency is equivalent to entailment and therefore truth. Inconsistency clearly means falsehood\textsuperscript{9}.

“Analysis” of a problem is when one searches for and discovers a simpler, more fundamental problem, which is easier to prove than an initial problem. So in doing this, if one makes sure the simpler (or ‘reduced’) proposition (or diagrams) are convertible with the initial problem it will be guarantee that solving the reduced problem will (“synthetically”) solve the original one. And for equations this means being “in the same terms as”, for geometrical diagrams this means satisfying the “Givens” of the problem.

Illustration of a geometrical synthesis (where the analysis is symmetrical)

But the problem here is not a purely mathematical or geometrical one but the key Phaedo one of (quasi-metaphysical) explanation or causation. It is not concerning three symmetrical dimensions but a fourth, dynamic one between explanans (e.g. cause) and explanandum. Like in Pythagorean metamathematics the dynamic complex relations between particulars raises the mind to simpler things: the more stably unified level of numbers and Forms

<Table slide>

2 Musical Harmony

So also the relationship between notes and their harmony has two levels. Harmonious notes are not so much convertible or mutually reducible because they are dynamic things. Rather they mutually reinforce. But the octave relationship, the 2:1 ratio is as close as two dynamic things can come to reducibility.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid. p.28
\textsuperscript{9} I would note that this condition: “same terms” plus “consistency” results in something stronger than mere entailment of one by the other, but \textit{mutual} entailment – as is the case in much geometrical analysis of one hypothesis to a reduced one – such as in the Meno’s second example. The “same terms” condition is met by the aspects of the “Givens” which are shared by both hypotheses.
Two vibrations of a lyre string are heard as being in harmony if the whole number ratios of their vibrations coheres, or reinforces enough. In the Timaeus Plato explains such sounds. Pitch is explained by speed, 67ac, harmony is explained by reinforcement of notes by one slowing down enough for the other, 80ab, not, as we know it to be, frequencies. They reinforce each other dynamically to make a new stable wave pattern. Plato’s reinforcement theory would seem rather unsatisfactory yet it’s clear, for our purposes that he could see one travelling note being to some extent logically or mathematically reducible to another, like a higher ‘C’ is to a lower ‘C’.

Change one of these frequencies or speeds just a little and the reinforced wave pattern become highly unstable. The ear tunes into this phenomenon. Two ‘C’s an octave apart sound very harmonious (ratio 2/1), as do, importantly for Greek scales, a perfect fourth (e.g. a C and an F, ratio 4/3)\(^{11}\), etc. The mathematics describes a certain degree of harmonious reinforcement. Again Plato in the Timaeus is aware of the maths-harmony relationship, forming the World Soul according to harmonics (35c-36a).

Any two notes whose ratios are not represented on the Greek diatonic scale are seen as disharmonious for them\(^{12}\). A ‘C’ and a ‘B’ don’t. They can be regarded in terms of a standard tetrachord as disharmonious – as are of course many other dualities involving relatively random frequencies and ratios. Mutually supporting notes take us to the ‘just’ level, non-mutually supporting do not.

So if the ratios involve small whole numbers we get “just” harmonies. They sound unified, consonant. Others don’t. They are in disharmony. This is not convertibility, but in terms of the level of individual notes and the level of consonant unity the relationship just two values, harmonic or not, just or not.

3 Analogy with Explanation of Formal Perception

The metaphysical world of the Phaedo has such a duality, between the opined objects of sensation and objects which are true.

Socrates’ somewhat mythological taking stock (80a-85b) after his initial four arguments (“all that has been said”, 80b) depicts the “divine-like soul” (80a-b) “of the true philosopher” (83b, 85b) letting go of sensation, prophet-like (84e-85b) in order to get at “truth” (83b), “viewing what is true and divine and not an object of opinion” (84ab). Hence in the final myth Plato describes: “If someone could reach to the summit, or put on wings and fly aloft, when he put up his head he would see the world above ... if his nature were able to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the true heaven and the true light and the true earth.” (109e)

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10 See Gregory 2008, note on 80b.
11 The basic unit for Greek scales was the Tetrachords (Burnyeat, p.50-1), the boundaries making a perfect fourth, two notes being chosen in between (presumably one might think from the modern chromatic scale). Two perfect fourths, with a tone in between make up an octave.
12 Burnyeat, 2000, p.48
13 Fine (2013) questions the traditional exclusive ascription of opinion and knowledge to these two realms but not the existential distinction of the realms – for which we will be following McCabe.
We can expect there to be a network of dynamic relationships between the realm of explanatory Forms and the realm of explained particulars. Famosly, middle-Plato has the human mind rising up from the latter to the former by reflecting upon the compresence of opposites. This is the discovery of different patterns of attraction-to-like and repelling-of-unlike. All actual relationships between the two realms are in harmony. Otherwise we would not have the good world Plato assumes, and that he had hoped Anaxagoras would confirm, in which Reason, throughout the Timaeus, is using Forms and numbers (53b) to organise Necessity.

So quasi-metaphysical relationships are true if there dynamic validly rises, in the mid of the perceiver, from sense objects to Forms. And this is closely related to actual way in which the changing realm is participating in, not to say organised by, the stable realm. The way in which objects participate in Forms is hierarchically harmonious. There is an ultimate tendency towards unity. The compresence of opposites in sense objects raises the mind toward the harmonious unification of these objects in Forms, and of one's own nous with that realm, especially the Good.

A proposed relationship between changing things and the explanatory unchanging which is false will not take part in such hierarchical unification. So there will be no reinforcement, no significant degree of reducibility one with another. They will be disharmonious with all other true ones – like any musical frequency ratio not in dynamic harmony with the 1:2 octave will sound bad.

4. Bailey’s rejection of this progression.

We have built upon geometry’s restriction of expressing equations “in the same terms” as each other to make them convertible and so analysis easily reversible. This satisfied 100a by making consistency the same as entailment to truth. We have found that musical notes are dynamic things with very similar properties. They are frequencies which either cohere extremely well, into “just” or “true” harmonies” or clearly fall short of that. So they are “in the same terms” as each other. So if the terms of SP were notes then it could means “harmonise” in 100a. We have also found something similar with the Phaedo’s epistemological and metaphysical relationships between sensible objects and true things. If they are real they terminate in truth, that is that affirm something about Forms. If the conditions which make one such relationship, one such reflection upon the compresence of opposites real are in harmony with the conditions of another that other is real, and it’s affirmation about the stable realm as affirmation of truth. It’s all to do with reflecting upon the compresence of opposites in a harmoniously developmental way.

Now my key condition, “being in the same terms as” is one Bailey considers

14 E.g.: McCabe, 1994, p.37-47. As we shall see below this resultant phenomenon can be, and has been by numerous scholars, more tightly described in a set of laws.
15 As described by causal laws which we will discuss below. Cf. Gallop 1975, P.168; McCabe 1994, p.77 & cf. p.45; Sedley 1998, 121; Kanayama 2000, 53f, 16 57a, 63a, 65d, 76d, 80ab, 89cff
but rejects. He calls it being “on the same subject matter”\(^{17}\). Because he is not running with the relevance of geometrical analysis his description is not in mathematical terms. But still he acknowledges that if the “same subject matter” criterion can be clearly and consistently articulated, “in a fine grained” enough manner it might work. Statements which are genuinely about the same thing and which are consistent with true statements about that thing are also true. He worries that criteria for being ‘genuinely’ about the same thing are not so easily distinguishable for criteria for “truth”. But that’s not the case if, developing upon the undisputed phenomenon of geometrical analysis we define relevant statements as relating sense objects to Forms. Restrictive this is, but this is what the Phaedo does!

Bailey goes on to say, concerning an alternative theory, such as Aristotle’s four causes,

we are in danger of reasoning as follows: “Aristotle’s claim is on the same subject matter as Socrates; there is no detectable inconsistency between the two, at this stage; so on these grounds we should suppose Aristotle’s claim true.

But Aristotle’s theory is inconsistent with Plato’s restrictive metaphysics. In fact the causal part of this metaphysic refuses to call Socrates’ bones and sinews “causes”. Sedley calls Plato’s causal theory “autere”\(^{18}\) but argues that it deals with Hume’s objections – better perhaps than Aristotle’s theory!

Conclusion: Applying this to the Phaedo’s hypotheses and his development of Geomtrical analysis.

With Benson et al we remember that the overall question is “What causes Generation and Corruption? In accord with the Method of Hypothesis we get a reduced question “Do Forms Exist?” and hypothetical answer “yes”. Now this latter is quickly treated like the “very worthy” hypothesis (92a) it turned out to be in the Recollection argument.

So to apply our above theory to the way in which the hypotheses interact in our passages we will need to look at the dynamic relationships between the (embryonic) comprence of opposites and the hypotheses. For the first reduced hypothesis “itself” this means looking at the Recollection argument as one that confirms the hypothesis “the Equals itself exists”. It is after all a “robust hypothesis” in 100a, “worthy” at 92de and, in the conclusion of the Recollection argument (76e-77a), it is as equally certain as the recollection theory, which it helps to prove\(^{19}\). From this we would adduce a “Law of Existence Forms”.

A similar approach must be taken to the hypothesised answer to the main problem – “Forms Explain/Cause”. But most of the work has been done for us. Gallop, McCabe, Sedley and Kanayama\(^{20}\) have discerned “Laws of aitia” from the 100dff illustrations.

\(^{17}\) Bailey, p.101f
\(^{18}\) Sedley, 1998, p.125
\(^{19}\) Thanks to N. Iwata for highlighting this point in an Oxford presentation.
\(^{20}\) Gallop 1975, P.168; McCabe 1994, p.77 & cf. p.45; Sedley 1998, 121; Kanayama 2000, 53f,
We just need to show a harmony between these latter laws and the “Law of Existence Forms”. We then have our musical analogy. The laws are like notes. As our minds apply the laws to each type of perceived accidental property, and rise towards each major Form, we are doing some analogous to hearing different but very similar musical notes – like those an octave apart, like C2, C3, C4, etc. If the Forms Exists notes when paired with each of the other notes harmonise (like in a Perfect Fifth rather than an octave) we have significant evidence (according to 100a) that “Forms Cause” is true\(^{21}\). If any of them don’t Forms cause is not true.\(^{22}\).

This would be the heart of the argument for 100a, but it needs to be expanded upon, and worked out for 101d\(^{23}\).

Related to this it is crucial to place the whole thing in the context of the overall Method of Hypothesis. For us, Benson and Sayre that means the geometrical method of analysis. They both do this well enough for 100a. And as we have seen Benson acknowledges that 101d adds something new to the Meno’s geometrical analysis. But he’s not able to explain why.

The quasi-metaphysical understanding I have highlighted is what I think the Phaedo adds. From Robinson onwards it has been acknowledged that Plato is moving from geometrical inquiry in the Meno to metaphysically explanatory inquiry in the Phaedo.

I believe this explanatory relationship as something akin to a geometrical axiom is initially adumbrated in the Meno’s Virtue argument and then in Phaedo’s Recollection argument.

This developed type of axiom can enable us to fill out my solution to these problems, and to see how the Deuteros Plous is a development of geometrical analysis to take account of navigating not geometry but Plato’s universe.

My synthesis of Recollection argument, Deuteros Plous law, musical harmony and the raising of the mind beyond sense objects is well described in the Republic 531cd – I believe!

ENDS

APPENDIX

Given that my “austere” interpretation of Plato’s quasi-metaphysics is something of a paradigm shift one perhaps should note the reasonableness of seeing

\(^{21}\) Burnyeat, 2000, using the Timaeus, has established that Plato was fully aware of these distinct musical intervals and their relevant differences.

\(^{22}\) MM McCabe harmonises with my basic point, I think, in arguing that the discernment of “Forms Cause” develops from a “coming to understand” that Forms “are separate from their instantiations~”. McCabe, Plato and His Predecessors, p 62-3. How else one must ask is the movement from “Forms Exist” to “Forms Cause” achieved so seamlessly. Without the invocation of such laws it is not an obvious development at all, let alone a strong inference. Rather like Iwata (in his 2015 Oxford presentation) McCabe uses the Republic’s 523-5 compresence of opposites as that which forces the mind toward higher (reduced) hypotheses. I would think that this is a development of the Phaedo’s method but so far beyond what hypothesis reduction is in the Phaedo, and especially in its Recollection argument, as not amenable to linking.

\(^{23}\) Benson brings out how the hormethenta text (101d) adds a new, hypothesis confirming, step to the basic ‘analysis’ and ‘synthesis’ of the Meno’s geometrical proving. Benson 2015, loc3346. But he can’t explain why this should be so! I think I can!
the distinct but related realms of particular and Form (so not of specific individual and general 'universal', or Bailey's species and genera) as ingrained in such a way in the dialogue.

Robinson has shown that Middle Plato is developing the role of Forms as the elenctic objects of unsuccessful attempts at definition into the "groundwork on which to construct various positive doctrines, for example that the soul is immortal".24 Mourelatos25 sees this groundwork as dualistic epistemological sailing terrain of Parmenides.

But Plato wants to go beyond this also, as the Meno and Phaedo will show and the Republic 531b confirms26.

McCabe points out that in middle–Plato "an individual particular thing in the physical world is enmeshed in a complex of relations and values."27 These latter are the explanatory context28, and comprise existential numbers, geometrical objects and Forms. Plato has Socrates navigate this "mesh". It is difficult to map this onto Bailey's hierarchy. But we should expect there to be patterns and laws to this network. Moreover it would seem to be this reality that led Plato to intuit that geometrical analysis, which uses patterns and laws called axioms and postulates, would be so fruitful to his enterprise of inquiring beyond belief in particulars. Which brings us to the next sentence.

Il tentativo di comprendere univocamente l'inferenza di sumphwnein (SP) in entrambi i suoi usi nel Deuteros Plous si è dimostrato difficile. Queste perché la relazione utilizza l'ipotesi come premessa al 100a, ma solo supporta (o meno) a 101d. Così i termini della relazione includono l'ipotesi nel Fedone 100a ma non nel 101d dove i termini sono solo le "conseguenze" (hormethenta) dell'ipotesi.

Nel 100a l'applicazione di successo della SP sostiene direttamente (or 'implicazione') una deduzione logica dall'ipotesi. L'ipotesi sumphwnei una conclusione. Se la SP non si applica, significa che i suoi termini sono incoerenti, e

24 Ibid. p. 61. The Elenctic use of deduction exclusively to disprove theses (Robinson, 1953, p.7) develops into its "constructive" use (p.61). This is a major purpose of the introduction of the geometrical method of hypothesis "deduction … as opposed … to intuition". Ibid. P. 105, with its deductive ‘synthesis’ in the Meno and its development in the Phaedo.
25 Mourelatos, A, The Route of Parmenides, 1970, p.177-8. Socrates' non-divine, wandering, teleological (ou eneka 67bc, mirrors the ouneken esti noema of B8.34 which applies to both quests) sailing in the Phaedo is drawn by something akin to Recollected ideas. Key repetitions of this sailing theme are at 85d and of course 99d, but see also 64c1;d1;64a1;65d7. Kahn, 1996, p.314 associates the “raft” (d2) with the doctrine of Forms, taken after failing “to discover how things really are” – perhaps like ignoring Odysseus' divine signs.
26 Burnyeat, 2000, p15-17. Kahn (1996, p.70) argues that the Phaedo involves a synthesis between the Parmenidean metaphysics shown in the Symposium (Diotima's seeing the Transcendent Form of Beauty) with Meno's Pythagorean concept of immortality.
27 Ibid. p.50
28 MM McCabe 1994, p.45, & p.60f, 78
l'altro termine (non-ipotesi) è considerato falso. Ma se nel 101d la SP applica tra le conseguenze dell'ipotesi, ciò supporta l'ipotesi.

Una disarmonia tra le conseguenze non riesce a fornire tale supporto. Quindi se volessimo rendere univoche le due SP, ci troveremmo di fronte ad un complicato enigma logico, la cui soluzione sfugge virtualmente a tutti i commentatori, senza cambiare i termini come indicato dal testo di Platone.

In linea di massima ritengo che gli studiosi facciano molti sforzi per interpretare (ma senza riuscirvi completamente!) una delle SP in maniera fedele al testo ed in qualche modo trascurino l'altra. Sayre e Benson sono di aiuto con il 100a, li vedendo il metodo di analisi geometrica, come Menn ha dimostrato conclusivamente veniva applicato nell'argomento virtù di Menone. Ma con 101d devono perdere il legame e concludono che il testo è intrinsecamente “vago”.

Ritengo che Bailey sia uno dei migliori con il 101d, sebbene non vede (assieme con Gentzler, a seguito delle negazioni esplicite di Robinson e Bluck) la rilevanza della analisi geometrica. Inoltre egli sembra ritenere che la rilettura di 100d di Gentzler e Hackforth tratti dei contrari e non dei contradditori di cui essa in realtà si occupa. Questo ostacola il suo uso, altrimenti utile, dell'analogia musicale.

Voglio raccogliere i frutti dei rispettivi buoni punti, sintetizzandoli con l'aiuto di una chiave quasi-metafisica. Quest'è la relazione esplicativa tra particolari oggetti dei sensi e forme semplici.

Ma mia soluzione all’enigma SP consiste in questo: ognuna di codeste due relazioni di Forme particolari si armonizzerà nel percipiente alla stessa maniera di due note di un tetracordo Greco in audiente (ciò secondo la concezione di Platone dell'udito umano nel Timeo). Ogni relazione falsa si disarmonizzerà con una relazione vera, alla stessa maniera di una disarmonia musicale. Questa è la concezione quasi-metafisica che il Fedone aggiunge alla analisi geometrica del Menone.

Concludo affermando che il Deuteros Plous è l'applicazione del metodo di analisi geometrica al mondo armonico di Platone. In tale contesto, i testi SP, preso alla lettera, possono essere interpretati in modo coerente.
Von der Höhle in den Himmel:
Der Philosoph im Jenseitsmythos des *Phaidon* oder Sokrates im Glück

Maennlein-Robert, Irmgard


Wenden wir uns also zuerst (1.) der Sphäre der als Paradies geschilderten ‚wahren‘ Erde zu (109e2-8; 110b5-111c3): Kurz bevor Sokrates den Mythos erzählt, spricht er davon, dass die Seele, die ‚rein und maßvoll gelebt hat, und Götter als Führer erhalten hat, dann den ihr jeweils zukommenden Ort bewohnt‘ (108c2-5). Im Mythos nun wird er konkreter: Über dem tief unten in der Erde liegenden Tartaros und den unterirdischen Flusslandschaften liegen höhere, auf bzw. über der Kugelerde zu lokalisierende Bereiche (‚die eigentliche Erde liegt rein im reinen Himmelsraum, in dem die Sterne sind, die meisten, die sich damit beschäftigen, Aither nennen‘ (109b6-c2); ‚wer von oben auf die Erde blickt, wird erkennen: jener ist der wahre Himmel und das wahre Licht und die gleichsam wahre Erde‘ (109e6-8).1 Wahrheit und Reinheit charakterisieren diese Sphäre. Dann beschreibt Sokrates detaillierter die ‚wahre Erde‘ aus der Vogelperspektive. Ihre prächtige Farbenvielfalt, Schönheit der Natur, Glätte und Luzidität der Gesteine und Edelmetalle erweist sich als ein ‚Schauspiel für selige Beschauer‘ (111a3f.: θέαμα εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν),4

1* Die Literaturverweise sind auf das für den Vortrag Nötigste beschränkt.


3 Vgl. Phd. 110b2: τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς υπὸ τῶι ὁμορφῶν ὄντα.


Wer lebt nun in dieser Sphäre auf der „wahren Erde“? Es sind verstorbene Menschen (111a4f.), die beim Gericht für ihr gutes Leben belohnt wurden, die „fromm“ (ὁσιοι) waren (vgl. 114b6-c2). Diese Menschen haben dort eine Art Körper, leben lange, aber sie bleiben nicht auf ewig dort. An dieser Stelle deutet Sokrates an, dass dagegen diejenigen, die sich durch Philosophie „hinreichend gereinigt“ haben, gänzlich ohne Körper für die Folgezeit leben und zu „noch schöneren Wohnungen“ gelangen (114c2-6) - weitere Details spart er aus: Diese Wohnungen wären nicht leicht beschreibbar und jetzt reiche die Zeit nicht.

Wo wir uns nun diesen Ort für die Philosophen vorzustellen haben, wird allein im Phaidon angedeutet: Im Gorgias gelangen die besonders guten Seelen zu den Inseln der Seligen,8 bleiben also im Raum des etablierten Mythos, wie sie etwa Homer, Hesiod oder Pindar beschrieben hatten. In der Politeia gelangen die guten Menschen in den „Himmel“, der nur als oberhalb des δαιμόνιος τόπος kenntlich wird; die Guten kommen „rein“ aus diesem Himmel zurück.9 Wenn Sokrates also allein hier im Phaidon auf die neue Sphäre für die Philosophen verweist, muss diese, so meine ich, in diesem Dialog von besonderer Bedeutung sein (s.u.).10 Bereits an weiteren Stellen im früheren Gespräch mit Kebes kommt Sokrates auf eben diesen jenseitigen Bereich der Philosophen zu sprechen. Er beschreibt diesen als βέλτιστος τόπος, der den εὐδαιμονέστατοι vorbehalten bleibe. Damit macht er klar, dass es auch unter den Glücklichen graduelle Unterschiede gebe (82a11ff.). Das nimmt vorweg, was Sokrates beim 3. Unsterblichkeitsbeweis sagt: Wie der Aufstieg der Seele in jenseitige Bereiche graduell erfolgt,11 so gibt es eine graduell-hierarchische Stufung der Räume auch im Bereich auf der wahren Erde und darüber hinaus. Es kommt also dort zu einer Ausdifferenzierung unter den Glücklichen, von denen

Od. 5, 73ff. (Höhle der Kalypso) den literarischen Bezugspunkt für Sokrates.


7 Als Befreiung aus einem Gefängnis wird hier nicht die Befreiung vom Körper genannt, sondern die Entfernung von den Topoi des früheren (unterirdischen) Lebens: Phd. 114b6-c2.


10 So Ebert (2004).

11 Phd. 77b-84b.
die Philosophen weiter/höher, in 'noch schöner' Wohnstätten gelangen.12 Das sind offenbar exklusive Räume, denn Sokrates macht klar, dass allein 'derjenige, der sich philosophisch betätigt hat und vollständig rein geworden ist, auch zu den Göttern (εἰς ... θεῶν γένος) gelangt (82b10-c1; 69c6f.: ο ὁ δὲ κακαθαρμένος τε καὶ τετελεσμένος ... μετὰ θεῶν οἰκήσεως).

Wo müssen wir uns im Phaidon nun den jenseitigen Raum für die Philosophen vorstellen? Der erkennbaren immanenten Erzähllogik und –strukturierung zufolge, nach der die Räume im Jenseits horizontal nach ihrer Wertigkeit angeordnet sind, ist der Bereich für die gänzlich Gereinigten noch höher als der des Glücks auf der 'wahren Erde' zu lokalisieren13 und damit im Bereich des Athers, also im Himmel (sind identisch, 109b7-c2) zu denken.14 Ich möchte das kurz begründen: Die glücklichen Menschen auf der 'wahren Erde' kommunizieren zwar mit Göttern, die als nah gedacht sind und können sie wahrnehmen (vgl. 111b8f.: οἰσθέους). Aber wenn man genau hinsieht, verkehren sie mit diesen Göttern vor allem mittels bekannter ritueller Praktiken über Medien. Ich vermute, dass die hier gemeinten Götter denen der traditionellen griechischen Religion und Lebenswelt entsprechen dürften.15 Denn wenn diese Götter sinnlich wahrnehmbar sind, müssen sie gestalthaft (anthropomorph) gedacht sein. Auch das ist ein weiterer Hinweis darauf, dass hier noch nicht die höchste Stufe erreicht ist, dass die Götter auf dieser Ebene noch nicht das höchste Göttliche darstellen.16 Darüber hinaus sind in dieser Sphäre Sonne, Mond und Sterne offenbar wichtige Bezugspunkte für die Glückslichen auf der 'wahren Erde': Die Gestirne können ja von dort aus unbehindert und so wie sie wirklich sind – gesehen werden. Nicht zuletzt aus dieser Gestirnbetrachtung resultiert eine offenbar noch größere Glückseligkeit (111c2f.: καὶ τὴν ἄλλην εὐδαιμονίαν τούτων ἀκόλουθον εἶναι).17 Es sind also räumlich wie hinsichtlich des Glücks auf der 'wahren Erde' noch höhere Grade erkennbar. Diejenigen freilich, die in ihrer 'Annäherung an das Göttliche' noch weiter gekommen sind, die Philosophen, unterscheiden sich von den anderen Glücklichen dadurch, dass ihnen die Trennung vom Körper, also die Katharsis, zu Lebzeiten in höherem Maße gelungen ist. Hier ist das Konzept vom Körper als Gefängnis verschmolzen mit dem vom Körper als Verunreinigung der Seele.18 Katharsis erweist sich somit als Schlüssel zum Verständnis: Bereits im Gespräch mit Kebs zuvor hatte Sokrates sein religiöses19 basiertes Konzept von Philosophia als Reinigung beschrieben: Die

12 Dass es sich dabei wirklich direkt um die Analoga zum letzten transzendentalen Prinzip als erklärem 'Fluchtpunkt' des Philosophen handelt, so Krummen (2007) 118-120, würde ich bezweifeln. Mit Blick auf die Hierarchie der Götter im Timaios wären auch die οἰκήσεις der Philosophen aus dem Phaidon noch nicht im Bereich der Ideen oder gar des letzten Prinzips.
13 Lisi (2001) 441 meint, dass dieser Bereich "mit größter Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht auf der oberen Erde liegt", bietet aber keine andere Erklärung an.
16 So mit White (1989) 249.
Katharsis der Philosophen, also derer, die bereits zu Lebzeiten erfolgreich mittels der Tugenden (v.a. Phronesis, 69c1-3) die μελέτη θανάτου betrieben haben (81a2; vgl. 64a6; 67e5-7), besteht Sokrates zufolge aus der vollständigen Trennung von Seele und Körper (67d5: λύσις καὶ χωρισμός; 64c4ff.: ἀπαλλαγή). Der Philosoph darf im Jenseits völlig körperfrei in seliger Ruhe und Glück für die nach dem Tod folgende Zeit’ leben (114c4; 81a4-10). Katharsis erweist sich Sokrates zufolge als rein ethischer und intellektueller Prozess, wenn man so will, als lebenslange, mühsame, seelische Ritualpraxis des Philosophen, die sich absetzt von der in Initiations- oder Reinigungsritualen propagierten Katharsis resp. diese intellektualisiert. Dazu kommt im Phaidon allerdings noch der räumliche Aspekt: Nach der Erzähllogik des Mythos dürfen wir nämlich annehmen, dass die Seele eines Philosophen, wie Sokrates ihn als ideal schildert, da vom Körper erleichtert, noch weiter oben im Äther zu denken ist. Das wäre also, in gewisser Analogie zu den alten mythischen Helden, die auf die Inseln der Seligen oder ins Elysium entrückt werden, die ‚philosophische‘, moderne Variante der Entrückung des neuen Helden – des Philosophen – in den Himmel, oder um es platonisch zu sagen: in die Gefilde des νοητόν.

Für diese Vorstellungen vom Kosmos als Jenseits und der Seele am Himmel lassen sich verschiedene Erklärungsbündel zusammenschnüren, die, wie bereits Walter Burkert beobachtet hat, allesamt letztlich auf der damals neuen (astronomischen) Einsicht in die Kugelgestalt der Erde beruhen. Somit waren weder ein traditioneller Hades noch die ‚Inseln der Seligen‘ am Rand der Erde länger zu verorten. Die wohl ältesten Belege dafür dafür sich in der attischen Tragödie


24 Vgl. auch Phd. 58b5 zur traditionellen Vorstellung, dass die Stadt während der Schiffsgesandtschaft nach Delos ‚rein‘ bleiben müssen, d.h. keine Todesurteile vollstreckt werden dürfen.


26 Vgl. Phd. 110b2.


29 Burkert, W., Weisheit und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon, Nürnberg

Im Folgenden (2.) geht es darum, warum nur und gerade im Phaidon das jenseitige Schicksal der Seelen von Philosophen anklingt. Die Ausgangshypothese ist die, dass der Phaidon-Mythos mit Blick auf den ganzen Dialog eine neue Perspektive eröffnet: Es geht konkret um den Tod des Philosophen Sokrates, das unmittelbar nach dem Jenseitsmythos vom Erzähler des Dialogs, Phaidon, minutiös...

40 Phd. 108c2-4; 110b5-111c3; 114b6-c6; vgl. 63c4-7.
in Analogie zum anonymen Hauptakteur im Höhlengleichnis der *Politeia*, auch hier um den platonischen Sokrates selbst, der zu dieser 'Schau' oder Einsicht gelangt ist. Wie der Protophilosoph im Höhlengleichnis nach seiner Schau der wahren Welt außerhalb der Höhle wieder in diese hinabsteigt, um die Menschen dort über ihre grundlegenden Irrtümer aufzuklären, so berichtet der platonische Sokrates auch im *Phaidon* von einer solchen 'Schau' im Jenseits, hier freilich fokussiert auf das Schicksal der unsterblichen Seele. Die im *Phaidon* nun beschriebene 'Schau' der Erde und des Jenseits ermöglicht, so Sokrates explizit, eine 'große Hoffnung' (114c9; vgl. 63c4-7). Das Wagnis sei 'schön' und daher sei die (gleichsam therapeutische) Autosuggestion durch solche Mythen auch für ihn wichtig (ἐπανύπνῳ, 114d6-8).


Im letzten und dritten Schritt (3.) möchte ich anhand weiterer Passagen aus dem *Phaidon* zeigen, dass Sokrates hier tatsächlich als 'Kandidat' für den 'noch schöneren Bereich' der Glückseligkeit über der 'wahren' Erde gelten muss. Das bestätigt der Erzähler und Augenzeuge, Phaidon, bereits im Rahmengespräch mit Echekrates: Denn er beschreibt Sokrates dort (58e3f.) bereits an seinem letzten

49 Z.B. *Phd* 64a-68d;
50 So ist etwa die Schilderung einer 'viel schöneren' und 'farbigeren & bunteren' Vision charakteristisch für (schamanische) Himmelsreisen, so Burkert (1962) 334 und 336 (mit Anm. 52, dort: Verweis auf *Phaidon* 109bff.).
52 Das von Burkert (1962) 113 über Pythagoras' göttliches Wissen (auch über das Jenseits) formulierte Satz „der Prophet muss auf sein eigenes Beispiel verweisen” ließe sich problemlos auf den Sokrates im *Phaidon* übertragen.

**Abstract**

In this paper I will focus on the symbolism of eschatological spaces and spheres and their relevance to Socrates in the final myth of Plato's *Phaedo*. This myth is told by Socrates towards the end of the dialogue. It deals with the fate of the immortal human soul after death, the soul's journeys and places in the netherworld. Here Plato creates a singular blend of traditional believes in Hades and divers contemporary religious and scientific concepts wich he puts into the mouth of his literary figure Socrates. Central is the journey of the 'pure' and 'pious' souls in the netherworld, which Socrates describes in detail. These very souls seem to be extremely important for him, as he comes back to them again and again, sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly about the special places for the good people's and the philosopher's souls. What we can identify is a close correspondence between areas and the souls located there in terms of atmosphere, way of life and happiness.

The 'true earth' (1.) is described as realm of happiness (eudaimonia), but it becomes apparent that souls of philosophers will live on in superior located areas in

54 Vgl. erneut *Ti.* 42b3-5.
56 Siehe die verba Socr. *Phd.* 114c8; bereits 63c1-5 und 64a1.
the aither resp. in heaven. The destiny of the immortal soul, which has undergone a purification (katharsis) through philosophy during lifetime (with body), is closely connected to recent conceptions of hades and cosmos developed in Plato's time.

Next (2.) we have to ask, why this very design of the netherworld is told exactly in the Phaedo. It's relevance to Socrates and also the fact that psychology is visualized as cosmology in the myth are important. Here Socrates's role as a visionary or ecstatic person is striking. This is based on the change of perspective described by Socrates, it is the view from above on the earth, which makes possible the fundamental new insight that above our caves the 'true earth' in the aither is located. This perspective resembles clearly an ecstatic vision. In Plato's text we find actually some references to Socrates as the visionary, who underlines a connection between him and the myth used as instrument of hope.

Finally (3.) I would like to show that the soon dying Socrates has to be considered not only as an ideal candidate for the realm of happiness on the 'true earth', but moreover as a candidate even for the 'much more beautiful' dwellings of the philosophers. This is confirmed by the narrator of the dialogue and eye witness Phaedo already when he starts his talk with Echecrates in the beginning: Since Socrates is described by him as a 'happy' person (58e3: εὐδαίμων), who has reached the highest aim of philosophical pursuit. The singular position of philosophers is due to the author Plato: Hence he stages 'performatively' his philosophical hero as a reliable person in terms of his hopes for the afterlife.
In questo mia breve comunicazione mi occuperò dell’ultimo argomento del Fedone in relazione alla contrarietà diretta e indiretta tra pragma e idea e tra idea e idea (101b1-105b3). Attraverso il riferimento al passo del Timeo (56-57) cercherò di mostrare 1) come si possa scorgere una relazione analogica (o “omologa” nel senso descritto da Greimas e Courtès) tra piano dei pragmata e piano delle idee retta da una logica semantica, 2) che pragmata ed eide osservano i medesimi tipi di relazione e che tali relazioni dipendono da “compatibilità” e “incompatibilità” semantiche, ovvero da “congiunzione” e “disgiunzione” e in ultimo 3) suggerirò che con questo passo Platone inaugura una semiotica del mondo naturale.

L’ultimo argomento del Fedone presenta un’interessante quanto problematica discussione sui contrari, considerati sia al livello eidetic sia al livello fisico. Già da questa considerazione possiamo notare una, almeno apparente, incongruenza, poiché Socrate fa rientrare dalla finestra ciò che aveva cacciato dalla porta, ovvero la discussione sugli enti fisici. Il problema, tuttavia, si sposta nella considerazione degli enti fisici, perché è il concetto stesso di “ente fisico” a subire una riconfigurazione, in quanto l’ente fisico cessa di essere “cosa” e, attraverso l’introduzione degli eide come “cause”, diviene un “nucleo semantico”. Dal passo preso in considerazione, l’ente fisico si trova ad essere una fenomenizzazione di un’idea: l’idea infatti “occupa” (katekhein)1 la “cosa” e le conferisce sia il nome sia le qualità fisiche. Un ente ha quindi determinate qualità (dal punto di vista fisico) e determinate qualificazioni (dal punto di vista del pensiero e del linguaggio) in quanto parteceipie di una o più idee: anzi, le qualità fisiche possono essere davvero comprese soltanto alla luce della partecipazione dell’ente a una o più idee. Ciò si apprende dalla discussione sulla grandezza: Simmia è grande non perché è Simmia ma in quanto parteceipie dell’idea di grande.

La discussione sui contrari parte dal principio per il quale un contrario in sé non può tollerare di accogliere il proprio contrario rimanendo identico a se stesso. In 102e-103a, Socrate enuncia il principio logico (e ontologico) da cui prende le mosse il mio breve intervento:

E nessun altro dei contrari, finché è ciò che era, consente di diventare né di essere contemporaneamente il suo contrario, ma nel subire una cosa simile o si allontana o perisce (102e8-103a2; tr. Casertano)

οὐδ’ ἄλλο οὐδὲν τῶν ἐναντίων, ἐτι δν ὅπερ ἦν, ἃμα τούναντίον γίγνεσθαί τε και ἐἶναι, ἀλλ’ ἦτοι ἀπέρχεται ἢ ἀπόλλυται ἐν τούτῳ τῷ παθήματι

Un anonimo interlocutore ricorda allora l’argomento dei contrari (cfr. 70ss.) obiettando che prima si era detto il esatto contrario, ovvero che da contrari si generano contrari. A questo punto Socrate ribatte mettendo in luce la differenza con l’argomento precedente, in quanto nel discorso di prima si trattava di pragmata: da un pragma nasce il pragma contrario. L’argomento di cui si discute nell’ultimo 1 Cfr. Phaed. 104d1, d6; 105d3.
argomento, come specifica Socrate, verte invece sui contrari in sé e non sulle cose contrarie.

Ciò che desta un po' di sospetto quanto alla legittimità del ragionamento è che in questo passo, una volta enunciato questo principio, Socrate, come primo esempio, adduce dei principi fisici – il caldo e il freddo – che però sono subito messi in relazione a due pragmata, il fuoco e la neve, che vengono analizzati in base ai due principi contrari ai quali partecipano. Fuoco e neve, quindi, in quanto pragmata che hanno sempre in sé principi contrari non possono essere l’uno accanto all’altro, altrimenti o periscono o cambiano luogo.

Molti studiosi hanno notato la vicinanza di questo passo con quello di Timeo 56-57, in cui i mutamenti degli elementi sono descritti e spiegati attraverso la terminologia guerresca; ma la vicinanza non consiste soltanto nell’uso della stessa metafora. Effettivamente la prossimità concettuale tra i passi di questi due dialoghi è notevole. Questo passo del Timeo tratta del mutamento di un elemento in un altro, precisamente di un elemento avvolto e mutato dal fuoco. È importante sottolineare i principi alla base di questo mutamento, perché sono estremamente prossimi a quelli sottesi alla relazione tra fuoco e neve:

quando uno degli elementi, avvolto nel fuoco, è tagliato da esso grazie all’acutezza dei suoi angoli e dei suoi lati, cessa di essere tagliato solo nel momento in cui assume la natura del fuoco, perché ogni elemento simile e identico a se stesso non può né produrre alcun mutamento né subirlo da ciò che gli è simile (Tim. 56e8-57a5; tr. Fronterotta)

La differenza, espressa dallo oukh homoios, determina anche lo spostamento di particelle da un luogo a un altro. È il caso, subito dopo chiarito, delle particelle piccole che si trovano tra particelle più grandi:

se si dirigono verso di esse [le particelle più grandi, scil., interpretazione di Fronterotta], e uno degli altri elementi combattete insieme a loro, non cessano di sciogliersi, finché, o rigettate indietro o disciolte completamente, non fuggano via verso l’elemento che è loro congenere, oppure, vinte e, da molte che erano, divenute un’unica cosa simile all’elemento dominante, non rimangano in esso (Tim. 57b4-7; tr. Fronterotta)

Il principio che presiede a questi mutamenti di luogo, così come ai mutamenti qualitativi, è il principio della somiglianza-dissomiglianza. Il lessico utilizzato è chiaro a riguardo: tra elementi – o enti – homoia e syngene non vi può essere combattimento né mutamento; quando invece si produce una differenza tra un elemento e gli altri elementi che lo circondano allora si produce una battaglia, una opposizione che prevede o l’assimilazione dell’elemento più debole a quello più forte o il cambiamento di luogo verso l’elemento congenere. Come viene esplicitato poco dopo, i due principi che presiedono alla permanenza in un determinato stato e al
mutamento sono la homalotes e la anomalotes:

Così, appunto, dovremmo porre sempre la quiete nell’uniformità e il mutamento nel passaggio a un’assenza di uniformità (Tim. 57e6-58a1; tr. Fronterotta lievemente modificata per il termine kinesis)

οὕτω δὴ στάσιν μὲν ἐν ὁμαλότητι, κίνησιν δὲ εἰς ἀνωμαλότητα ἀεὶ τιθῶμεν.

Da questi passi del Timeo strettamente legati al passo del Fedone preso in considerazione, tre sono gli aspetti da sottolineare. Un primo aspetto riguarda i principi e le dinamiche sottese ai cambi di stato della materia: la somiglianza e l’uniformità non dànno luogo a mutamenti, mentre la differenza e la non-uniformità generano mutamenti, che, nella metafora guerresca, sono battaglie in cui l’elemento più forte vince. Ciò significa che elementi differenti operano, di fatto, come elementi contrari che generano opposizione. Il secondo aspetto riguarda la

2 In relazione al passo del Fedone al centro della mia analisi, è importante sottolineare l’uso del verbo apergazesthai in relazione alle idee: il pari e il dispari operano (apergazesthai/ergazesthai) in maniera da rendere una cosa, rispettivamente, pari e dispari. Del resto, che l’idea operi è perfettamente in linea anche con il passo del Sofista (247d-e) in cui lo Straniero afferma che «tutto ciò che per sua natura possiede una capacità di produrre (poiein) un qualunque effetto o di subirlo, anche di entità irrilevante da parte della cosa più insignificante e pure soltanto un’unica volta, tutto ciò è realmente (πἀρ’ ὅπου ὄντως ἐλθεῖ): pongo in effetti che la definizione che definisce le cose che sono sia che non sono niente altro che “capacità” (dynamis)» (247d8-64; tr. F. Fronterotta). L’idea del dispari rende dispari la cosa che occupa, così come l’idea del tre rende tre la cosa che occupa: come sottolinea Giovanni Casertano, la terminologia utilizzata qui da Platone per descrivere la relazione cosa-idea è metaforica e allusiva perché è estremamente problematico concepire questa relazione in maniera puramente logica (cfr. Platone, fedone, o dell’anima. Dramma etico in tre atti, traduzione, commento e note a cura di Giovanni Casertano, Paolo LoFFredo Iniziative editoriali, Napoli 2015; p. 211). Da questo punto di vista possiamo immaginare la relazione tra cosa e idea come un processo di informazione/comunicazione nella cui forma base vi è un polo attivo (appunto una dynamis attiva) che è l’idea e un polo passivo (una dynamis passiva, per riprendere le parole del Sofista).

3 L’opposizione fisica di due elementi si traduce in opposizione semantica nel momento stesso in cui gli enti fisici sono portati a un livello superiore di considerazione attraverso l’introduzione degli eide, ovvero dal momento in cui la “cosa” è tale in quanto partecipa a un eidos (per la natura significativa della cosa cfr. infra). Quanto occorre mettere in evidenza ai nostri fini è che, da un punto di vista semantico e come Greimas ritiene, contrasti non binari sottendono una struttura binaria. J. Lyons, Semantics 1, Cambridge University Press, 1977 (cap. 9) discute delle opposizioni e dei contrasti ponendo l’accento sulla “gradabilità” (è il caso, ad es., di simile e dissimile, grande e piccolo, caldo e freddo etc.) e “non-gradabilità” (ad es. positivo e negativo, pari e dispari etc.) di un attributo. A. J. Greimas, sémantique structurale, Larousse, Paris, 1966, invero, considera la congiunzione e la disgiunzione la struttura elementare della significazione (pp. 18ss.): la relazione tra due termini-oggetto individua un asse semantico (o categoria semica), ovvero un medesimo piano cui due opposti/contrari appartengono. È il caso, ad es., dell’asse semantico di bianco e nero, grande e piccolo etc.: «Ciò che è importante è l’esistenza di un punto di vista unico, di una dimensione all’interno della quale si manifesta l’opposizione, che si presenta sotto la forma di due poli estremi di un medesimo asse. […] Proponiamo di chiamare asse semantico questo denominatore comune dei due termini, questo fondo sul quale si
stretta prossimità di questa concezione del Timeo con il trattato pseudo-ippocratico
del Regime (1 6), in cui i mutamenti delle particelle vengono descritti in termini di
guerra (machetai). Un terzo aspetto, importante per l’economia del Fedone, è che in
questa dinamica degli enti fisici viene ripresa proprio l’indagine peri physeos che era
stata abbandonata, dramaticamente e metodologicamente.

Ritornando al Fedone, in effetti, se volessimo attribuire un riferimento per l’esempio di caldo-freddo e fuoco-neve, non potremmo non guardare proprio al
Regime. In questo testo, infatti, i due principi esplicativi della realtà fisica sono fuoco
e acqua, che hanno come proprietà caratteristiche le classiche coppie caldo-freddo
e secco-umido. Il discorso, in altre parole, ritorna sull’indagine peri physeos da cui
la seconda navigazione aveva allontanato la ricerca, e per di più invalido quanto era
stato argomentato a proposito dei pragmata contrari: dalla neve non si genererà mai
il fuoco né dal fuoco la neve. Il problema di questo passo, e la seconda incongruenza,
a mio avviso, risiedono proprio nel’esempio addotto, perché invece di trattare del
caldo e del freddo in sé, Platone tratta del fuoco e della neve che sono “cose” e che
pertanto dovrebbero generarsi l’una dall’altra. Alla luce di queste considerazioni
Socrate enuncia il seguente principio:

non solo l’idea stessa merita il suo nome per sempre, ma c’è anche qualcosa di
diverso da quella, che però possiede sempre la forma di quella, finché esiste (Phaed.
103e2-5; tr. Casertano)

Ci troviamo di fronte a un’altra perplessità, perché viene chiamata in causa
la questione del nome. Ma a complicare maggiormente questa “dimostrazione”
interviene l’esempio successivo, quello della disparità e del tre. A rigor di logica, se
l’esempio è analogo al precedente, il tre dovrebbe essere una “cosa” che partecipa
della disparità e che pertanto, pur non essendo contrario al pari non può essere in
contatto con esso, perché altrimenti o perirebbe o cambierebbe luogo. Il discorso
a mio avviso viaggia, se possibile, su di un terreno ancora più scivoloso, perché
occorre chiedersi che cosa è il tre? Una cosa o un’idea? Lasciando da parte la
discussione sul termine trias, ci si potrebbe chiedere anche se il fuoco e la neve non
possano essere anch’esse delle idee e se queste due idee abbiano gli stessi rapporti
delle cose fuoco e neve in relazione al caldo e al freddo. Non penso che possa essere
tracciata qui una linea di demarcazione netta tra cose e idee, perché 1) il fuoco sviluppa l’articolazione della significazione. Si vede che l’asse semantico ha per fun-
zione quella di sussumere, di totalizzare le articolazioni che gli sono inerenti» (Gre-
imas 1966, p. 21). L’impostazione di Greimas permette di riconsiderare il concetto
di “gradabilità”. Mentre Jakobson considera l’articolazione semica come “s vs non s”
per indicare opposizione binaria, Brøndal la considera come “positivo vs negativo”. Quest’ultima strutturazione può accettare un terzo termine tra i due poli estremi
il quale, se non è né positivo né negativo, si designa come termine neutro, se è sia
positivo sia negativo si designa come termine complesso. Greimas nota in proposito
che in realtà «solo l’articolazione è complessa nell’assiomatica di Brøndal; il numero
di sèmi implicati in questa resta costante. La struttura brøndaliana è tanto binaria
quanto quella di Jakobson» (Greimas 1966, pp. 23-24). In altri termini, pur consi-
derando nell’asse semantico un termine medio tra i due estremi, non viene meno
la struttura binaria dell’asse. Questa struttura elementare calza bene per i passi del
Fedone e del Timeo qui considerati.
e la neve sono anche idee e le cose “fuoco” e “neve” si devono comportare come le rispettive idee, essendo queste paradigmatiche rispetto alla realtà sensibile, 2) i pragmata hanno la propria determinazione non in quanto pragmata determinati ma in quanto partecipano a determinate idee, 3) il tre è un’idea, 4) e perché, se le idee servono a uscire dall’impasse in cui Anassagora aveva gettato Socrate, i pragmata devono essere analizzati alla luce di una metodologia che introduce gli eide, ovvero essere considerati non in quanto “cose”, ma in quanto epifenomeni di una realtà/metodologia che è al di là del piano fisico.

L’argomentazione impone una riflessione non tanto sulla partecipazione degli enti fisici alle idee quanto una riflessione sul carattere analogico dei piani fisico ed eidetico e sulle relazioni alla base degli elementi in ciascuno di questi piani. Il discorso platonico verte sui pragmata che “sono occupati” da un contrario in sé (idea). Tali pragmata non potranno mai accettare l’”avvicinarsi” (metafora spaziale che intenderei con “comunicare con”) di un’idea contraria a quella che recano in sé in maniera coessenziale: all’approssimarsi del freddo, il fuoco o perirà o cambierà luogo. Il discorso platonico, però, non esplicita la relazione fondante, ovvero quella dell’idea del fuoco con l’idea del caldo e del freddo. Possiamo dire che all’approssimarsi dell’idea del freddo l’idea del fuoco o perisce o cambia luogo? La risposta mi sembrerebbe positiva perché ritengo implicito questo passaggio nell’esempio del fuoco e della neve ed esplicito per il caso del tre. Infatti, bENCHÉ l’argomentazione all’inizio debba considerare il tre come pragma, poco oltre entra in scena l’idea del tre (ἡ τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα, Phaed. 104d5-6) e si comprende che l’essere tre di una cosa dipende dalla “occupazione” di un pragma da parte dell’idea del tre:

Tu sai infatti che le cose occupate dall’idea del tre non solo necessariamente sono tre, ma anche dispari (Phaed. 104d5-7; tr. Casertano)

4 Intendo qui per «analogia» quanto descritto da A.J. Greimas-J. Courtés, Semiotica. Dizionario ragionato della teoria del linguaggio, tr. it. Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2007 (ed. or. 1979): si parla «di analogia a proposito delle relazioni che un sistema o un processo semiotico sono suscettibili d’intrattenere con il loro referente esterno, ovvero con il mondo naturale […]. 4. L’analogia serve anche da punto di partenza per spiegare la costituzione e lo svolgimento delle isotopie metaforiche che sembrano suscettibili di essere omologate tra di loro» (s.v. “Analoga”, p. 7). Importante ai nostri fini è il concetto di omologazione (attività analogica) e di omologia (termine che rimpiazza il più vago “analogia”). Importante è la definizione che questi due autori dànno della omologazione, poiché è un senso più preciso al quale mi voglio riferire: «1. L’omologazione è una operazione di analisi semantica, applicabile a tutti gli ambiti semiotici, che fa parte della procedura generale di strutturazione. Va considerata come una formulazione rigorosa del ragionamento per analogia. Data la struttura «A:B :: A’:B’» A e A’ sono detti omologhi in rapporto a B e B’. Dal punto di vista semantico, unomologia può essere affermata solo a tre condizioni: a) i termini rappresentati dalle lettere maiuscole devono essere dei sememi scomponibili in semi; b) i termini A e A’ da un lato e B e B’ dall’altro comportano necessariamente almeno un sema comune; c) la relazione fra A e B da un lato e A’ e B’ dall’altro è identica e può essere riconosciuta come una delle relazioni logiche elementari (contraddizione, contrarietà, complementarità). […]. 3. In quanto disciplina imposta al ragionamento analogico, e la cui importanza per la ricerca non va sottovalutata, l’omologazione è una procedura generale che travalica i limiti della semantica (in senso stretto): si usa, per esempio, per stabilire le regole di conversione tra livelli, per determinare correlazioni nella metodologia comparativa, per formulare le costrizioni semiotiche (sintattiche o semantiche) ecc.» (ivi, s.v. “Omologazione”, pp. 227-228).
οἴσθα γὰρ δὴπου ὁτι ἃ ἄν τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα κατάσχει, ἀνάγκη αὐτοῖς οὐ μόνον
τρισὶν εἶναι ἀλλὰ καὶ περιττοῖς.

Un *pragma* è quindi insieme tre, numero e dispari in quanto occupato
dall’idea del tre. Questa “occupazione”, tuttavia, non è neutra quanto alle relazioni
che si stabiliscono tra la cosa tre e le idee contrarie a quelle del tre e della disparità.

non solo i contrari manifestamente non accolgono gli uni gli altri, ma anche
quelle cose che, pur non essendo contrarie tra di loro, hanno sempre in sé i contrari.
Sembra che neppure queste possano accogliere l’idea contraria a quella che è presente
in esse, ma, avvicinandosi questa, o periscono o cedono il posto. Non diremo che il
tre perirà o subirà qualsiasi altra cosa, prima di tollerare, restando tre, di diventare
pari? (*Phaed.* 104b7-c3; tr. Casertano)

ὅτι φαίνεται οὐ μόνον ἐκεῖνα τὰ ἐναντία ἄλληλα οὐ δεχόμενα, ἄλλα καὶ ὅσα
οὐκ ὄντ’ ἀλλήλοις ἐναντία ἔχει ἢ ἔναντι, οὐδὲ ταύτα ἐικος δεχομένοις ἐκείνην
τὴν ἰδέαν ἢ ἢ τῇ ἐν αὐτοῖς ὁριγή ἐναντία δὲ, ἀλλ’ ἐπιούσης αὐτῆς ἤτοι ἀπολλύμενα
ἢ ἑπεκχωροῦντα. ἢ οὐ φήσομεν τὰ τρία καὶ ἀπολείσθαι πρότερον καὶ ἄλλο ὅτιον
πείσεσθαι, πρὶν ὑπομεῖναι ἐτὰ τρία ἄρτια γενέσθαι;

Da ciò si possono ricavare varie conseguenze. Innanzitutto il *pragma* non ha in
sé qualità fisiche né qualificazioni, esso le mutua dall’idea che lo occupa (*katekhein*).
L’idea che occupa un *pragma* porta con sé non soltanto essa stessa (il proprio nome
e la propria *dynamis*), ma tutte le implicazioni e le relazioni che essa intrattiene con
le altre idee (somiglianza, differenza, contrarietà, contraddizione etc.). Il *pragma*
quindi si troverà ad avere le stesse connotazioni essenziali dell’idea cui partecipa (un
nome e varie *dynamicis*). Inoltre, da quest’ultimo passo si può ricavare non soltanto,
come fa Monique Dixsaut6, che le relazioni tra *pragmata* sono omologhe – nel senso
di Greimas – a quelle tra idee, ma che qui, più che altro, si sta discutendo proprio
delle relazioni tra idee che non sono contrarie in sé ma che si ritrovano su di un
piano di contrarietà dovuta alle relazioni che intrattengono con altre idee. In altre
parole, se le cose sono determinate dalle idee che le occupano e le relazioni che esse
intrattengono con cose differenti dipendono dalle caratteristiche delle idee, allora
possiamo dedurre da questo passo che quando si discute di cose in realtà si sta
discutendo delle caratteristiche delle idee e delle loro relazioni reciproche.

A questo punto ci possiamo chiedere che tipo di relazioni vi sia alla base della
strutturazione delle idee, o almeno alla base di questo tipo di idee. Alla luce di questo
passo, penso che si possa individuare chiaramente un tipo di relazione basata sui
principi del simile e del dissimile, che riposa, dal punto di vista fisico e semantico,

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sui concetti di incompatibilità⁷ e contrasto⁸.

L’omologia tra il piano eidetico e il piano fisico che qui viene posta mi sembra essere pertinente e conclusiva rispetto al problema posto dalla seconda navigazione. La critica alla fisica di Anassagora sfiocava nella ricerca di cause che potessero rendere ragione dei fenomeni fisici, cause ritrovate nelle idee. Tuttavia, la riconsiderazione eidetica dei fenomeni fisici – come il fuoco e la neve – apre a un altro punto problematico, ovvero, nella prospettiva di questo passo, a una specularità tra piano fisico e piano eidetico. Tale “specularità”, però, a mio avviso, non indica una duplicazione, ma la posizione dei fenomeni fisici sul piano della semanticità, che rende ragione delle relazioni oppusive e analogiche chiamate in causa nel breve passo analizzato.

Sebbene non vi sia nel Fedone una discussione sulla koinonia ton genon, sono molti gli studiosi che ve la vedono in nuce o sottesa, e con la discussione sul fuoco e la neve e sul tre, piccolo passo nella più generale “dimostrazione” dell’immortalità dell’anima, Platone apre a una prospettiva, estremamente problematica, che tuttavia esplicita il senso della seconda navigazione e getta luce sulla natura degli enti fisici e delle idee.

L’ipotesi delle idee, così come è posta qui, da un lato apre a una semanticità sia delle idee sia degli enti fisici, dall’altro pone il problema della struttura e delle relazioni tra le idee.

Torniamo all’esempio di fuoco e neve. Il pragma-fuoco è tale perché occupato dall’idea del fuoco, lo stesso si dica per il pragma-neve. Le relazioni con il caldo e il freddo quindi si giocano sul piano eidetico. Posto ciò, però, la struttura base della relazione non è soltanto di compatibilità/incompatibilità, di complementarità⁹/ contrasto, ma di congiunzione/disgiunzione.

“Il fuoco non è freddo” non indica, a un primo livello d’indagine, opposizione o contraddizione, ma incompatibilità tra la cosa e il predicato. Questo è il senso della differenza tra “opposizione” e “contrast”, per cui l”“opposizione” è un caso

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⁷ Riprendo il concetto di “incompatibilità” da Lyons (cit.): «The relationship of sense which holds between lexemes in many-member sets such as (“Sunday”, “Monday”, …, “Saturday”) may be described as incompatibility. This notion is difficult to make as precise as the notion of opposition. […]. The important point is that incompatibility as a lexical relation, like opposition, is based on contrast within similarity» (p. 288).

⁸ Lyons (cit.) descrive così le differenze tra “contrast”, “opposizione” e “antonimia”: «Contrast will be taken as the most general term, carrying no implications as to the number of elements in the set of paradigmatically contrasting elements. Opposition will be restricted to dichotomous, or binary, contrast; and antonymy will be restricted still further, to gradable opposites, such as “big”: “small”, “high”: “low”, etc.» (p. 279).

⁹ Intendo qui “complementarità” nel senso di Greimas-Courtés (cit.): «La complementarità è una delle relazioni costitutive della categoria semantic che contraggono il subcontrario e il contrario appartenenti alla stessa deissi, positiva (S₁ + S̅ ₁) o negativa (S₂ + S̅ ₂), nel quadrato semiotico» (p. 43). Lyons (cit.) invece considera la “complementarità” come la relazione tra due termini per la quale la negazione dell’uno implica l’affermazione dell’altro.

Dalla scomposizione dell’idea del fuoco allora potremmo avere “caldo” e “secco” in opposizione ai sèmi della neve “freddo” e “umido”. Queste unità minime di contenuto si strutturano in relazione binaria per opposizione. È quanto fa qui, a mio avviso, Platone, per mostrare un tipo di relazione tra idee.

In questa prospettiva, le relazioni tra fuoco e neve possono essere rappresentate attraverso il quadrato semiotico elaborato da Greimas, per cui si avrebbe:

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
\text{Caldo (S1)} & \text{Freddo (S2)} \\
\text{Fuoco (S̅2̅)} & \text{Neve (S̅1̅)}
\end{array}
\]

Questo quadrato si adatta bene al passo del Fedone in questione, perché la relazione di contrarietà si ha nei due lati orizzontali (caldo-freddo e fuoco-neve), mentre la relazione di contraddittorietà viene indicata dalle diagonali (caldo-neve e freddo-fuoco): se c’è il caldo non c’è la neve e se c’è il freddo non c’è il fuoco, il che è proprio quanto dice Socrate.

Per approdare a questo risultato, utile ai fini della “dimostrazione” dell’immortalità dell’anima, Platone sceglie con cura gli esempi per mettere in evidenza e sfruttare le opposizioni esistenti. Utilizzando questo metodo, però, Platone divide la realtà naturale – e quindi eidetica – in due classi di elementi, in cui quelli dell’una si oppongono a quelli dell’altra. A reggere il discorso e l’argomentazione sono i due principi della somiglianza e della dissomiglianza, il primo indicante una koinonia (una “comunicazione” più che “comunanza”) il secondo una esclusione, ovvero, la congiunzione e la disgiunzione, che sono per Greimas la struttura elementare della significazione.

Se la particolarizzazione degli eide determina le cose e le loro reciproche relazioni, ciò, come ho tentato di proporre, significa che le cose, assumendo il nome e le caratteristiche dell’eidos cui ciascuna partecipa, sono rivelatrici delle relazioni tra idee. In altri termini le cose significano le idee, e possiamo osservare le relazioni tra enti fisici come relazioni tra idee. Il fuoco e la neve sono anch’essi eide, altrimenti

10 Cfr. J. Lyons, Semantics I, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 279. Lyons accenna soltanto, per lasciarne ad “altri” la discussione, alla tendenza da parte dell’uomo di categorizzare l’esperienza in termini di opposizione, ovvero di contrasti binari (cfr. ivi, p. 271), ma afferma che, in ogni caso, è un fatto che “the binary opposition is one of the most important principles governing the structure of languages, and the most evident manifestation of this principle, as far as the vocabulary is concerned, is antonymy” (ibid.). Una discussione a parte dovrebbe essere fatta per gli opposti che possono avere gradazioni intermedie tra di essi (ad esempio “tiepido” come intermedio – o “termine complesso” per Greimas – tra “caldo” e “freddo”) e quelli che non presentano questa possibilità (come per esempio “pari” e “dispari”). Il problema che ci riguarda da vicino è che in Platone, in alcuni luoghi, la negazione di un predicato conduce all’affermazione del contrario. Uno dei più celebri luoghi è quello del Protagora (330-331) in cui si dice che se la giustizia non è santa allora è empia.

11 Non mi addentro nella discussione sul sèma, perché varie accezioni sono state date a questo concetto. Quanto mette conto sottolineare qui è il fatto che il sèma è una unità minima di contenuto di natura relazionale che si struttura sempre attraverso una relazione binaria definita come categoria semica.
la cosa fuoco e la cosa neve non avrebbero né il nome né le proprie caratteristiche (o dynameis). In questa prospettiva, dire che le cose significano le idee è dire che le cose sono segni delle idee e rimandano necessariamente a esse.

A questo punto possiamo spingerci oltre, perché il carattere di segno che la cosa acquisisce apre alla possibilità di una semiotica del mondo naturale. Svolgo queste considerazioni in relazione alla semiotica del mondo naturale così come è stata abbozzata da Greimas (Du sens, 1970, pp. 49 ss.). In questo quadro, gli enti fisici perdono il loro statuto di referenti del discorso in quanto già inseriti nel piano del linguaggio: la partecipazione di una cosa a un’idea si manifesta, infatti, primariamente nell’acquisizione del nome dell’idea da parte della cosa.12

La possibilità di considerare le cose come segni che rinviano ad altro mi sembra giustificata in questo passo dal carattere fondante dell’idea rispetto alla cosa. La cosa non è né può essere in sé, ma è sempre in relazione all’idea cui partecipa. Il referente del mondo naturale, in questa prospettiva e limitatamente a questo passo, è il mondo eidetico e attraverso l’ipotesi degli eide si invertono referente e contenuto: le cose sono espressione degli eide.

A questo punto, e per trarre una breve conclusione, possiamo sviluppare le suggestioni di questo passo. L’ipotesi degli eide posta in questi termini indica la possibilità di portare alla luce la struttura binaria delle relazioni tra idee che sono organizzate per opposizioni. Non solo: l’omologia – nel senso greimasiano – tra eidos ed ente fisico porta a una considerazione semantica di entrambi, nel senso che entrambi sono posti all’interno di una struttura relazionale e da essa traggono il proprio significato. Ma ancora: porre questa omologia contempla anche la possibilità di vedere, attraverso gli enti fisici, le relazioni tra eide, ovvero la possibilità di porre una fisica degli eide allo stesso modo in cui si può porre una semantica del mondo naturale. La struttura e l’articolazione degli elementi fisici nel passo del Timeo, infatti, sono analoghe a quelle degli enti e delle idee nel passo del Fedone considerato. Se le cose hanno le proprie determinazioni in base alle idee alle quali partecipano, i processi fisici ai quali le cose danno luogo saranno omologhi ai processi ai quali danno luogo le idee (è il verbo apergazesthai usato per descrivere l’azione dell’idea). In conclusione, ci possiamo chiedere: cosa accadrà all’idea del tre all’avvicinarsi dell’idea del dispari? Certamente, non potendo perire, si allontanerà e “cambierà luogo”, proprio come gli elementi differenti del Timeo.

Abstract

In this paper I argue that in the Phaedo (101b1-105b3) 1) there is an homologous (according to Greimas-Courtés’ definition of “homology”) relationship between the pragmata and the ideas which is based on a semantic logic, 2) pragmata and ideas observe the same kind of relationship which depends on “compatibility” and “incompatibility” (“conjunction” and “disjunction” for Greimas), and, 3) in this excerpt, Plato inaugurates a semiotics of the natural world.

In the last argument of the Phaedo there is a discussion about the direct and indirect opposition by which Socrates states that an opposite cannot become its own opposite. When an opposite approaches a thing carrying the respective opposite, this thing will either withdraw or will cease to exist. This excerpt is close to Timaeus

12 Cfr. Greimas, Du sens, Éditions du Seuil, 1970: «Il suffit pour cela de considérer le monde extra-linguistique non plus comme un référént absolu, mais comme le lieu de la manifestation du sensible, susceptible de devenir la manifestation du sens humain, c’est-à-dire de la signification pour l’homme ; de traiter en somme ce référént comme un ensemble de systèmes sémiotiques plus ou moins implicites» (p. 52).
56-57 in which the same warlike metaphor is employed to explain the change of matter. This metaphor shows that what is different becomes opposite. This is the case of fire and snow in the *Phaedo*: when the heat approaches the snow, the latter either escapes or dies.

Starting from these considerations, Plato analyses the relationship of opposition. Indeed, it seems that the relationship between two things (or two ideas) can be of either similarity or dissimilarity. This allows us to look at Plato’s analysis by means of Greimas’ structural semantics which considers the basic structure of relationship (and of signification) in terms of *conjunction* and *disjunction*. The semiotic square fits well with the example of fire and snow, showing that the basic relationship between elements (things or ideas) is of polarity and analogy. This fact splits reality into two different and opposed fields according to the chosen *catégorie sémique*.

According to these premises, a thing is a complex of properties which are opposed to the properties of another thing: this fact gives birth to an opposition of second level. This is due to the fact that a thing receives its own properties from the idea which occupies (*katekhein*) the thing and this means that physical processes reveal eidetic relations. Furthermore, the *pragmata* can be considered as epiphenomena of the ideas, i.e. as signs of the ideas since they show the structural relations among them. By following this assumption, Plato inaugurates a “semiotics of the natural world” and a “physics of the ideas”.
The exchange of pleasures and pains in the *Phaedo*

Marques, Marcelo

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the image of the ‘exchange’ that should be guided by ‘reflective thinking’ (*phronesis*) in the constitution of excellence (*arete*) in the *Phaedo* (69A-D) in dialogue with some of Antiphon’s passages (DK87 B44; 49-54, 57-62). By establishing this confrontation, I hope to throw some light on the differences between the ‘exchange’ proposed by Socrates and the so called ‘commerce’ of affections and values practiced by most citizens. Let us start by pointing to two passages that synthesize the problems I would like to elaborate on:

“Socrates - My good Simmias, I fear this is not the right exchange to attain excellence, to exchange pleasures for pleasures, pains for pains and fears for fears, the greater for the lesser, like coins, but that the only right coin for which all these things should be exchanged is reflection” (*Phaedo* 69A6-10) (transl. Weiss modified).\(^1\)

“But it is difficult to have acquired such a possession, seeming to have acquired pleasures, but attracting pains (…) In fact, in the same place where the pleasant resides, somewhere close by there is also the painful, for pleasures do not trade in pleasures by themselves, but pains and toils accompany them (Stobaeus 4. 22b. 66; DK87B49) (transl. Gagarin modified).\(^2\)

The questions brought to discussion in the *Phaedo*, even if construed differently from different sources by Plato, allow us to elaborate on how Socrates and Antiphon hold different views on 1. the nature of what is exchanged, 2. what values are being sought, 3. the ‘currency’ proposed. The differences between the exchanges can only be established by analyzing their constitutive elements, that is, their objects, their ends and means. Nevertheless, establishing differences will also allow us to perceive converging conceptions between the two thinkers.

On one hand, Antiphon’s is a kind of exchange that 1. tends to render all differences equivalent, 2. operates with what has been called an instrumental conception of excellence and 3. understands *phronesis* as the calculation of gains and losses. What matters is what these objects will allow one to reach, their differences being taken as extrinsic, in the sense that they are just instruments, opportunities for something that is external to them. Excellence is not aimed at itself, but used as a means to an end, and intelligence is operational, in the sense that it has to be efficient, not excellent in itself. On the other hand, Socrates 1. recognizes differences by postulating intelligible parameters, 2. poses excellence as the ordering of the soul and 3. understands *phronesis* as ‘reflective thinking’, with higher epistemic claims, for it aims at establishing what a value actually is in itself (the just, the good, the beautiful - 65D4-8). Ultimately, my point is that the confrontation between these two thinkers

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1 Ό μακάρε Σίμμια, μὴ γὰρ οὐχ αὕτη ἡ ὀρθὴ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀλλαγή, ἢδονὰς πρὸς ἢδονὰς καὶ λύπας πρὸς λύπας καὶ φόβον πρὸς φόβον καταλλάττεσθαι, καὶ μείζω πρὸς ἐλάττω ἄστερ νομίσματα, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἐκεῖνο μόνον τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθόν, ἀντι οὐ δεὶ πάντα ταῦτα ταῦτα καταλλάττεσθαι φρόνησις.

2 χαλεπόν δὲ καὶ ἐκτίθεσθαι κτήμα τοιοῦτον, δοκοῦντα ἢδονὰς κτάσθαι λύπας ἀγέσθαι (…) ἔνθα τὸ ἢδοῖ, ἦνεστι πλησίον που καὶ τὸ λυπηρόν, αἱ γὰρ ἢδοναί οὐκ ἐπὶ ὁφῶν αὐτῶν ἐμπορεύονται, ἀλλ’ ἀκολουθοῦσιν αὐταῖς λύπαι καὶ πόνοι.
characters (because characters they are) helps to clarify some relevant differences between a philosophical way of living/dying and values that prevail among Athenian citizens, of which Antiphon gives an intelligent account.

I build Antiphon’s positions basically from a selection from On Truth, with passages that allow me to understand what he says about pleasure and pain, in the process of leading a reasonable life in the city as a successful citizen. There is a significant amount of text that allows us to establish such an implicit dialogue with Socrates in the Phaedo. My starting point is that pleasure and pain are fundamental affections or experiences to which are attributed values, both by Antiphon and by Socrates, in such a way as to shape different ways of living in the city. These attitudes are ultimately defined by the role given to reflection (phronesis), understood as the progressive awareness of differences at different levels and to which each one attributes different roles.

Considering the Phaedo as a whole, it seems to me that it has been established that we are not talking about literally searching for death, the extremist interpretation having already been discarded. In this sense, the passage in Laws IX on the condemnation of suicide by the Athenian Stranger is unequivocal: life is what there is of most familiar and most lovable (ton panton oikeiotaton kai philotaton) to human beings; depriving ourselves of the part we received from destiny, outside very specific circumstances that would force us to do it (city law, a great unavoidable pain, chance) is an attitude marked by shame, indolence and cowardice. Besides, the argumentative context is precise: no object of desire can be fully attained, without limits, by human beings; hence the idea of ‘liberation’ or ‘death’ understood as a metaphor for a full encounter with what is searched, that is, as a radical and pure exercise of ‘reflective thinking’.

Considering death a bad thing and being afraid of dying are the opinion and the affection shared by most human beings; it is in this confrontation that different strategies arise, such as the idea of exchanging or making commerce between pleasures and fears.

How are we to interpret the relation between “this unusual mixture (aethes krasis) (59A6) of affections” we experiment before death? The mixture to which Phaedo makes reference, at the very beginning of his report? What does it mean to say that it can be experienced philosophically?

2. Antiphon’s exchanges

Antiphon’s On Truth fragments are permeated by several oppositions, the analysis of which should allow us to better understand what he means by excellence and phronesis: between different kinds of pleasure, false pain and no pain, elaborated through proper understanding (gnomes) (DKB53; A6; B58); between physis and nomos (DKB44); between saving money and using it properly (DKB54); between what is just and what is not (DKB44c; 44d; 51) and between individual and collective instances of deliberation (ethical and political values) (DKB44E; B88). We can even find the daring proposal that convention determines the very experience of sense perception (DKB1; 2; 44a) and the calculation of the costs and benefits of living alone as opposed to married life (DKB49).

5 Laws IX 873C2-D8.
6 On fr.44, Decleva-Caizzi, 1982; on moral calculation in Antiphon’s speeches, Silva,
In fragment 44a (extracted from the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus), the central point is the opposition between natural and conventional determinations (nature as opposed to custom or law). Justice is conceived in conventional terms, as not going against the behavior prescribed by the law of the city; the discussion that follows revolves around the value of ‘utility’, whether it is conveniently (συμφερόντος) taken into account or not. This is connected to the theme of the visibility of actions: if one goes against the behavior prescribed by the law, in a covered way (λαθεὶ), one avoids shame and punishment (καὶ αἰσχύνης καὶ σεμίας απελλακταί); but if it is not covered, one does not (με λαθόν δοῦ).

One thing our passage of the Phaedo may be understood as implying (just so we do not lose our perspective) is that the usefulness (utility or convenience) of acting this or that way is determined merely by its inclusion in a ‘give-take’ logic that will establish ‘value’, according to a quantitative calculus that is extrinsic to what the objects, affections and actions at stake effectively are (or what they mean).

Antiphon states in this context that many just things, that are just by convention, are at war with nature (πολέμιος τεί φυσεί); and he goes further: the very things that men see (or not), or that they should see (or not) are disposed by convention to the eyes (νενομοθετεῖαι γὰρ επί τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἡ δεῖ αὐτούς ἅραν καὶ ἦ αὖ ὁ δεῖ); and still, the things that are to be heard, said and done are equally determined by convention; finally, the things that one should desire (or not) are also disposed by convention to their thought (καὶ εἰπτοι νοοῦι ἂν τε δεί αὐτον εἴπθυμεν καὶ ἢν ἂν).

Now, that is a fascinating thesis. The depth of this radical perspective shows how Antiphon actually goes beyond the mere conventional exchange of gains and losses to sustain his position. I propose Antiphon does both things: he conceptually transposes what most men think and, at the same time, advances on his own in an original attempt to explain the diversity of norms and forms he has to deal with, as a citizen who is particularly involved in teaching others how to become good citizens.

This brings our two characters closer together, in the sense that when Antiphon refers to the limitations to which are submitted visible (perceptible) things, as opposed to nature’s non visible determinations, one could point to an actual analogy between the oppositions he and Socrates elaborate. Socrates goes further, by attributing new meaning to what he calls “non visible nature”, in the sense of the invisible intelligibility of beings thought in and by themselves (99D-100A). But an important difference remains: the fact that justice belongs also to the invisible (intelligible) nature, as opposed to the conventional character Antiphon attributes to justice understood as tangible legal prescriptions.

According to Antiphon, living and dying themselves belong to the order of nature; living is one among other convenient things (τὸν συμφερὸντον), although dying is not. Things that cause suffering (τὰ αλγυνόντα) are not useful (οὐκοῦν ὀνίνεσιν) to nature more than pleasant ones (τὰ εὐπραινόντα); painful things then could not be more convenient than pleasant ones (οὐκοῦν ἀν οὔτε συμφερόντ’ εἴε ταλυποῦντα μαλλὸν ἐὰν τὰ ἥδοντα). In this context, it is said that someone could find many other cases of war against nature and, among them, the fact of suffering more, once it is possible to suffer less; having less pleasure, once it is possible to have more pleasure (ἐὶν τ’ ἐν αὐτοῖς αλγυνοθεῖ τε μαλλόν, ἔξων ἥττο, καὶ εἰλατό ἥδεσθαι, ἔξων πλεῖο).

The topics listed are explicitly the ones dealt with in the Phaedo and so is the very idea of ‘exchanging’: the extrinsic opposition between life and death, suffering
against having pleasure, having less pleasure when you can have more of it. In this passage of the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus, the dimension of quantitative calculus becomes patent in the exchanges, permanently operated among citizens in general. What is at stake is the detailed, intelligent evaluation as to what one should or should not do, in order to impose or avoid punishment.  

On one hand, Antiphon proposes that the proper exam (sképsis) of things should reveal how much sensible perception itself is determined by what is conventional, even to the point of including desires themselves; this necessarily leads to the discussion of how useful or convenient experiences of pain and or pleasure may be. On the other hand, affections are thought to be the result of natural determinations; this turns the calculation of pleasures and pains into a serious task of intelligent discernment between unavoidable nature and variable convention.

In a sequence of fragments numbered 44e (which include Philostratus, Xenophon and Jamblichus), called On consensus, what is discussed is what moves citizens towards common agreement (homonoia). Is it established in the polis as something in the direction of which they move according to their own decisions. Is it something they do in order to enjoy themselves (hina tois autois hedontai)? Are they merely persuaded by others in assemblies according to variable circumstances? Or, still, are they actually persuaded by laws, so long as they have in mind the strength or happiness of the city as a whole? Because it covers a significant number of aspects of such an intricate process, Antiphon’s analysis is rather perspicacious and complete. Let us put it in clearer terms: is common opinion in the city built as a result of an actually reflective decision-making process, or are people just seeking for collective enjoyment? Are these unconscious citizens merely easy prey of clever persuasion strategies or do they consciously accept the law as something good for all?

Even without wider explicit reference to Antiphon on the part of Plato, it becomes patent how much these passages (fragments) are consistent with the conception of excellence that is discussed and criticized by Socrates in the Phaedo. Political consensus is a collective arrangement that covers a multi level exchange (or a true commerce) of objects, values and beliefs, concerning both the imposition of restrictions and the expectation of benefits. And more, this wide negotiation includes intelligent calculation and deliberation, decision making, clever strategic persuasion, sharp consciousness of the cooperative efficacy of norms in the process of establishing a common good and so on. From these texts we can certainly say that Antiphon was not only deliberately and actively part of the so called ‘exchange’, but also that he was sharply aware of it.

Fragment 49 deals with the fact of a man wanting marriage and wife (kai gamon kai gynaikos epithymesato). Such conventional fact of an individual’s life is also reflected upon by being included in the greater context of a ‘game’, competition

7 In order to evaluate the extent of Antiphon’s reflections on Athenian legal practices and norms, see Tetralogies; Gagarin, 2002; Silva, 2005; 8 In other fragments, one can find brief references concerning the vocabulary that pertains to questions related to pleasure: DK87B17 - Aphrodite, instead of “aphrodisiac pleasures” or that which is proper to aphrodisiacs; DK87B20 - reference to the term “alternances” (epallaxeis), as opposed to “exchanges” (aynallagas) or “mixtures”. 9 See Cassin, 1993. 10 See Seaford, 2004, on how decisive the institution of money was for the “early Greek mind”, even though “the shared trust” that actually constituted the monetary system was always dependent on a specific transaction or a particular social group.
(agon) or ‘exchange’. The text points to the possibility of the woman not being adequate (epitedeia) and to the difficulty that marriage may imply, once one may turn friends into enemies (tous philous ekthrous poiesai), each member of the couple valuing and being valued differently. The basic topic is the desire for love and coupling, understood from the start as a situation of competition, that is, that will inevitably lead to evaluation and calculation. On one hand, the values at issue here are, first of all, pragmatic, including compatibility, quantity and utility, and leading to inevitable difficulties. On the other hand, these are also conditions for friendship and respectability, leading to eventual advantages and pleasures. Anyway, the axiological dimension of the discussion is unquestionable, and another version of the “exchange of pleasures and pains” is formulated:

It is also hard if one gets such a possession, seeming to get pleasures, but attracting pain. Let us, then, not speak of things that lead to hatred, but let us speak of things that, among all, are the most compatible with life. What is more pleasant to a man than a wife after his own heart? What is sweeter for a young man? But in the very pleasure lies near at hand the pain, for pleasures do not come alone, but are attended by griefs and troubles. Winning in olympic, pythian and other games like these as well as all pleasures are (only) apt to be achieved by great pains. Honors, prizes and delights, which the god gives to men, depend necessarily on great toils and exertions, and having in view needs. For my part, if another body came to be, which was as needy of care as I already am, I could not live, so great is the trouble I give myself for the sake of health, the acquisition of a livelihood, and for reputation, moderation, a good image and a good name. What then, if another body came to be for me which was as needy of care? (…). DK87B49. Stobaeus, 4. 22b.66 (Freeman transl. modified).11

Such is the exchange of marriage; that which seemed pleasant reveals itself as being its exact opposite, even in the case of a wife, so pleasing and sweet as she may be; hence the conclusion arrived at in an almost empirical manner: pleasure and its opposite lie in the same place, being very close opposites, to which a time perspective is added, an opposite giving way to another (just like in Socrates’ myth in 60B–C). It is a curious reflection indeed, which starts from a simply empirical or physical description of married life: the fact of another body coming to be by my side, another body equally needy and fragile, demanding permanent care, implying in endless difficulties. In a general perspective, among other countered values are health, everyday life management, reputation, thought, good image and good name; the same objects, practices and values that are listed in the Phaedo (64D) are here inserted in a kind of calculation that does not seem to differentiate between them, not more than at a conventional level.

11 χαλεπὸν δὲ καὶ ἐκτῆσθαι κτῆμα τοιοῦτον, δοκοῦντα ἡδονὰς κτάσθαι λύπας ἄγεσθαι. φέρε δή, μή τὰ παλιγκοτα λέγωμεν, λεγέσθω τὰ πάντων ἐπιτηδείστατα. τί γὰρ ἦδιον ἀνθρώπων γυναικός καταθῆκαι; τί δὲ γυνίτερον ἄλλως τε καὶ νέως; ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ δὲ γε τούτῳ, ἐνθά τοῦ ἡδονίτην ἐνθά τοῦ λύπησιν τινῶν καὶ τοῦ πόνου τινῶν καὶ τοῦ σοφίστην τινὸς. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὀλυμπιονικαὶ καὶ πιθιονικαὶ καὶ οἱ τοιοῦτοί ἁγιαὶ καὶ σοφικαὶ καὶ πάσα ἡ ἡδονὰς ἐκ μεγάλων λυπημάτων ἑθέλουσιν παραγινεσθαι τιμαὶ γάρ, ἄθλα, δελεάτα, ἄθος ἕδωκεν ἀνθρώποις, μεγάλων πόνων καὶ ἱδρώτων εἰς ἀνάγκας καθιστᾶσιν. ἐγὼ γάρ, εἰ μοι γένοιτο σῶμα ἐτέρων τοιοῦτον ἐπιμελὲς ὅν οἶλον ἐγώ ἐμαυτῷ, οὐκ ἂν ἐνυόνησθον ἢ γαρ, ὅστε ἐμαυτῷ πολλὰ πράγματα παρέχειν ὑπὲρ τε τῆς ἰσχίας τοῦ σώματος ὑπὲρ τοῦ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν βίον ἢ τῆς ἁρμαγείας τοῦ σώματος ὑπέρ τε τοῦ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν βίον ἢ ἐξ ὧν ἠλλογήσθη ὑπὲρ τε δόξης καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ εὐκλείας τοῦ εὖ ἀκουενδὲ τί οὖν, εἰ μοι γένοιτο σῶμα ἐτέρων τοιοῦτον, ὅ γε μοι οὕτως ἐπιμελεῖς εἶ. 
What is at stake in all of 63E-69E is how to deal with death, having recognized our attachment to bodily values; Socrates is neither talking about ‘the body’ in general nor about one singular extra body with which he has suddenly to deal with; he is talking about how much the *philosomatos* individual is attached to values posed and supposedly chosen in the way of living he leads, as opposed to the *philosophos* individual who frees (*apalyo*) himself from the community he has with bodily things, and how he becomes different (*diapherontos*) from other men (65A).

Curiously relevant, though ambiguous, is what Antiphon has to say about human life, in general:

Life is like a day-long watch (*phroura*), and the length of life is like one day, as it were, on which, having seen the light, we pass on the post to others who come after us. DK87B50. Stobaeus, 4.34.63 (Freeman modified). 12

The whole of life is amazingly open to complaint, my friend, it has nothing remarkable, great or noble, but all is small, feeble, brief-lasting, and mingled with great pains. DK87B51. Stobaeus, 4.34.56 (Freeman modified). 13

On one hand ‘life’ is taken as a kind of *phroura* in the positive sense of a watch post, that implies the action of taking care of something and constituting an experience that is passed on to others that come after us, each turn constituting an ephemeral stay. On the other hand, in the next passage, life is not only brief but also meaningless. It is amazing in that we can accuse it of not offering anything great or solemn, the summing up of opposite values seeming to come down to a negative result. The mixing of good and bad, of pleasures and pains is another way of rephrasing the so called ‘exchange’ even without actual emphasis on a temporal dimension.

It becomes clear how some of Antiphon’s reflections converge with Socrates’ in several aspects, positive or negative. The hegemonic calculation of efficacy, or the instrumental use of *phronein*, in the sense that goods must be desired for the consequences they make possible, such as pleasures, honor, avoiding pains and even justice (understood as not violating the rules (*nomima*) of the city). 14 It becomes equally clear how important is how he points to an invariable dimension beyond what is conventionally taken to be good and that is nature (*physis*), and how he recognizes the decisive role of thinking well (*kalos phronein*) as a guiding value when acting in the city.

3. Socrates’ criticisms

Let’s concentrate now on Socrate’s criticisms. Let me go back to our central passage of the *Phaedo*, having been provocatively motivated by Antiphon’s reflections on the three aspects that constitute the metaphor of the exchange: the objects exchanged (and by that I mean affections and values in so far as they are marked by significant differences), the concepts of excellence that may result from

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12 τὸ ζῆν ἔοικε φρουρά ἐφημέρῳ τὸ τε μήκος τοῦ βίου ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ, ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, ἢ ἀναβλέποντες πρὸς τὸ φῶς παρεγγυῶμεν τοῖς ἐπιγιγνομένοις ἑτέροις.
13 εὐκατηγόρητος πᾶς ὁ βίος θαυμαστώς, ὡς μακάριε, καὶ οὐδὲν ἔχων περιττὸν οὐδὲ μέγα καὶ σεμνόν, ἀλλὰ πάντα σμικρὰ καὶ ἀσθενὴ καὶ ὀλιοχρόνια καὶ ἀναμεμειγμένα λύπαις μεγάλαις.
14 See Barney, 2011, on Trasymachus and Antiphon. Barney’s proposal is that we read Callicles, Thrasy machus and Glaucon as Plato’s analysis of Antiphon broken down to three positions.
these and the notion of *phronesis* that permeates them. My point is that the metaphor, at one level, may be misleading, if taken as ignoring significant differences between the things exchanged; but, at another level, it may lead the way to posing a true common reference (coin, *nomisma*), through which objects, affections and values can be measured for what they really are; not replacing them or reducing them to a supposed same substante, but giving things such new meanings, offering such a new way of understanding them, that thinking and acting acquire a new dimension.

“Socrates - (…) when all these (affections) are bought and sold for reflection and with reflection then there is really courage and moderation and justice and, in a word, true excellence (with reflection), whether pleasures and fears and all such things are present or absent; but when these (affections) are separated from reflection and exchanged for one another, such an excellence is only a shadow painting and really slavish, having nothing of health or truth, whereas, the true one (excellence) is really a purification from all these things - moderation, justice, courage - and reflection itself is a kind of purification” (69B1-C3).15

Calculations are not right when they cannot evaluate differences properly. Some exchanges are determined by the fact that they represent things from an external and apparent point of view. They cannot evaluate properly different kinds of affections such as fears or pains, mistaking quality for quantity; nor can they see the factors that determine different pleasures and make them comparatively better or worse, bigger or smaller in terms of authenticity and relevance for a truly good life.

How can it be that citizens practice injustice so widely? They pretend they are just by using *skiagraphia*, that is, by projecting in the political scene persuasive, multidimensional images of themselves acting as if they were what they are not, thus making others believe the use of these devices are advantageous to them. Putting on a show, as we say it, an appearance or “an occasion for a false pretension of virtue”; it is a game that counts on the spectator being at a certain position, so that the intended visual effect is produced. The exchanges called virtue can pass as what they are not, by counting on a set of shared beliefs, that establish some “point of view” in relation to courage or moderation (not, of course, on a spatial point of reception of the visual effects produced).16

According to Socrates, considering death as an evil and being afraid of dying are opinions and affections shared by most humans. But there are different strategies to cope with them and the ‘exchange’ of smaller pleasures for bigger ones, or of bigger pains for smaller ones is not the best way of doing it. Socrates criticizes these exchanges by pointing to their contradictory nature, insofar as they affirm and deny the same thing, such as being brave due to fear, being moderate through license and

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15 καὶ τούτου μὲν πάντα καὶ μετὰ τούτου ἐνοῦμενά τε καὶ πιπρασκόμενα τῷ ὄντι ἡ καὶ ἀνδρεία καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη καὶ συλλήβδην ἀλήθης ἀρετή, μετὰ φρονήσεως, καὶ προσγιγνομένων καὶ ἀπογιγνομένων καὶ ἡδονῶν καὶ φόβων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων τῶν τοιούτων χωριζόμενα δὲ φρονήσεως καὶ ἀλλαττόμενα ἀντὶ ἀλλήλων μὴ σκιαγραφία τις ἢ τῷ τοιαύτῃ ἀρετή· καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἀνδραποδίας τε καὶ οὐδὲν ἡγείται ὡς ῥηθείς ἢ ἀλήθες ἢ ἡκέπε, τὸ δ’ ἀλήθες τῷ ὄντι ἡ καθάρσις τις τῶν τοιούτων πάντων καὶ ἡ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀνδρεία, καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ φρόνησις μὴ καθαρμός τις ἢ. On the interpolation at 69B, against Burnet (1911), see Weiss, 1987; Dixsaut, 1991.

16 See Koch, 2012, p.2-4; and also *Republic* I 330D-331B, Cephalus on justice; *Republic* II 358A, 365C, Glaucon on injustice. On the radical criticism of the tyrant’s *public mise en scène* in *Republic* IX, see Marques, 2011.
controlling while being controlled (68D-69A).17

Having gone over differences and excellences, I turn now to phronesis and start by two of Antiphon’s fragments that deal with ‘money’. The opposition between big and small or the exchanges between smaller and greater are formulated in the context of working, earning and spending.

In fragment 53, those who ‘work and suffer’ save the results, “have pleasure just like anyone would imagine it possible to have pleasure” (hedontai hoia de tis an eikaseien hedesthai); but when they have to spend what they earned, use it, they suffer as if their richness were being torn off their own flesh (DK87B53. Stobaeus, 3.10.39).

Such basic practices refer to the very system of exchanges we are interested in, in which pleasure and pain alternate dramatically. The corporeal character of the axiological investment is strongly emphasized by the cruel bodily metaphor of having your flesh torn apart.

In the same sense, we have fragment 54, which is a narrative (logos): a man who had a lot of money stowed away refuses to loan it to somebody else and ends up having it stolen by a third one. When he goes back to the man, regretting his earlier refusal, he gets from him a piece of advice that makes explicit the dimension of the bad calculation operated by him: on one hand, not using the good does not imply in any actual gain, nor in any loss, for that matter; but real gain lies in knowing how to use it. Good use has to be regulated by some kind of thinking, an intelligence that weighs gains and losses, that evaluates effective perspectives of advantages and disadvantages:

For when the god does not at all wish to give a man goods, even conceding a wealth of goods, (he) makes him poor in good thinking (kalos phronein), for by taking away one he will be deprived of both (DK87B54. Stobaeus, 3.16.30).18

This narrative provides us with a good opportunity to connect directly back to our Phaedo passage. What it is saying is that kalos phronein is what makes the difference; good thinking is the actual good, for it is what enables a man to use all other goods well, to the point that, by not being able to think well, a man cannot make good use of anything else. That is, true value is good phronein.19 The mere possession of goods does not constitute real value, but knowing how to use them does. Good thinking is as important a means as the fact of owning the material good itself. In fact, for Antiphon, there is a bilateral equivalence, according to which having one means nothing without the other. The posing of phronein as a divine good establishes the value of reflective thinking in such a way as to unify the two

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17 The meaning of ‘moderation’ is taken first from the prevailing use of the term (that which the many call moderation - not being mastered by appetites, passions or pleasures) but it is then analyzed critically. True moderation is taken to mean a non violent excitement of certain appetites and a decreasing of their importance, which allows for limited conduct. Seen in this new perspective, being brave or moderate can no longer be attributed to those who sustain primarily values associated with body functions and needs, but rather with those who tend towards research and reflective thinking.

18 ὅτῳ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς μὴ παντελῶς βούλεται ἀγαθὰ διδὸναι ἀνδρί, χρημάτων πλούτον παρασχῶν, τοῦ καλῶς φρονεῖν δὲ πένητα ποίησας, τὸ ἔτερον ἀφελόμενος ἀμφοτέρων ἀπεστέρησεν.

19 The passage may also be considered to be making a reference to Aesop (Fables 412.412b H). For a moment, it seems that Antiphon’s Aesop goes beyond Socrates’ Aesop, according to whom the god ties up the two heads, at least on this aspect, good thinking.
orders of goods, even if risking to level them down.

Back to the Phaedo: what is at stake is what a man should occupy himself with; only by phronesis can he establish effective differences and then value them accordingly. The mistake among most citizens seems to lie in the way thinking is conceived and practiced; mere quantitative calculation being mistaken for the true intelligent evaluation of qualitative differences.

Socrates points to our capacity of reflective thinking by using pure thought in itself (autei kath’ auten eilikrinei tei dianoiai) (65E7-66A6). Phronesis makes us capable of aiming at the truth of what things are, capable of discerning between what effectively is and is not, whatever each thing is; it constitutes excellence in that it becomes the key to making fair and good decisions.

Socrates refuses the notion that true excellence may be simply taught through habit or assured by the force of law and fear of punishment, that is, he refuses a dogmatic and mechanical understanding of it. If arete is phronesis, it is a capacity of intelligent reflective measuring (metretike tekhne), as opposed to the mere maximization of the “so called” pleasures.20

On one hand, I do not think there is actual replacement of one thing for the other; that is not how phronesis works. On the other, reflective thinking does not simply “accompany” our actions; actually it constitutes them; it is the actual exercise of the best dimension of our souls, and it will be pleasant as a surplus, not as a decisive motivation; the calculative dimension does not have to be suppressed,21 but it cannot be predominant; that is all.

Passage 84A-B helps us elaborate on how a life of phronesis works. It effectively takes thinking as food for the soul, making efforts and yet reaching a moderate calm; following reasoning and demanding argument, pondering over and observing what is believed to be true and divine, in such a way as to turn this into a way of living; so that, when death comes, it will not mean that much of a difference.

Is phronesis the aim of the exchange? Is it its means? Or is it the very process of reflective thinking, that includes means and ends but cannot be reduced to either of them? It is by decreasing the difference between means and ends, by going beyond the logics of efficacy, without suppressing it, by realizing how relative instrumental reasoning is, that the opposition between the process (katharsis) and the result (katharmos) of phronesis loses much of its importance. In my view, phronesis synthesizes several dimensions: it is means, end, value and way of living; so that one is truly excellent for the sake of it, so that one is brave not in order to preserve one’s honor, temperate not to maximize one’s pleasure, nor just only to adapt to the prevalent norm. That is how phronesis is proposed as the genuine value against which everything can and should be measured (exchanged).

Socrates rejects the incorrect exchange (allage ouk orthe) but he maintains the metaphor, proposing one only right currency (monon to nomisma orthon), phronesis.22 The question debated among all interpreters (since Burnet’s version in 1911) has been how legitimate it is to maintain the same metaphor used to criticize the exchanges operated by regular men, in order to propose a new way of acting based on true, authentic values.

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20 On the consistency between the Protagoras and the Phaedo, see Bossi, 2008, p.159.
21 Koch, 2012, p.8 reminds how recurrent the exchange metaphor is, and even that it tends to become a model, consistently with the choice of the second kind of goods, at the beginning of Republic II (357D-358A).
22 The complexity of the practice allows for multiple levels in the use of the metaphor (religious, political, material, non material, positive and negative aspects etc.). See Reden, 1995.
We cannot deny that it is a difficult metaphor. Choosing a *nomisma* means adopting a value that automatically implies in the decrease or loss of value of the ones that have not been chosen. By making the exchange ‘for’ *phronesis*, one gets true excellence accompanied ‘by’ *phronesis* (*meta phronesis*). The exchange is not between *aretai*, but between things to which one attributes more or less value, the process/result of exchange constituting aspects of the constitution of it.

Knowing means getting to know true differences, that guide good separation (*katharsis*); true thinking means being able to think differences, at different levels, mainly by making it possible to discern true *aretai* from the shadow dramas played on the public scene. The use of reflective thinking implies in discerning false coins (any pleasure at all) from true values (true limited pleasures). It is always some set of differences that guide decision making, and in order to make that operational, thinking is decisive, not just a lateral aspect. But thinking does not, of course, stripe them of affections, on the contrary, it allows them to guide affections better, to live them more honorably, with more dignity because of the truth rendered possible in their very experience.

From Socrates’ perspective in the *Phaedo*: without reflection, excellence is reduced to a kind of exchange that operates with ‘goods’ in a way that does not recognize (true) differences, so that ‘goods’ are searched for their consequences, not for the value they carry in themselves.23 This lack of discernment turns radically unequal things into equivalent ones (*sans plus*). What could apparently be a good and free way of acting reveals itself as servile and inauthentic; the unreflecting use of criteria to guide the exchange shows how it is that relevant opposites get confused - health and disease, for instance, purity and impurity. Socrates’ point being that reflective thinking must take into account a dimension that purifies (meaning ‘that perceives differences’) so that it can lead to ‘things that really are’ and to a kind of exchange that is not a ‘give-take’ deal, but a way of acting that is based on a deeper (more serious, committed) understanding of what is at stake.

To become philosophers means to become aware of, analyze and evaluate our affections and practices through reflective thinking (*phronesis*); this implies in re-evaluating trivial weights and measures, minor values and practices through the exercise of major measures such as rational analysis, intelligent discernment and wisdom. What Socrates refuses is common practice, mechanical and dogmatic views of things, dogmatic because extrinsic to the very nature of beings and elements at stake; this kind of calculation is refused because it involves no more than its quantitative dimension, that is, because it is concerned with nothing other than the number and the intensity of affections. What Socrates proposes is that pleasure, for instance, be analyzed critically and reflected upon, so that pain may be understood in an intelligent and detached way; that fear be clarified by discernment, quantities and qualities of these and other affections being pondered by thinking. What really counts is the reflectively intelligent dimension of all excellence, in the sense that it is thinking that qualifies and determines good action, it is critical discernment that can take into account what actually is at stake; it is intelligent detachment that allows for effective human excellence.

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23 Consistently with *Republic* II 357A-358E.
After relating to Echecrates the reasons for the delay of Socrates’ execution—the purification of the city during the embassy (theōria) to Delos in commemoration of Theseus’ rescue of the “twice seven” from the Minotaur (58a-b), Phaedo begins his account of the day itself and the extraordinary feelings he experienced (thaumasia epathon, 58e1). On the one hand, “no pity entered me as being present at the death of a man close to me. For to me the man appeared happy … both in his manner and his discourses, how fearlessly and nobly did he die” (58e3ff.).¹ In high spirits, Socrates was ready to engage in philosophical conversation like any other day. For Phaedo and the rest of his companions, however, the experience was not quite the same: “A simply uncanny (atopon) experience befell me, and an unaccustomed blend mixed of pleasure and pain…. And all of us present were more or less of the same disposition, now laughing, sometimes weeping” (59a5-9).

When Phaedo comes to recount the events of the day and the course of the discussion in detail, it is Socrates who first brings up the theme of pleasure and pain. Released from his shackles and rubbing his leg to restore the circulation, he reflects: “What an uncanny thing seems to be that which human beings call pleasure! How extraordinarily is it inclined by nature to seem to be its opposite, pain: the two are not willing to occur simultaneously to a human being, but if someone pursues the one and obtains it is practically always necessary that he also obtain the other, as if, though being two, they were joined to the same head” (60b3-8). Socrates continues with the remark that if Aesop had thought of this he would surely have composed a fable (mythos) to the effect that some god, unable to reconcile pleasure and pain as they warred with each other, had joined them together so that the one would always follow the other.

It is at this point that Cebes interrupts to ask Socrates about the stories (logous) of Aesop that he has apparently put to verse, as well as the proem to Apollo that he had composed. But before entering into a consideration of Socrates’ musical activity it is important to a few remarks about his brief discussion of pleasure and pain. While Phaedo had remarked on his own uncanny experience of pleasure and pain of philosophical conversation with Socrates on his last day, and Socrates’ own good spirits, Socrates himself uses of the example of the pleasant sensation of restored circulation in his leg. While Phaedo’s experience of pleasure and pain refers to the soul, Socrates’ is a purely bodily phenomenon. Socrates, who appeared entirely happy on the day of his death, seems to suggest that the mixture of pleasure and pain is necessary only for the body, and therefore that his companions’ experience is a result of their own insufficient detachment from the concerns of the body. The aim of Socrates’ musical practice, and of the Phaedo as a whole, is to encourage precisely the kind of detachment that Socrates himself already embodies.

Answering Cebes’ question, Socrates recounts a dream that had come to him in many different forms in his life, but which would always tell him the same thing, that he should make and practice mousikê (60d-61c). He had taken this as encouragement to continue in his practice of philosophy, “since philosophy was the greatest mousikê,” but now, waiting for his execution, it has occurred to him that the command of the dream might have been to practice dēmōdē mousikên all along.

¹ All references to the Phaedo and other Platonic dialogues are to Burnet’s edition for the OCT. All translations from the Greek are my own.
(61a6f.). In order, then, to acquit himself of his sacred obligation (aphosiōsasthai), he has spent his last days “composing poems,” and “considering that a poet, if he intends to be a poet, must make myths and not logoi,” and that he was not himself capable of making myths (mythologikos),

he had taken “those myths which I had ready at hand (prokheirous) and knew, those of Aesop, and put to verse the first ones I came across” (61b).

While Socrates seems to strongly distinguish the logoi of philosophy from the mythoi of popular music, the two cannot be conceived as opposites but at most as poles along a single continuum that is mousikē. If philosophy is the “greatest” mousikē and poetry is popular or dēmōdē, they are nonetheless both mousikē, and so must have something in common in terms of form, content, or intention. This is nothing more than what Socrates had already suggested with his account of pleasure and pain and the Aesopian fable he uses to illustrate his point. It would be going too far, however, to say that the only difference between poetry and philosophy is verse and meter, for Socrates seems to say that the distinction between mythos and logos is the more fundamental. But even here the distinction is not absolute. Socrates is not, at least so he says, mythologikos, but his own, albeit brief, Aesopian fable about pleasure and pain is already an example of the interpenetration of mythos and logos.

This etymological play is by no means accidental,² for Socrates will immediately introduce the subsequent discussion of the immortality of the soul as a combination of mythos and logos. Having suggested that Evenus, who had first asked Cebes about Socrates’ poetry, would eagerly follow Socrates to death—if he were a philosopher—Socrates continues that “perhaps it is most appropriate for one who is about to make a journey to the beyond to investigate (diaskopein) and mythologein about the journey” (61d10-e2). Later, he will repeat almost the same words. Agreeing with Cebes that the demonstration of the immortality of the soul is very difficult and requires much encouragement and assurance (paramythias kai pisteōs), he asks, “do you want us to consider this very matters by means of mythos and logos, [to see] whether it is plausible (eikos) that it is so or not?” (70b5ff.).

If, then, the text clearly encourages us to make a connection between Socrates’ practice of “popular music” and the subsequent discussion of the soul’s immortality, how are we to understand the significance of this connection? The implication is surely not that the subsequent arguments for the immortality of the soul are to be dismissed as mere myths, but neither are they to be taken purely as logoi, as rational arguments in isolation. Instead, I suggest, we must try to understand them as a kind of dēmōdē mousikē, but how does Plato understand dēmōdē mousikē? In the Republic, mousikē is the first part of the education of the children who will become guardians (Rep. 377a), and someone not sufficiently educated in this art will become a misologist (misologos) and amousos (Rep. 411d). The connection between music and misology will turn out to be crucial to understanding the Phaedo, and it is possible to make this connection by turning to another musical clue from the dialogue. After the presentation of the recollection argument, Simmias objects that this only proves half of what is needed, for the existence of the soul before birth does not guarantee its continued existence after death (77a-c). Socrates responds that Simmias and Cebes seem to share the childish fear that death, like a great wind, will blow the soul out of the body and scatter it, which draws a laugh from Cebes:

’S0, Socrates, attempt to persuade us as ones so frightened, or rather, not as if we were the ones frightened, but perhaps even in us there is a kind of child who fears such things. Attempt to persuade this [child], then, not to fear death like a kind of bugbear.’ But we must,’ said Socrates, ‘sing incantations (epa(i)dein) over this child every day until you grow out of this childishness (exepaisēte, 77e3-9)

² Cf. Republic 377b11, where mythopoios has the same meaning.
When Cebes asks where they will be able to find this incantation (epō(i)dos) once Socrates has left them, he responds that there must be many good men capable of providing it, among both the Greeks and the barbarians, but that Cebes and the rest of his companions “must also look [for it] themselves with each other (autous met’ allēlōn), for perhaps you would not easily find men more capable than you of doing this” (78a).

How are we to understand the epodoi necessary to calm the inner child that is afraid of death? In the Charmides, Socrates defines the epodos as a kind of incantation sung by doctors as they apply their drugs (pharmaka). “If one sings the epodē [Plato seems to use both the masculine and feminine forms interchangeably] at the same time as he applies it, the pharmakon will make [the patient] entirely healthy, but without the epode there is no benefit from the herb” (Charmides, 155e). It is easy enough to think of the ambiguous meaning of the pharmakon, medicine or poison, and of the pharmakon of hemlock the Socrates will drink. Only with the proper epodos, only if death is not feared, Socrates suggests, it will be beneficial. The Charmides goes on to identify the epodoi with kaloi logoi that will produce sōphrosyne in the soul (157a), and at least in the context of the Phaedo it seems clear that kaloi logoi, beautiful or noble discourse, are to be understood not so much as simply valid arguments as the plausible mixture of mythos and logos that Socrates had already mentioned. This interpretation is clearly supported by a passage from the tenth book of the Laws, where addressing the second category of impiety (the denial of divine providence), the Athenian Stranger agrees that the hypothetical young man who denies that the gods are concerned with human affairs can be “compelled by arguments (tois logois) to agree that he does not speak (legein) correctly. And yet it is my opinion that there is an additional need of some epo(i)doi mythoi” (Laws 903a10-b2). Explaining these epo(i)doi mythoi, Helmig has written that “their task is to make more plausible that which cannot be demonstrated rationally, because it lies beyond the powers of human understanding,” and the Stranger’s clear distinction between them and the proceeding logoi is enough to confirm this interpretation. Platonic epo(i)doi, then, will not run counter to reason, but they will make claims that cannot be fully confirmed by mere logos, and their task will be to persuade the listener in ways that are not purely rational in order to produce not merely rational conviction but a certain state of the soul: in the case of the Charmides, sōphrosyne, and in the Phaedo, a relief from the fear of death.

Cebes asks where they shall find someone able to provide them this epodos once Socrates has departed. While he does not seem to recognize it, it is clear from Phaedo’s description of the emotional state of Socrates’ companions that day that it was the figure of Socrates himself, as much as or more than his arguments, that kept their fear of death at bay, and that is the prospect of his death, as much as or more than death itself, that is the cause of their fear. Socrates recognizes as much when he reminds them that they themselves are as capable as anyone of finding the needed epodos, that they need not fear his death because they may continue the search themselves.

If the epodos against the fear of death can be found by the unaided efforts of Socrates’ companions, they still require, so to speak, a second epodos against their grief at the death of Socrates himself. He must convince them that they really are

capable of continuing their pursuit of the epodos, that is, their pursuit of philosophy, without him. For if it is only their pursuit of the logos that can provide them with this charm against the fear of death, they must maintain their dedication to philosophy even before the fear of death has been conquered. Or as Socrates will put it later, Phaedo ought not to cut his hair the next day, in mourning for Socrates' death, but rather, "I will cut mine and you these locks of yours if our logos meets its end (teleutesēi) and we are not able to bring it back to life (anabiōsasthai, 89b). This exchange comes at the heart of the dialogue, after Cebes, with his counterexample of the soul dying after wearing out a number of bodies like cloaks, has cast into doubt Socrates' previous argument for the immortality of the soul. After hearing this refutation, Socrates' companions were displeased and doubted the possibility of presenting any convincing logos about the subject, fearing that they were not competent judges and that such topics could bring no conviction (88c). At this point Phaedo affirms that he was never more amazed by Socrates than at that moment. “But I was especially amazed at him for this first of all, with how much pleasure and goodwill and delight he received the logos of the young men, and then how, when he perceived how grievously we were suffering because of the logoi, how he healed us and called on us as ones defeated and routed [in battle] and rallied to follow and consider together the logos” (88e4-89a7).

What inspires Phaedrus' amazement is Socrates' cheerful reception of a refutation according to which his own death may very well be final. This reaction demonstrates more clearly than any logos that his first commitment is always to the logos, wherever it leads, not to defending a certain position. Thus, when he says to Phaedrus that their failure to bring the logos back to life, and not his death, would be a true cause for mourning, he is not referring to his proposed proof of the immortality of the soul but to the discussion as a whole. This is made clear as he proceeds to warn his companions against becoming misologists, haters of logos or philosophical discussion, "for it is impossible for anyone to suffer a greater evil than this, coming to hate logoi” (89d). As misanthropy is the result of the disillusionment that follows a naïve trust in men, Socrates argues, so misology is the result of the disillusionment that follows a naïve trust in logoi. In the present context, it is the all-too-strong desire to believe the arguments for the immortality of the soul that, in the face of objections such as Cebes', will turn to dismay and distrust of all logos, and so be deprived of “the truth and knowledge of the beings” (90c-d). They must all for the sake of the rest of their lives—and Socrates for the sake of his death— "man up and take courage" (andristrateon kai prothumeteon) in order to avoid the error of misology (90e). Socrates is especially concerned to present his own struggle.

For in the present moment I run the risk of not being philosophical (philosophōs ekhein) about [my death], but, like those who are quite uneducated, of being contentious (philonikōs). For they, when they dispute about something, give no thought to how it stands with the subject of the logos, but are eager that those with them come to the same opinion which they themselves posited. And at the present moment, I think, I differ from these men only in this: I will not be eager that my companions come to the opinion that what I say is true, unless incidentally, but that I come to the opinion as much as possible in accord with how things are (91a). Even as he faces his death, Socrates' first commitment is to the truth, not to defending whatever happens to be his opinion. Thus, he continues:

I reason (logizomai) … that if what I say [sc. that the soul is immortal] happens to be true, it would be a fine thing to be persuaded of it. But if, on the other hand, nothing remains for the dead, then at least for this time itself before my death I will be less unpleasant to those present by grieving, and this folly (anoia) of mine won’t
go on—for that would be an evil—but will perish a short time later. It is so prepared … that I approach the logos” (91b1-9).

As this passage makes clear, Socrates’ “philosophical attitude” towards death is not dependent on his belief in the immortality of the soul. This of course is not to deny that he finds the arguments in favor persuasive, but that the outcome of this particular argument is not for him crucial to the viability of his philosophical attitude. This attitude consists in the desire that his opinion conform as much as possible to how things are, to attain “truth and knowledge of the beings”. If the soul is in fact immortal, then it is indeed a fine thing to believe it, for it is the truth. But if Socrates is in error, then death itself will soon relieve him of his folly. In other words, Socrates does not consider death an evil even if it does imply the complete cessation of existence. It is error or false opinion—and even worse misology—that is the great evil, not death.

This “philosophical attitude” is the true meaning of Socrates’ definition of philosophy as the “practice of dying and being dead” (apothein(e)iskein te kai tethnanai, 64a). This definition of philosophy, which draws a laugh from the somber Simmias (64a10-b1), does not mean that philosophers simply spend their whole life preparing for the death of the body, but as indicated by the perfect tethnanai, implies a form of life that is already a kind of death, that is, a life spent in the attempt to as much as possible gather the soul into itself (autēn kath’ autēn) and separate from the body (64c, cf. 64e). The purpose of this metaphorical separation of soul and body is the acquisition of wisdom or phronēsis, which is hindered by a reliance on the confusion and imprecision of the senses (65a-b). The reasoning (logizesthai) that grasps truth is most successful when it is not disturbed by the pleasures or pains of the body (65c). Thus, as we live, the dissociation of soul and body is the closest will come to true knowledge and phronesis, and in death lies the only uncertain chance of attaining complete wisdom (66e-67a).

This description of the philosophical life as a practice of dying and being dead is Socrates’ “apology” to his companions for not doing everything he could to avoid his execution, and it is perhaps the best example of his interweaving of mythos and logos in order to produce a “popular music”. While its function as logos is most apparent, closer analysis reveals its equally important mythic component, intended not only as an apologia to defend his decision to his companions, but as an epodos of consolation and encouragement. Two “mythic” elements can be identified in the apologia. First, the identification of the soul’s quest for true knowledge with the literal separation of soul from body that is death relies on an implicitly materialist and even pneumatic understanding of thought, where pure thinking is identified with its concentration in one location. Second, the apologia assumes, without yet presenting a proof, that the soul is immortal, and the philosophy’s eros for phronesis can finally be consummated. Concluding that true knowledge is only possible in separation from the body, Socrates affirms that “one of two things is the case: either it is nowhere possible to acquire knowledge, or [only] for the dead” (66e). The implicit premise of the apologia is that philosophy would be in vain if complete wisdom were impossible, but Socrates’ later description of the “philosophical attitude” shows that that is not what he actually believes. Even if perfect knowledge is impossible, partial knowledge, or one might say the knowledge of ignorance, is still better than no knowledge at all.

If we can in fact read this apologia, and the Phaedo as a whole, as a kind of epodos that combines rational argument with mythos so as to constitute a kind of popular music or dēmodē mousikē, we are left with the question of why Socrates’ closest companions—and above all Simmias and Cebes, who display a great aptitude
for philosophical argument—are still in need of a less than purely philosophical consolation. The clue to answering this question is the word dēmōdē itself, meaning “popular” or more literally “of the demos”. The only other occurrence of the world in Plato is at Laws 710a, where it qualifies the “vulgar” virtue (to be specific, sōphroyne) that, unlike true virtue, is separate from phronēsis and in which even children and animals may share. It is this same virtue that, in the Phaedo, Socrates attributes not to the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, but to the “lover of the body” (philosōmatos, 68c1, cf. 69a-b). His companions demonstrate that they are still lovers of the body precisely by their pain at Socrates’ coming death and their own fear of death (69d).

Further evidence of their continued preoccupation with the body is the myth Socrates tells near the end of the dialogue, which recounts the fate of souls after their death in distinctly terrestrial and non-heavenly terms. This further example of epodos (cf. epa(i)dein, 114d), which “it would it would not be proper for any man with sense (noun ekhonti) to insist on”, relates that what we call the earth that we dwell on is in fact nothing but a hollow or crevice below the surface of the true earth (109b-c), and that our view of the true heaven is obscured as if we were fish who looked up at the sea above us and thought that it was already the sky (109e). It is only virtuous souls who are able to ascend to the surface of the true earth (114b-c), with its true soil and stones and plants and animals (110d-e). It is true, Socrates recounts, that those sufficiently purified by philosophy will live on without bodies altogether and in “habitations still more beautiful than these”, but it is difficult to say anything clear about the subject (114c). The vision of the afterlife that Socrates presents, then, is again meant for those who have not yet been sufficiently purified by philosophy, who like his companions are still lovers of the body. Socrates’ dēmōdē mousikē, then, is meant for those of the corresponding virtue who, like his companions, have not yet fully turned away from the body toward the soul and to philosophy, and its aim is to bring them to just that point of neglect for the body and dedication to logos where this music itself would, as in the case of Socrates himself, no longer be necessary.

The Phaedo presents a number of arguments for the immortality of the soul, arguments which according to Socrates, remain in need if more precise investigation even after they have convinced Simmias and Cebes (107b). And it is precisely the assurance of this continued philosophical investigation, not the demonstration of the immortality of the soul in itself, that is the ultimate aim of the Phaedo. As we have seen, for Socrates, if not for his companions, death holds no fear even if the arguments for the immortality of the soul are refuted, in which case the “folly” (anoia) of his arguments would at least give his companions less cause for grief. Thus, Socrates bids his friends to “give little thought to Socrates, and much more to the truth” and to make every objection to his arguments for the immortality of the soul if they find any flaws in them (91c1ff.). The ultimate aim of Socrates’ dēmōdē mousikē, then, is through a mixture of mythos and logos to support his companions’ own dedication to logos. His practice of poetry, which culminates in the telling of the mythos of the true earth (110b1), is meant to be in service of the “greatest music” that is philosophy.

RESUMEN

La discusión contemporánea sobre el Fedón tiende a enfocarse casi exclusivamente en el análisis de los cuatro argumentos a favor de la inmortalidad del alma, y hasta cierto punto en lo que cuenta Sócrates de su abandono de la filosofía natural para investigar las cosas a través de las ideas. Pero aunque ningún diálogo presenta como el Fedón un vínculo tan estrecho entre escenario dramático y tema filosófico, no se ha prestado mucha atención al significado filosófico de este contexto,
sobre todo los detalles dramáticos que Platón elige incluir en su presentación del último día de Sócrates. Uno de los detalles más sorprendentes que encontramos es la declaración de Sócrates de haber empezado a practicar la “música popular” (dēmōdē mousikē). En este artículo presento una lectura de la “música popular” de Sócrates según la cual esta no es un mero pormenor vivido sino un anuncio de la forma de argumento filosófico que se va a encontrar en el diálogo en conjunto. Incluso los argumentos a favor de la inmortalidad del alma son una forma de música popular en el sentido que su propósito no es solo (con optimismo) demostrar la verdad sino también y primariamente producir un efecto emotivo en los compañeros de Sócrates. El propósito primario de Sócrates no es demostrar la inmortalidad del alma sino fortalecer el compromiso de sus compañeros al logos y a la filosofía, protegiéndolos contra la misología o odio al logos. Para lograr este fin, Sócrates tiene que recurrir a una mezcla de logos y mito, la cual constituye su “música popular.”
Filosofia, vita filosofica e ordine dell’anima: le occupazioni del filosofo e dell’anima a *Phaed. 64 a*, *Phaed. 84 b* e l’ascesa del filosofo nel *Simposio*

Menchelli, Mariella

A *Phaed. 64 a* Socrate introduce la condotta di vita filosofica, l’occupazione di coloro che si applicano correttamente alla filosofia, e che rischia di sfuggire agli altri, che non è altro che occuparsi di morire e di essere morti: κινδυνεύουσι γάρ ὅσοι τυγχάνουσιν ὅρθως ἀπτόμενοι φιλοσοφίας λεληθέναι τοὺς ἄλλους ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο αὐτοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι.

L’attività del filosofo, la sua condotta, riguardano l’anima e non il corpo e soltanto dopo lo scioglimento dal corpo, dunque dopo la morte, l’anima è libera dagli impedimenti ai quali è sottoposta essendo inchiodata al corpo.

L’avvio dell’argomentazione a *Phaed. 64 a* sconvolge la morale tradizionale, lo sviluppo dell’argomentazione, con l’analisi dell’esercizio della virtù, da parte del filosofo a confronto con i più, ne rileverà i limiti.

L’impiego del verbo *epitedeueo*, che indica l’attività dell’uomo, le sue occupazioni e la sua condotta di vita (*epitedeumata* nella polis (è spesso associato alle leggi, *epitedeumata kai nomoi*, sia in Platone sia in Isocrate, sia nella discussione di Platone con i sofisti, come si rileva nell’*Ippia maggiore* in particolare) in relazione alla morte (poi ripreso con il tema della *melete thanatou, Phaed. 67* e ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶν, ribadito per l’anima a *Phaed. 81 a* τεθνάναι μελετῶσιν, ribadito per l’anima a *Phae...
scelta di interlocutori pitagorici, che Platone sembra prediligere per parlare di anima, cfr. anche il *Timeo*, come i matematici per parlare della scienza.

Il tema dell’attività/comportamento del filosofo introdotto a *Phaed. 64* a (κινδυνεύοντι γάρ ὅσοι τυγχάνουσιν ὅρθως ἀπτόμενοι φιλοσοφίας λεληθέναι τοῖς ἄλλοις ὦτι οὐδέν ἄλλο αὐτοῖς ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι) è infatti un tema maggiore, che viene ripreso a *84b* ταῦτα δ’ ἐπιτηδεύσασα (e così *67* e ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσιν viene ripreso a *81* a τεθνάναι μελετῶσιν ῥᾳδίως) con riferimento esplicito all’anima, in un preciso quadro di corrispondenze all’interno del lungo passo. Se a *81* a τεθνάναι μελετῶσιν ῥᾳδίως si richiama *67* e ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσιν, così a *84* b ταῦτα δ’ ἐπιτηδεύσασα si richiama *64* a ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι. Dopo avere affrontato il problema dell’immortalità dell’anima, l’anima stessa è in primo piano e diventa il soggetto esplicito.

I più e la virtù: la virtù in senso vulgato di *68* e, lo scarto in *Symp. 209-210*

Nel proporre la vita filosofica si registra lo scarto al quale si è fatto riferimento tra la virtù in senso vulgato (cfr. e. g. anche *68* e τὴν εὐήθη σωφροσύνην) e l’esercizio della virtù da parte del filosofo.

Uno scarto analogo sembra comparire in *Symp.* 209 e 210 dove si evoca la morale tradizionale con Omero ed Esiodo e poi si propone un nuovo avvio per il filosofo. L’impiego del verbo *epitedeuo* a *64* a riceve luce anche da *Symp. 209* b–c e dalla celebre ascesa che ha inizio a *Symp. 210* a: il confronto tra *Phaed. 64* e seguenti, con il quadro della vita comune e della vita filosofica, e *Symp. 209* e 210 dove alla vita ordinata del cittadino comune si giustappone l’ascesi filosofica, può gettare luce sulle parole di Socrate nel *Fedone*. Se si confronta la bipartizione tra comportamento virtuoso tradizionale e comportamento virtuoso del filosofo ad esso giustapposto lo scarto appare infatti ancora più chiaro con *Symp. 209-210*.

Un tema maggiore in particolare nel *Simposio* è in effetti il bello morale, che modi di vivere e leggi rappresentano.

2 Cfr. infra. Dunque il testo tràdito a *Phaed. 84* b ταῦτα δ’ ἐπιτηδεύσασα appare difendibile (e al tempo stesso lectio difficilior). In *Phaed. 64* a e in *Phaed. 84* b, alcuni termini usuali della morale tradizionale vengono pertanto reimpiegati a fondare e a raffigurare la condotta del filosofo: *Phaed. 64* a sembra introdurre nel dialogo il punto di rottura, poiché solo la vita filosofica è la via proposta da Socrate e solo la filosofia viene in aiuto all’anima, con l’impiego di termini tecnici dell’attività umana per la sfera della morte, in particolare il verbo *epitedeuo*, termine che ha appunto significativo retroterra in Isocrate, in Platone. La prospettiva è già quella dell’anima, non ancora liberata dal corpo (una prospettiva illuminata, come è noto, dalla decisa scelta di interlocutori pitagorici, che Platone sembra prediligere per parlare di anima, cfr. anche il *Timeo*, come i matematici per parlare della scienza).

κάλλος τιμιώτερον ἡγήσασθαι τοῦ ἐν τῷ σῶμα, ὡστε καὶ ἐὰν ἔπικεικὴ ᾧν τὴν ψυχήν τις κάν συμκρόν ἄθος ἔχῃ, ἔξαρκειν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐρᾶν καὶ κήδεσθαι καὶ τίκτειν λόγους τοιούτους καὶ ἤχητι, οἵπερν ποίησομεν βελτίως τοὺς νέους, ἵνα ἀναγκασθῇ αὐθενσασθαι τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ τοῖς νόμοις καλὸν καὶ τοὐτ᾽ ἰδεῖν ὅτι πὰν αὐτῷ αὐτῷ συγγενές ἐστίν, ἵνα τὸ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καλὸν τὸν ἐγγίζῃ εἶναι. Μετὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἀγαγεῖν, ἵνα ἴδῃ αὖ ἐπιστημῶν κάλλος, καὶ βλέπων πρὸς πολὺ ἢδη τὸ καλὸν μηκέτι τὸ παρ᾽ ἑνί, ὥσπερ οἰκέτης, ἀγαπῶν παιδαρίου κάλλος ἢ ἀνθρώπου τινὸς ἢ ἐπιτηδεύματος ἑνός [...].

Al tempo stesso un riferimento agli epitedeumata viene ripreso in relazione a Socrate nel discorso di Alcibiade. Plat., Symp. 221 c 4 καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἐπὶ τὰ καλὰ μαθήματα [...].

Al tempo stesso un riferimento agli epitedeumata viene ripreso in relazione a Socrate nel discorso di Alcibiade. Plat., Symp. 221 c 2 Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν ἄν τις καὶ ἀλλὰ ἔχοι Σωκράτη ἐπαινέσαι καὶ θαυμάσια, ἀλλὰ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἐπιτηδευμάτων τάχ᾽ ἄν τις καὶ περὶ ἄλλου τοιαῦτα εἴποι, τὸ δὲ μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων ὅμοιον εἶναι, μήτε τῶν παλαιῶν μήτε τῶν νῦν ὄντων, τούτῳ ἄξιον παντὸς θαύματος.

Lelogio di Socrate si muove sul piano della condotta di vita, gli epitedeumata, il ritratto finale di Socrate tracciato da Alcibiade riprende l'ascesi.

I passi precedenti all'ascesi si soffermano già sul tema etico-politico della condotta di vita (e della urgenza pedagogica), che verrà ripreso con l'ascesi del filosofo ma è significativo notare che esso si colloca nel passo che la precede ad un livello più tradizionale, quello dei buoni poeti e dei buoni legislatori.

2. Esercizio della virtù e abitudine. Condotta di vita dall'Ippia al Simposio, al Fedone

Al tempo stesso nel primo mito escatologico del Fedone si fa riferimento a “coloro che praticarono (ἐπιτετηδευκότες) la virtù civile e politica, quella che chiamano temperanza e giustizia, quella che nasce dal costume e dall'esercizio, senza filosofia e senza conoscenza” (82 b, trad. Reale), e di seguito, invece, ai filosofi, del tutto distinti dagli uomini comuni, seppure virtuosi: ancora una volta si registra il 4 Peraltro anche sotto l'aspetto della condotta di vita, come dice Alcibiade (Symp. 221, con il quale si richiama l'ascesa del filosofo) Socrate è irreprensibile.

5 D'altro canto il tema comparirà anche nella Repubblica in relazione con la virtù come nel Simposio, per esempio alla fine del IV libro, riprendendo il tema della giustizia del Gorgia: Resp. 444 e 4-5 Λρ ὅπων οὐ καὶ τὰ μὲν καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα εἰς ἄρετῆς κτήσιν φέρει, τὰ δ′ αἰσχρὰ εἰς κακιᾶς, ἀνάγκη, τὸ δ᾽ ὅπως ἢξη, ως ὕπιπκε, ἤμεν ἐκεῖνον καὶ κήδεσθαι καὶ τίκτειν λόγους τοιούτους καὶ καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα καὶ εἶναι δίκαιον, ἐάντε λανθάνῃ ἐάντε μὴ τοιοῦτος ἢ, ἢ διδικεῖν τε καὶ διδικὸν εἶναι, ἐάντε μὴ διδικεῖν δικὴν μηδὲ βελτίως γίγνεται κολαζόμενος. Ampi spazio viene dedicato nella Repubblica alla questione di 'una sola occupazione' per il cittadino; il termine ricorre dunque nei due significati principali di occupazione, attività da un lato, e modo di vivere, condotta di vita dall'altro.
duplice esercizio della virtù, che del resto nel primo caso avviene per abitudine, ἐκ ἔθους (cfr. anche Resp. 619 c ἔθει).

Sul tema degli epitedeumata in senso del tutto tradizionale già Ippia si era peraltro cimentato con successo a Sparta secondo il dialogo omonimo: da questo tema il dialogo tra Ippia e Socrate prende avvio, tema che sarà presente peraltro in Platone in alcuni dei dialoghi maggiori (e tema che provoca la cruda reazione di Socrate alla fine dell’Ippia stesso)⁶.

Il tema riceve luce, come si è osservato, soprattutto dalla trattazione del Simposio e del Fedone.

La posizione di Socrate

Radicalmente diversa (anche rispetto a Fedone 82b) è la posizione del filosofo, la posizione di Socrate.

Come Socrate rileva a più riprese anche nel Fedone, c’è chi persegue la virtù avendo in mente il successo economico, i φιλοχρήματοι, o il successo politico, i φιλότιμοι; ad essi si contrappone l’attività del filosofo e dell’anima che con l’aiuto della filosofia rende più labili i suoi legami con il corpo.

Come si ribadisce a Phaed. 83 e, coloro che sono i veri amanti del sapere praticano le virtù non per le ragioni dei più. Come è stato detto, infatti, secondo l’esercizio per così dire vulgato delle virtù esse vengono praticate come merce di scambio, per evitare mali maggiori.

Vicino al Simposio, sopra citato, è il Fedone stesso a sviluppare il tema del comportamento morale in relazione all’anima, con un messaggio come si è detto dirompente rispetto alla morale tradizionale.

4. Una lezione di P Petrie e i codici medievali

Come si ribadisce a Phaed. 83 e, coloro che sono i veri amanti del sapere praticano dunque le virtù non per le ragioni dei più. A Phaed. 83, seguo Vicaire e OCT 1995, i codici aggiungono φασιν, letto anche da Giamblico, mentre Hermann e Usener lo espungono: la lezione con l’espunzione è stampata da Vicaire e appare presunta da P Petrie, cfr. anche OCT 1995 e cfr. CPF per l’edizione del papiro: la lezione priva dell’aggiunta appare preferibile anche sulla base delle osservazioni sopra proposte poiché viene a ribadire lo scarto nell’esercizio della virtù tra i filosofi e i più. Come si è detto sopra, secondo l’esercizio per così dire vulgato delle virtù esse vengono praticate come merce di scambio, per evitare mali maggiori. Diversa è invece la ragione per cui coloro che praticano la filosofia sono kosmioi, e per cui sono coraggiosi. La filosofia li esorta dolcemente e ne intraprende la liberazione. Lo...

⁶ Appare possibile sottolineare l’importanza del tema anche nell’Accademia. In un dialogo pseudoplatonico tra i più letti del corpus delle opere di Platone, l’Assioco o sulla morte, ascritto con convincenti argomentazioni all’Accademia di II/I secolo a. C., Socrate racconta un mito dell’aldilà nel quale i giudici, in un quadro che riecheggia con una certa precisione il Gorgia di Platone, esaminano l’anima, e il comportamento secondo la quale ha abitato nel corpo, ovvero la condotta di vita: Ax. 371 c ἐνταυθοῖ καθέζονται δικασταὶ ἀνακρίνοντες τῶν ἀφικνουμένων ἕκαστον, τίνα βίον βεβίωκε καὶ τίσιν ἐπιτηδεύμασιν ἐνῳκίσθη τῷ σώματι; anche nell’Accademia ellenistica, e in un dialogo De morte, o meglio de formidine mortis, la condotta di vita resta tema fondamentale. Così nell’Apologia di Socrate, che l’autore dell’Assioco riecheggia a più riprese, come è stato anche recentemente notato.
stesso tema del kosmein, dell'ordine dell'anima ritorna a più riprese nel dialogo.

Brevi lacerti dal passo preso in esame compaiono anche in un codice del secolo XI, il Laur. Plut. 58.24, che contiene brevi estratti da alcuni dialoghi platonici, tra i quali il Fedone appare come il più rappresentato.

La bipartizione tra comportamento virtuoso tradizionale e comportamento virtuoso del filosofo ad esso giustapposto sembra del resto analizzabile, come si è proposto, anche alla luce di Symp. 209-212.

5. Phaed 64 a / Phaed 84 b

Il discorso che prende avvio a 64 a culmina nell'immagine dell'anima letteralmente inchiodata al corpo ma che grazie alla sua condotta (Phaed. 84 b ταύτα δ'ἐπιτηδεύσασα) non teme di essere dispersa e soffiata via dai venti (in risposta a 77d-e) al momento della separazione dal corpo (e ancora nella narrazione dello scarto tra il sentire comune riguardo ai cigni e la interpretazione veritiera del loro canto).

Il significato del verbo epitedeuo nella discussione del Simposio e del Fedone suggerisce di non condividere l'espunzione proposta a Phaed. 84 b, ταύτα δ'ἐπιτηδεύσασα, riferito all'anima, da Ast (cfr. Vicaire, apparato, e OCT 1995, apparato), e condivisa per esempio da Burnet. Dopo avere affrontato il problema dell'immortalità dell'anima, l'anima stessa è in primo piano e diventa il soggetto esplicito: a 81 a τεθνάναι μελετῶσα ῥᾳδίως si richiama 67 e ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσιν, così a 84 b ταύτα δ'ἐπιτηδεύσασα si richiama 64 a ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι, dunque il testo tráduto a Phaed. 84 b ταύτα δ'ἐπιτηδεύσασα appare difendibile (e al tempo stesso lectio difficilior).

Il filosofo in prima battuta, l'anima, una volta apparsa in primo piano, presentano la vita filosofica e il vero esercizio della virtù.

Summary

A brief discussion of Phaedo 64 a and 84b suggests a re-consideration of the use of some terms of ethical and ‘political’ interest such as epitedevo, epitedeumata (and meletao) in the sphere of death; at first they are used for the philosopher and then for the soul (defending a variant reading at 84b). An opposition between virtue in the common sense and the virtue of the philosopher has the same goal, as stated also by Symposium 209-210. As stated by Plato, Socrates thinks different from his beloved Athenians and the only true virtues, the philosophical virtues, are exercised by him.
Introduction

Galileo often resembles an epistemological Proteus. Because of his unquestionable status as one of the ‘founding fathers’ of modern science, his methodological tenets have not only been constantly bent to support whichever theory of natural science is en vogue at any given moment, but his fundamentally ‘Classical’ allegiances have accordingly experienced major shifts.1 Is Galileo a ‘Platonist’ or an ‘Aristotelian’? Is he a ‘realist’ or an ‘instrumentalist’? Does he ever prove to be an ‘Archimedean’ scientist? Or perhaps none of the above? What ancient sources, if any, inform his conception of the workings and methods of physics?

The dichotomy of ‘Platonism’ and ‘Aristotelianism’, in particular, seems to dominate early- and mid-twentieth-century Galilean scholarship. A. Koyré’s seminal article (1943),2 for instance, establishes a polarizing contrast between ‘Platonic’ and ‘Aristotelian’ natural science, based on the role assigned to mathematics in making sense of the physical world. Koyré argues that, whereas Aristotle conceives of the workings of nature as being intelligible in purely empirical terms, without the need for mathematical formalization, Plato (in the Timaeus) describes the structure of nature as being inherently geometrical, and therefore only subject to explanation through mathematical concepts. According to Koyré (followed by Crombie and others), Galileo is essentially a ‘Platonist’ insofar as he attributes a crucial importance to the use of mathematics in natural science (ubi mathematica, ibi Plato).3 C. Dollo (1989), however, has rightly pointed out that Galileo’s Platonism is constituted by well-defined and circumscribed elements of method and cosmological content, rather than by a mere set of ‘Platonic ideas’, vaguely related to the mathematization of the world, but devoid of factual significance.4

Other scholars, most notably T.P. McTighe (1968) and E. McMullin (1978), have emphasized the ‘Aristotelian’ character of Galileo’s epistemology by drawing attention to his conception of physics - and of mechanics in particular - as a demonstrative science, or a ‘science of the necessary’. Demonstration, for Aristotle provides the gnoseological foil against which the explanatory power of any other science is to be measured: an extremely influential idea, if one thinks - for example - of Veblen’s claim that the formulation of a science endowed with “necessity and sufficiency” is the goal of any investigations of the foundations of geometry.5 Moreover, building

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1 See e.g. Wallace 1974: 79 (with references); McMullin 1978: 210.
2 Koyré’s views concerning the predominance of natural philosophy (in the Aristotelian sense) over the application of mathematical reasoning to the physical world constitute one the main underpinnings of his well-known denial that the ancients ever developed any ‘technology’ in the modern sense of the term (cf. especially From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe, Baltimore - London 1957).
3 It is now known that the principal experiments described in Galileo’s Discorsi, and thought by Koyré to be pure ‘thought experiments’, were in fact performed (see e.g. Dubarle 1968: 305).
4 Similarly, J. Hankins (2000) rightly warns against the tendnecy of much Galilean scholarship to approach the Platonic problem from an unhistorical perspective: rather, we should understand Platonism in terms of what it meant for Galileo in his own time, rather than in terms of what it means for us now. For example, Ficino’s view on how the planets’ motion is a composite of rectilinear and circular motion is much closer than Plato’s Timaeus to Galileo’s own cosmogonic account (cf. Hankins 2004: 159).
5 Veblen 1903: 309.
upon an intuition originally suggested by Cassirer,6 A.C. Crombie (1953) and N. Jardine (1976) have shown striking affinities between Galileo's account of scientific demonstration and the Aristotelian theories of Paduan Renaissance intellectuals such as Agostino Nifo and Giacomo Zabarella, whose doctrines most probably acted as 'mediators' between ancient (or medieval) Aristotelianism and Galileo's epistemology.7

This paper focuses on a particular aspect of Galileo's methodology, i.e. his "metodo resolutivo", which I intend to relate to the Platonic (and neo-Platonic) concept of hypothetical method. In order to do so, I will examine Galileo's conception of hypothesis and hypothetical reasoning, showing that his use of the term "ipotesi" is by no means unequivocal. However, at least one of his ways of employing the notion is, I will argue, eminently Platonic.

Galileo the realist?

The main piece of evidence for mathematical 'Platonism' in Galileo's method of science is usually taken to be a well-known and oft-quoted passage from The Assayer (1623), in which Galileo polemizes against Orazio Grassi's failure to understand the 'mathematical language' which constitutes the basis of the scientific intelligibility of the world:

Il Saggiatore, 6.34-37

Parmi, oltre a ciò, di scorgere nel Sarsi ferma credenza, che nel filosofare sia necessario appoggiarsi all'opinioni di qualche celebre autore, sì che la mente nostra, quando non si maritasse col discorso d'un altro, ne dovesse in tutto rimanere sterile ed infeconda; e forse stima che la filosofia sia un libro e una fantasia d'un uomo, come l'Iliade e l'Orlando Furioso, libri ne' quali la meno importante cosa è che quello che vi è scritto sia vero. Signor Sarsi, la cosa non istà cosi. La filosofia è scritta in questo grandissimo libro che continuamente ci sta aperto innanzi a gli occhi (io dico l'universo), ma non si può intender se prima non s'impara a intender la lingua, e conoscere i caratteri, ne' quali è scritto. Egli è scritto in lingua matematica, e i caratteri son triangoli, cerchi, ed altre figure geometriche, senza i quali mezi è impossibile a intenderne umanamente parola; senza questi è un aggrirarsi vanamente per un oscuro laberinto. (Galilei 2005: 99)

It seems to me that I discern in Sarsi a firm belief that in practising philosophy it is essential to support oneself upon the opinion of some celebrated author, as if when our minds are not wedded to the reasoning of some other person they ought to remain completely barren and sterile. Possibly he thinks that philosophy is a book of fiction created by some man, like the Iliad or Orlando Furioso - books in which the least important thing is whether what is written in them is true. Well, Sig. Sarsi, that is not the way matters stand. Philosophy is written in this grand book - I mean the universe - which stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is vainly wandering about in a dark labyrinth. (Drake 1960: 183-184, modified)

Reading this passage as an endorsement of (Platonic) mathematical realism would be reading too much into it and reading it out of context, as L. Geymonat already pointed out in his pioneering monograph.8 But it is not simply "a plea for [...] independent-mindedness"

6 Cassirer 1906: 134-141. A fundamental innovation of Paduan Aristotelianism consists, according to Cassirer, in bringing together the compositional and the analytical method, in order to establish procedures for acquiring knowledge that move from effects to causes and viceversa. Such a method is not so much a way of 'resolving' phenomena into fundamental principles as it is about shedding light on the hidden causes of those phenomena: in fact, it is an essentially causal-explanatory procedure. Cassirer sees in the role of mathematics the main, decisive difference between Zabarella's regressus and Galileo's own scientific method. Aristotelian syllogistics cannot, however, escape from the issue of whether and how the first principles can be proven: hence, for the new science, a need for hypotheses.


against established authority: it is Galileo’s own version of the time-honored idea of the Book of Nature, which for Galileo is encoded in mathematical language, and therefore understandable to a (well-educated) human mind.

Whether or not Galileo had Plato’s Timaeus (53c-55c) in mind, according to which the structure of the world can be explained in terms of five (Platonic) solids that can in turn be reduced to triangles, Galileo’s criticism of Sarsi (= Grassi) is clearly aimed at highlighting the latter’s underestimation of the role of mathematics in natural science. In fact, the Assayer as a whole has been read as “a heroic poem in prose, a ‘Sarsiad’, a protracted tale of right against wrong, good against evil, innocence against deceit”. Even though Galileo’s polemical statement is more concerned with his epistemology than with his actual scientific practice, it does reveal that Galileo conceives of nature as being ultimately readable.

Similar thoughts are expressed by Galileo in a famous programmatic document, the letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany (1615): the argument proceeds ex negativo and with a mainly apologetic tone, since the central purpose of the letter is not to prove that the Bible supports the Copernican theory, but rather to show that it does not refute it. Galileo, in other words, argues that there are no scriptural objections to the heliocentric model; that theology is not binding in physical investigation; that neither scriptural consensus nor the unanimity of the Church fathers nor the authority of the Church itself are sufficient to force a literal interpretation of the biblical text.

In arguing for the inescapable value of sensory experience and necessary demonstration, whose authority - not that of the Scriptures - is the starting point of science, Galileo states that the course of nature is “inexorable and immutable”. Hence the irrevocability of physical laws, once they have been conclusively proved by means of experience and demonstration. The mysteries of nature are to be investigated by reading the “open book of the sky”, which can obviously never be contradicted by the other divine book (= the Scriptures).

Here, however, a puzzle arises: if the workings of the natural world are readable and intelligible, why would the astronomer need to rely on hypothetical reasonings? In other words, how does Galileo conceive of scientific hypotheses and of their role in natural philosophy? As a matter of fact, his usage and treatment of the ‘technical’ language concerning the semantic sphere of ‘hypothesis’ still has not been thoroughly investigated, and such will be one of the main goals of this paper.

In attested Italian, the noun ‘ipotesi’ (a quasi-transliteration from the Greek ὑπόθεσις) is not common before the seventeenth century, the idea being more frequently expressed with the term ‘supposizione’ (from Latin suppositio, which literally has the analogous meaning of ‘putting under’). This paper will argue that, in both his early...
and his mature works, Galileo not only oscillates in his use of the Italian words “ipotesi” and “supposizione” (with its Latin equivalent *suppositio*), but that - at the same time - he also operates with (at least) three distinct concepts of scientific hypothesis. One of his methodological notions of hypothesis is, as I intend to argue, strikingly akin to the one employed in the ‘analytic method’ dear to the Platonic (and neo-Platonic) tradition. Such different conceptualizations, as I will show, contribute to highlighting different aspects of Galileo’s methodology in ways that have not hitherto been adequately explored.

‘It’s only a hypothesis’

In the introductory essay to Copernicus’ *De revolutionibus*, Osiander wrote that his “new hypotheses” are no less probable than the ancient (i.e. Ptolemaic) ones, and that nobody should “expect anything certain from astronomical models, which cannot furnish it, lest he accept as the truth ideas conceived for another purpose, and depart from this study a greater fool than when he entered it”.16 Copernicus’ reasoning, in other words, is presented by Osiander as purely hypothetical: the heliocentric - or, more precisely, geokinetic - theory is based on the argument that, if we *assume* the earth’s motion around the sun, *then* the observed phenomena are explained; to infer from this that the earth does indeed move would amount to a logical fallacy, known as *affirmatio consequentis*.17 Galileo’s preface to the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1632) describes the author’s Copernican option along similar lines:

*Dialogo dei massimi sistemi: al lettore*

To this end I have taken the Copernican side in the discourse, proceeding as with a pure mathematical hypothesis and striving by every artifice to represent it as superior to supposing the earth motionless - not, indeed, absolutely, but as against the arguments of some professed Peripatetics. These men, indeed, only deserve the bare name, although they do not even walk about; they are content to adore the shadows, philosophizing not with due circumspection but merely from having memorized a few ill-understood principles. (Drake 2001: 5–6, modified)

Galileo’s allegiance to ‘the Copernican side’ is stated as clearly as his hostility to the ‘Aristotelians’: the latter, instead of ‘walking about’ (= περιπατεῖν) in a spirit of genuine research, remain content with mere ‘shadows’ (the image is perhaps reminiscent of Plato’s cave). At the same time, however, Galileo calls his line of inquiry a ‘pure mathematical hypothesis’, which he is going to defend in all sorts of ‘artificial ways’. What exactly are these ‘artifices’? They are never explicitly defined, but they do not seem to involve any ‘empirical proof’ in particular: a few lines later, in fact, Galileo acknowledges the empirical equivalence of the Copernican and the Ptolemaic hypothesis.

*Dialogo dei massimi sistemi: al lettore*

Prima cercherò di mostrare, tutte le esperienze fattibili nella Terra essere mezi insufficienti a concluder la sua mobilità, ma indifferentemente potersi adattare così alla Terra mobile, come anco quiescente; e spero che in questo caso si paleseranno molte osservazioni ignote all’antichità. Secondariamente si esamineranno li fenomeni celesti, rinforzando l’ipotesi copernicana come se assolutamente dovesse rimaner vittoriosa, aggiungendo nuove speculazioni, le quali però servano per facilità d’astronomia, non per necessità di natura.18

17 Galileo’s first discussion of Copernican astronomy is found in a letter to Jacopo Mazzoni, a senior colleague at the University of Pisa, dated 30 May 1597. Mazzoni himself had just published a book critically discussing and comparing Plato and Aristotle (and taking an anti-Aristotelian view on the motion and speed of falling bodies), but also containing anti-Copernican arguments: Galileo congratulates his friend, then embarks on a lengthy refutation of Mazzoni’s anti-Copernicanism (Finocchiaro 2010: 47). For Galileo’s early interest in Plato and Aristotle (partly mediated by Mazzoni) and his juvenile commentaries on Aristotle’s *Physics*, cf. also Heilbron 2010: 46–47.
18 Cf. also the following passage from the Second Day: “[Salv.] Il vedere se l’una e l’altra posizione [scil. il moto diurno esser della Terra sola <o> dell’universo, trattone la Terra] sodisfacci egualmente
First, I shall try to show that all experiments practicable upon the earth are insufficient measures for proving its mobility, since they are indifferently adaptable to an earth in motion or at rest. I hope in so doing to reveal many observations unknown to the ancients. Secondly, the celestial phenomena will be examined, strengthening the Copernican hypothesis until it might seem that this must triumph absolutely. Here new reflections are adjoined which might be used in order to simplify astronomy, though not because of any necessity imposed by nature. (Drake 2001: 6)

Galileo stresses the importance of ‘simplicity’ in a scientific theory, which merely strengthens its plausibility, but certainly does not derive from natural necessity: the aim of an astronomical hypothesis is to ‘save the phenomena.’ The main idea is, of course, an ancient one. Ptolemy himself, in fact, makes important remarks on the empirical equivalence of competing hypotheses in the first book of his main treatise, the Almagest. Even though some of the phenomena recently observed on the Earth, Galileo claims, are ‘unknown to antiquity,’ they are still not sufficient to disprove one hypothesis in favor of the other.

He argues, however, that the importance of ‘celestial’ phenomena can be taken as far as to ‘reinforce’ the Copernican hypothesis as if it were to be conclusively demonstrated. I emphasized the words as if (“come se”) because they can shed light on the concept of “ipotesi” that Galileo employs in his preface. In his seminal book Philosophie des Als Ob, H. Vaihinger argued that ancient Greek thinkers had a multifarious concept of hypothesis: for the Greeks, the word ὑπόθεσις could mean either ‘foundational proposition’ (supporting something else), or ‘assumption’ (Lat. suppositio, as opposed to demonstratio or affirmatio), or even stylistic-rhetorical ‘fiction’ (Lat. fictio).

Whereas Plato and Aristotle - according to Vaihinger - mainly employed various versions of the first two types of ὑπόθεσις, the sceptics later brought the identification of hypothesis with fiction to its extreme consequences. These issues need not be further explored here: let it suffice for now to say that, for Vaihinger, when Plato and Aristotle employ the term ὑπόθεσις in the sense of ‘fiction,’ they only do so in order to introduce a reductio ad impossibile, in the course of which a certain proposition is ‘fictionally’ (or even ‘rhetorically’) assumed to be true, in order to show the absurd consequences that follow therefrom.

In Galileo’s preface to the Dialogue, the idea of ‘hypothesis’ as ‘fiction’ appears to play a major role, insofar as the alleged ‘fictionality’ of the Copernican model enables him not to defend it in terms of reality, which would have explicitly violated the Diktat established by the Congregation of the Index in 1616. Bellarmine, for example, had already formulated the principle of ‘purely hypothetical’ reasoning in his (in)famous letter to Foscarini, dated April 12, 1615:

Primo, dico che V. P. et il Sig.r Galileo facciano prudentemente a contentarsi di parlare ex suppositione e non assolutamente, come io ho sempre creduto che habbia parlato il Copernico. Perché il dire, che supposto che la Terra si muova e il Sole sia fermo si salvano tutte le apparenze meglio che con porre gli eccentrici et epicicli, è benissimo detto, e non ha pericolo nessuno; e questo basta al mathematico: ma volere affermare che realmente il Sole stia nel centro del mondo e solo si rivolzi in sé stesso senza correre dall’oriente all’occidente, e che la Terra stia nel terzo cielo e giri con somma velocità intorno al Sole, è cosa molto pericolosa non solo d’irritare i filosofi e teologi scolastici, ma anco di nuocere alla Santa Fede con rendere false le Scritture Sante [...].

bene [= anque bene], si comprenderà da gli esami particolari dell’apparenze alle quali si ha da sodisfare, perché sin ora si è discorso, e si discorrerà, ex hypothesis, supponendo che quanto al sodisfare all’apparenze ammendue le posizioni sieno eguamente accomodate” (Galilei 1963: 159).

19 Cf. Ptol., Almag. 1.7 (H21-H24): “One can show by the same arguments as the preceding that the earth cannot have any motion in the aforementioned directions, or indeed ever move at all from its position at the centre. For the same phenomena would result as would if it had any position other than that the central one” (trans. Toomer).
20 Vaihinger 1911: 248.
First, I say that it seems to me that Your Paternity and Mr. Galileo are proceeding prudently by limiting yourselves to speaking suppositionally and not absolutely, as I have always believed that Copernicus spoke. For there is no danger in saying that, by assuming the earth moves and the sun stands still, one saves all the appearances better than by postulating eccentrics and epicycles; and that is sufficient for the mathematician. However, it is different to want to affirm that in reality the sun is at the center of the world and only turns on itself without moving from east to west, and the earth is in the third heaven and revolves with great speed around the sun; this is a very dangerous thing, likely not only to irritate all scholastic philosophers and theologians, but also to harm the Holy Faith by rendering Holy Scripture false [...]. (cit. and trans. Finocchiaro 2008: 146)

Bellarmine appears to attribute Osiander's position to Copernicus himself. As long as the Earth is hypothetically supposed to be in motion, Bellarmine says, 'nobody is in danger' and the 'mathematician' is satisfied; however, to assert that the Earth really moves around the Sun would amount to a dangerous falsification of the Scriptures. This argument seems to imply that, should observational experience and necessary demonstration ever prove conclusively that the Earth moves and the Sun is at rest, the Catholic Church itself would have to rethink more cautiously the traditional interpretation of the seemingly opposed passages of the Scriptures. In fact, Bellarmine will later thaw to admit that such a possibility needs to be allowed for, should a conclusive and necessary demonstration of the geokinetic theory arise.

Does Galileo reach such a binding demonstration of the Copernican hypothesis? M. Finocchiaro (2010) divides the development of Galileo's defense of Copernicanism into three periods: a pre-telescopic stage, marked by indirect or implicit pursuit (in which his judgment is based on the theory's progressiveness, problem solving success in dynamics, and explanatory coherence in astronomy); then a full-blown middle period (1609-1616), characterized by explicit or qualified acceptance on mainly tentative or practical grounds (such as empirical accuracy, e.g. in the case of the 'Medicean stars'); finally, a problematic post-1616 stage, during which the issue is complicated by the intervention of the Catholic Church, and which is correspondingly dominated by the relationship of astronomy with religious beliefs (Copernicanism must be proved with a conclusive, necessary demonstration, not just on hypothetical grounds: otherwise, the Church will continue to ban it).

Now, the post-1616 ecclesiastical caveat provides precisely the context in which the preface of Galileo's Dialogue has to be read and understood. In its last page, the merely 'fictional' status of mathematical hypothesis is affirmed with a 'self-deprecatory' tone that is simply too forceful not to sound ironical:

**Dialogo dei massimi sistemi: al lettore**

Spero che da queste considerazioni il mondo conoscerà, che se le altre nazioni hanno navigato più, noi non abbiamo speculato meno, e che il rimettersi ad asserir la fermezza della Terra, e prendere il contrario solamente per capriccio matematico, non nasce da non aver contezza di quant'altri ci abbia pensato, ma, quando altro non fusse, da quelle ragioni che la pietà, la religione, il conoscimento

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22 Cf. the same Letter to Foscarini, a few lines below: “Third, I say that if there were a true demonstration that the sun is at the center of the world and the earth in the third heaven, and that the sun does not circle the earth but the earth circles the sun, then one would have to proceed with great care in explaining the Scriptures that appear contrary, and say rather that we do not understand them than that what is demonstrated is false. But I will not believe that there is such a demonstration, until it is shown to me. Nor is it the same to demonstrate that by assuming the sun to be at the center and the earth in heaven one can save the appearances, and to demonstrate that in truth the sun is at the center and the earth in heaven” (trans. Finocchiaro 2008: 147).

23 Heilbron 2010: 213. Cf. similarly Barberini’s somewhat clumsy effort to persuade Galileo of the purely hypothetical status of astronomical claims to natural knowledge (Heilbron 2010: 222).

24 Finocchiaro 2010: 63.
I hope that from these considerations the world will come to know that if other nations have navigated more, we have not theorized less. It is not from failing to take count of what others have thought that we have yielded to asserting that the earth is motionless, and holding the contrary to be a mere mathematical caprice, but (if for nothing else) for those reasons that are supplied by piety, religion, the knowledge of Divine Omnipotence, and a consciousness of the limitations of the human mind. (Drake 2001: 6)

Passages such as this one are evidently not to be taken at face value, especially considering Galileo's use of colloquial and quasi-comic language (“per capriccio matematico”).25 The use of “ipotesi” in the introductory letter of the Dialogue is ironically (and cautiously) derogatory, in that it implies the arbitrary or ‘capricious’ ficticiousness of the Copernican theory or model. A hypothesis, in this case, is a ‘fiction’ insofar as its explanatory value is confined to the realm of abstract mathematical reasoning. As Osiander already did, Galileo states that Copernicus' theory is a mere mathematical hypothesis, which religious and theological reasons do not allow to take too seriously. This claim, nevertheless, is precisely what the Dialogue is ultimately meant to refute: Bellarmine and his colleagues should instead read the preface, and be content with it.

Aristotelian assumptions
Why does science need hypotheses? The Peripatetic tradition grounded the substantial distinction between 'demonstrative' and 'non-demonstrative' knowledge on the fact that, whereas the former deals with 'what cannot be otherwise' (τὸ μὴ ἐνδεχόμενον ἄλλως ἔχειν), the latter is concerned with what is subject to change: that is, with 'what is capable of being otherwise' (τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον ἄλλως ἔχειν). Consider, for instance, this assessment of scientific knowledge and its principles offered by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics:26

Since scientific knowledge is a mode of conception concerning the universal and what exists by necessity, and demonstrated conclusions, like all scientific knowledge, proceed from first principles - for science involves reasoning-, it follows that there is no science, nor craft, nor prudence of the first principles of what is scientifically known. In fact, objects of scientific knowledge are demonstrable, while craft and prudence concern things that allow for change. [The knowledge] of first principles is not a matter of wisdom, either: for the wise man has to reach some conclusions by way of demonstration. Thus, if the faculties whereby we arrive at truth and never slip into falsehood, be it about things that allow for change or about invariable things, are scientific knowledge [episteme], prudence [phronesis], wisdom [sophia], and intellect [nous], and if none of these three - I mean prudence, scientific knowledge, and wisdom - allows us to apprehend the first principles, it remains that first principles must be apprehended by intellect [nous].27

In order to qualify as 'demonstrative science', knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) has to fulfil all three senses of ἀπόδειξις, i.e. to prove, to explain, and to teach.28 This is why science, in the Aristotelian epistemology, is defined as 'necessary knowledge through causes' (cognitio certa per causas): even when its reasonings are phrased in a conditional form, they are still apodeictic (or 'demonstrative') insofar as their logical conclusions are based upon necessary

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25 For a similar style, cf. the finale of the Fourth Day: “[Salv.] Credo veramente che l’imaginazion vostra, più che la nostra tardanza, abbia allungato il tempo; e per non lo prolungar più, sarà bene che, senza interporre altre parole, venghiamo al fatto, e mostriamo come la natura ha permesso (o sia che la cosa in rei veritate stia così, o pur per ischerzo e quasi perigliarsi giuoco de’ nostri ghiribizzi), ha, dico, permesso, che i movimenti, per ogni altro rispetto che per soddisfare al flusso e reflusso del mare, attribuiti gran tempo fa alla Terra, si trovino ora tanto aggiustamente servire alla causa di quello [...].” (Galilei 1963: 511).
26 Cf. also De an. 433a30, Met. 1015a34, EN 1140b22.
27 Translation mine.
or evident premisses. Is it possible to have necessary, demonstrative, and therefore scientific knowledge of natural phenomena, which are contingent and variable by definition? Far from being radically anti-Aristotelian, Galileo's scientific methodology is largely based on an ideal of science (scientia) as demonstration, even though it is complicated by oscillating views on how to define this demonstrative character itself.

The main source for Aristotle's conception of demonstrative science is his *Organon*. In particular, the Prior Analytics contain an elaborate theorization of hypothetical argument per impossibile, which aims at demonstrating the contradictory of the initial supposition by showing the absurd consequences deriving from the assumption of the initial proposition itself as true.

Aristot., *An. Pr.* 1.23, 41a21-38

It is evident, then, that the ostensive syllogisms come to their conclusion in the aforementioned figures. That this is so also for the arguments that lead to the impossible will be clear from the following. All those who reach a conclusion through the impossible deduce the falsehood by a syllogism, but prove the initial thesis from a hypothesis, when something impossible results from the assumption of the contradictory. For example, one proves that the diagonal [of the square] is incommensurable [with the side] because odd numbers turn out to be equal to even ones if one assumes that it is commensurable. Now that odd numbers turn out to be equal to even ones is deduced by syllogism, but that the diagonal is incommensurable is proved from a hypothesis, since a falsehood results because of its contradictory. For this is what was meant by 'deducing through the impossible', namely showing that something impossible follows because of the initial hypothesis. Thus, since there is an ostensive syllogism for the falsehood in arguments that lead to the impossible while the initial thesis is proved from a hypothesis, and since we said before that ostensive syllogisms come to a conclusion through those figures, it is evident that syllogisms through the impossible will also be in those figures. And the same holds for all other arguments from a hypothesis, for in all of them the syllogism is for the substituted proposition, while the initial thesis is reached through an agreement or some other kind of hypothesis. And if this is true, it is necessary that every demonstration and every syllogism come about through the three aforementioned figures. But once this has been proved, it is clear that every syllogism is perfected through the first figure and is reduced to the universal syllogisms in this figure.

(trans. Striker 2009: 38, modified)

Which proposition is the hypothesis that explains Aristotle's classification of this type of reasoning as 'arguments from a hypothesis'? Ancient and modern commentators are divided: is it the contradictory of the *demonstrandum* (Alexander of Aphrodisias), or the denial of the impossible conclusion (Mignucci), or the logical rule used in the step from the impossibility of the first conclusion to the assertion of the *demonstrandum* (Ross)? In the latter case, the hypothesis is a logical law that is evidently valid.

More generally, however, Aristotle conceives of arguments 'from a hypothesis' as based on a proposition that is accepted as true by an explicit agreement (ὁμολογία) between the διαλεγόμενοι. Why does Aristotle choose not to deal with hypothetical arguments as a whole, and just focuses on *reductio ad impossibile* instead? Perhaps this is due to the fact that his readers would have been already familiar with Plato's hypothetical arguments (cf. e.g. *Meno* 86e ff.), whereas the classification of *reductio ad impossibile* under the same category is Aristotle's own innovation. Let it suffice, for our purposes, to say that Galileo's conception of *ex suppositione* arguments is ostensibly influenced by Aristotle's application of hypothetical reasoning to arguments *per impossibile* alone.

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29 On knowledge *ex condicione* in the later Aristotelian tradition, see notably Crombie 1953: 268.
30 See notably Wallace 1974: 89 and McMullin 1978: 211.
31 Striker 2009: 177.
Let us now turn our attention to the discussion of natural motion at the beginning of the First Day of the Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems:

*Dialogo dei massimi sistemi: giornata prima*

[Salv.] Se i corpi integrali del mondo devono esser di lor natura mobili, è impossibile che i movimenti loro siano retti, o altri che circolari: e la ragione è assai facile e manifesta. Imperocché quello che si muove di moto retto, muta luogo; e continuando di muoversi, si va più e più sempre allontanando dal termine onde si partì e da tutti i luoghi per i quali successivamente ei va passando; e se tal moto naturalmente se gli conviene, adunque egli da principio non era nel luogo suo naturale, e però non erano le parti del mondo con ordine perfetto disposte: ma noi supponghiamo, quelle esser perfettamente ordinate: adunque, come tali, è impossibile che abbian no da natura di mutar luogo, ed in conseguenza di muoversi di moto retto. (Galilei 1963: 25)

If all integral bodies in the world are by nature movable, it is impossible that their motions should be straight, or anything else but circular; and the reason is very plain and obvious. For whatever moves straight changes place and, continuing to move, goes ever farther from its starting point and from every place through which it successively passes. If that were the motion which naturally suited it, then at the beginning it was not in its natural place. So then the parts of the world were not disposed in perfect order. But we are assuming them to be perfectly in order; and in that case, it is impossible that it should be their nature to change place, and consequently to move in a straight line. (Drake 2001: 21, modified)

Filippo Salviati, Galileo's spokesman, denies that integral bodies are endowed by nature with rectilinear motion: in so doing, he employs the Aristotelian language of *reductio ad impossibile*. The proposition 'all parts of the universe are disposed in perfect order' (or the like) is assumed to be true as a preliminary 'supposition', and it thereby contributes to prove the 'impossibility' (that is, the falsehood) of the original hypothesis - namely of the proposition 'the motions of integral bodies is rectilinear', or the like - once the consequences of the latter are shown to contradict the supposition concerning the perfect order of the universe. The argument, in other words, aims at proving that integral bodies do not move in a straight line, i.e. at demonstrating the contradictory of the hypothesis. Appearing at the outset of the First Day, this argument could be read as a rhetorical move on Salviati's part, striving to beat the Peripatetics at their own game.33

It is worth noting, in fact, that the language of *ex suppositione* reasoning is strikingly shared by both the 'Galilean' character of the Dialogue (Salviati) and the 'Aristotelian' character (Simplicio). Let us consider, for instance, this passage from the Fourth Day:

*Dialogo dei massimi sistemi: giornata quarta*

[Simpl.] Non mi par che si possa negare che il discorso fatto da voi proceda molto probabilmente, argumentando, come noi dichiamo, *ex suppositione*, cioè posto che la Terra si muova de i due movimenti attribuitigli dal Copernico: ma quando si escludano tali movimenti, il tutto resta vano ed invalido; l'esclusion poi di tale ipotesi ci viene dall'istesso vostro discorso assai manifestamente additata. Voi con la supposizion de i due movimenti terrestri rendete ragione del flusso e reflusso, ed all'incontro, circolarmente discorrendo, dal flusso e reflusso traete l'indizio e la confermazione di quei medesimi movimenti: e passando a più specifico discorso, dite che l' acqua per esser corpo fluido, e non tenacemente annesso alla Terra, non è costretta ad ubbidir puntualmente ad ogni suo movimento, dal che inducete poi il suo flusso e reflusso. (Galilei 1963: 536)

I do not think it can be denied that your argument goes along very plausibly, the reasoning being *ex suppositione*, as we say; that is, assuming that the earth does move in the two motions assigned to it by Copernicus. But if we exclude these movements, all the rest is vain and invalid; and the exclusion of this hypothesis is very clearly pointed out to us by your own reasoning. Under the assumption of the two terrestrial movements, you give reasons for the ebbing and flowing; and vice versa, arguing circularly, you draw from the ebbing and flowing the sign and confirmation of those same two movements. Passing to a more specific argument, you say that on account of the water being a fluid body and not firmly attached to the earth, it is not rigorously constrained to obey all the earth's movement. From this you deduce its ebbing and flowing. (Drake 2001: 506-507)

33 As for this dialectical strategy, we shall see that it is employed by Galileo in other parts of the *Dialogue*, too.
Simplicio starts by approvingly classifying Salviati’s discourse as a type of *ex suppositione* argument. What does he mean by *ex suppositione* in this context? If we follow Simplicio in representing the argument in a propositional form, ‘if *p* then *q*’, we can see that *p* stands for a mathematical hypothesis (= the earth’s movement as posited by Copernicus) and *q* stands for observable phenomena (= the tides). Simplicio, in other words, construes Salviati’s argument as a form of ‘hypothetico-deductive’ reasoning, which he then labels as ‘circular’ by charging it with *affirmatio consequentis*.

More importantly, Simplicio’s attempt at categorizing Salviati’s proof as hypothetico-deductive reasoning implicitly places it outside of the domain of science, which needs to be - in an Aristotelian perspective - strictly demonstrative, in order to be qualified as such. On the contrary, hypothetico-deductive arguments are eminently non-demonstrative, since they are based on non-evident (and therefore non-necessary) hypotheses: in fact, any hypothetico-deductive process proceeding from a hypothesized beginning to a necessarily verified conclusion cannot *ipso facto* transform its hypotheses into non-hypothetical truths.34

Now, the traditional procedure of *ex suppositione* reasoning - as it was understood in the Aristotelian epistemology of Galileo’s contemporaries - is a conditional argument of the form ‘if *p* then *q*’, where, however, *p* stands for an inductive (i.e. non-necessary) generalization deriving from the observation of nature, and *q* is a (non-observable) antecedent cause or condition necessary to produce it, as in the *modus ponendo ponens* of scholastic syllogistics.35 This way of reasoning is also exemplified in Galileo’s writings; yet Galileo gives it a particular turn which is extremely influential in his scientific methodology. Let us consider, for example, the following exchange between Simplicio and Salviati in the First Day of the Dialogue:

**Dialogo dei massimi sistemi: giornata prima**

[Simplicio] Aristotile fece il principal suo fondamento sul discorso a priori, mostrando la necessità dell’inalterabilità del cielo per i suoi principii naturali, manifesti e chiari; e la medesima stabili doppo a posteriori, per il senso e per le tradizioni degli antichi.

[Salviati] Cotesto, che voi dite, è il metodo col quale egli ha scritta la sua dottrina, ma non credo già che e’ sia quello col quale egli la investigò, perché io tengo per fermo ch’è procurasse prima, per via de’ sensi, dell’esperienze e delle osservazioni, di assicurarsi quanto fusse possibile della conclusione, e che doppo andasse ricercando i mezzi da poterla dimostrare, perché così si fa per lo più nelle scienze dimostrative: e questo avviene perché, quando la conclusione è vera, servendosi del metodo resolutivo, agevolmente si incontra qualche proposizione già dimostrata, o si arriva a qualche principio per sé noto; ma se la conclusione sia falsa, si può procedere in infinito senza incontrar mai verità alcuna conosciuta, se già altri non incontrasse alcun impossibile o assurdo manifesto. (Galilei 1963: 64-65)

“[Simplicio] Aristotle first laid the basis of his argument *a priori*, showing the necessity of the inalterability of heaven by means of natural, evident, and clear principles. He afterward supported the same *a posteriori*, by the senses and by the traditions of the ancients.

[Salviati] What you refer to is the method he uses in writing his doctrine, but I do not believe it to be that with which he investigated it. Rather, I think it certain that he first obtained it by means of the senses, experiments, and observations, to assure *himself as much* as possible of his conclusions. Afterward he sought means to make

34 See e.g. McTighe 1968: 371.
35 Wallace 1974: 95.
them demonstrable. That is what is done for the most part in the demonstrative sciences; this comes about because when the conclusion is true, one may by making use of the analytic method hit upon some proposition which is already demonstrated, or arrive at some principle known in itself; but if the conclusion is false, one can go on forever without ever finding any known truth - if indeed one does not encounter some impossibility or manifest absurdity. (Drake 2001: 57-58, modified)

Even though Salviati might *prima facie* appear to advocate a form of hypothetico-deductive method, the type of reasoning proposed here is eminently hypothetico-conditional: a conclusion, in fact, is first ‘hypothesized’ on the grounds of observational experience, then demonstrated by way of successive logical implications leading to an already known or demonstrated proposition. The latter part is what Salviati calls ‘analytic method’ (= “metodo resolutivo”). In this respect, Galileo’s debt to his Renaissance predecessors and contemporaries has been thoroughly investigated by historians of early modern science.36

Yet the hallmark of Galileo’s original approach to Renaissance Aristotelianism lies, in my view, precisely in the careful effort to distinguish the way in which Aristotle wrote and ‘presented’ his doctrine from the way in which he actually went about ‘investigating’ it. In the Dialogue, moreover, he seems to attribute to Aristotle what is in fact Salviati’s (= his own) method of scientific inquiry. The language of the passage here considered well illustrates how Galileo remains consistent in adopting Aristotelian ‘idioms’ (cf. for instance “scienze dimostrative”, “verità alcuna conosciuta”) in order to ‘Aristotelianize’ his own epistemological position, whose Platonic elements I am about to investigate.

*Platonic analysis*

To be sure, an earlier version of the ‘analytic method’ mentioned by Salviati had already been outlined, before Aristotle, by Plato’s Socrates in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere. The *Phaedo*, in particular, has long been acknowledged to offer the best and most complete account of the method of hypothesis in Plato.37 At *Phaed*, 100a3-8, for instance, Socrates sets out to tackle the problem of the mortality of the soul, and he explains that all his inquiries concerning philosophical matters proceed from an initial assumption, or hypothesis, of whose truth he is already assured. In fact, he says, the starting hypothesis must be a proposition or a principle deemed to be ‘the strongest’:

καὶ ὑποθέμενος ἑκάστοτε λόγον ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμενέστατον εἶναι, ἃ μὲν ἂν μοι δοκῇ τοῦτο συμφωνεῖν τίθημι ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα, καὶ περὶ αἰτίας καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων ὄντων, ἃ δὲν ἂν μὴ, ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ. βούλομαι δὲ σοι σαφέστερον εἰπεῖν ἃ λέγω· οἶμαι γάρ σε νῦν οὐ μανθάνειν.

I assume [hypothémenos] in each case a principle that I deem to be the strongest [erromenéstaton], and I regard as true whatever seems to me to agree with it, whether concerning the cause or anything else, and whatever disagrees with it, I consider as untrue. But I want to explain you more clearly what I mean: in fact, I think that you do not understand now.38

supponensque rationem semper, quam esse judico validissimam, quaeconque huic consonare videantur, pono equidem tanquam vera; idque ago et circa rerum causas et circa reliqua omnia: quae vero dissonant, vera esse nego. Volo equidem, quae dico, tibi apertius explanare. puto enim te nondum intelligere. (Ficino)

A few lines below, at 101c9-102a1, Socrates makes a further statement concerning the hypothetical method, urging Cebes not to answer objections raised

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37 Cf. e.g. Cellucci 2012: 57.
38 Translation mine.
against the hypothesis itself "until you have examined the [logical] consequences of the hypotheses, to see if they agree or disagree with each other" (some hypotheses are indeed stronger than others, as Simmias points out at 92d2-e2). Socrates also asserts that a hypothesis may be corroborated by being deduced from a "higher" proposition (Phaedo 101d5-e3). Thus, the initial hypothesis acts both as a premise for causal-explanatory reasoning and as a conclusion that must itself be proved - or refuted - on the basis of higher principles (cf. Phaedo 101e, 107b).

Whether Galileo read it in Sebastiano Erizzo’s 1574 Italian edition or in Marsilio Ficino’s 1484 Latin version (more probably the latter), there is no reason to doubt that he was familiar with Plato’s Phaedo. Galileo’s analytic method can, on the one hand, be regarded as consonant with Plato’s insofar as both specify that the researcher must have a ‘preliminary’ grasp of the validity and soundness of the hypothesis, before being able to build upon it and to define the truth-value of further propositions as depending on whether they agree or disagree with the initial hypothesis. On the other hand, Plato’s Socrates - unlike Galileo’s Salviati - never makes clear in the Phaedo what the hypothesis itself must eventually receive logical confirmation from.

Some light might be shed on this issue by a passage in the well-known ‘Divided Line’ section of Plato’s Republic.

Plato, Resp. 510b2-511a1
Σκόπει δὴ αὕτη καὶ τὴν τοῦ νοητοῦ τομῆν ἢ τμητέον.
Πη;
Ἡ τῶν μὲν αὐτοῦ τοῖς τότε μιμηθέειν ὡς εἰκόσιν χρωµένη ψυχὴ ζητεῖν ἀναγκάζεται εξ ὑποθέσεως, οὐκ ἐπὶ ἀρχῇ πορευοµένη ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τελευτήν, τὸ δ’ αὐτῶν ἄτοµον—τὸ ἐπὶ ἀρχῇ ἀνυπόθετον—εξ ὑποθέσεως ιδέα καὶ ἄνευ τῶν περὶ ἐκείνων εἰκόνων, αὐτῶν εἰς εἰς τὴν μέθοδον ποιοµένην.
Ταῦτ’, ἐφη, ἡ λέγεις, οὐχ ἰκανῶς ἔµαθον. Αλλ’ αὐτῷ γὰρ τῶν προειρήµενων µαθήσῃ. οἶµαι γάρ σε εἰδέναι ὅτι οἱ περὶ τὰς γεωµετρίας τε καὶ λογισµοὺς καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πραγµατεύµατα, ὑποθέµενοι τὸ τε περιττὸ καὶ τὸ ἀρτιὸ καὶ τὰ σχήµατα καὶ γωνιῶν τριττὰ εἴδη καὶ ἄλλα τούτων ἀδελφὰ καθ’ ἑκάστην μέθοδον ταῦτα µὲν ὡς εἰδότες, ποιησάµενοι ὑποθέσεις αὐτὰ, οὐδένα λόγον οὔτε αὐτοῖς οὔτε ἄλλοις ἐπὶ αὐτῶν διδόναι ὡς παντὶ φανερῶς, ἐκ τούτων δ’ ἀρχήµενοι τὰ λοιπὰ ἢ ἔτι διεξαγόµενε τελευτῶσιν ὁµολογοµένως ὡς εἰκόσιν χρωµένοι, ζητοῦντες δὲ αὐτὰ εἴδειν ὃς οὐκ ἂν ἄλλῳ ἴδοι τις ἢ τῇ διανοίᾳ.
Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἐφη, τοῦτο γε οἶδα. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὅτι τοῖς ὁρωµένοις εἰς εἰς προσχρῆµα καὶ τοῦς λόγους περὶ αὐτῶν ποιοῦνται, οὐ περὶ τούτων διανοοµένους, ἀλλ’ ἀκείµενοι περὶ οἷς ταῦτα οἶδα, τοῦ τετραγώνου αὐτοῦ ἔκαστον τοῦς λόγους ποιοῦµενοι καὶ διαµέτρον αὐτῆς, ἀλλ’ οὐ ταῦτα ἢ γράφουσιν, καὶ τάλα οὕτως, αὐτὰ µὲν ταῦτα ἢ πλάττοσι τοῦ καὶ γράφουσιν, ὅν καὶ σκιάκει καὶ ἐν ὑδάσιν εἰκόνες εἰσὶν, τούτως µὲν ὡς εἰκόσιν αὐτῶν χρωµένοι, ζητοῦντες δὲ αὐτὰ εἴδειν ὃς οὐκ ἂν ἄλλῳ ἴδοι τις ἢ τῇ διανοίᾳ.

Now consider again in what way the section of the intelligible is to be divided. What way is that?

39 Whether the meaning of ‘accord and disaccord’ in the whole section refers to logical deducibility or to internal consistency is not relevant for my present purposes: for the problem cf. Robinson 1953e; Rowe 1993; Newton Byrd 2007; Benson 2015: 136. Dancy 2004: 297 offers a good attempt at overcoming the antinomy between ‘logical entailment’ and ‘logical consistency’ by simply acknowledging that Plato had never done any formal logic: rather, according to Dancy (2004: 298), one should construe symphonē as referring to a loose form of ‘enthymematic entailment’, where hypothesized premises are needed to let the inference proceed, as well as a general notion of consistency whereby the further claims to which the hypothesis gives rise are jointly defensible. Thus, Socrates’ ‘concordant with’ means neither ‘entailed by’ nor ‘consistent with’, but something much vaguer.

40 See Favaro 1886: 244-245.
In the one section, the soul, using as images what was imitated at previous stages, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, not proceeding toward a first principle but toward a conclusion; but in the other section, the soul moves from the hypothesis toward an unhypothesized beginning which transcends hypotheses, without making any use of the images employed in the previous section, relying solely on forms and progressing systematically through forms.

I do not really understand what you mean, he said, but tell me again.

I will, said I. I think you will understand more readily after a few preliminary remarks. I think you know that those who study geometry and arithmetic and similar subjects postulate the odd and the even, geometrical figures and the three kinds of angles, and other relationships of this sort according to each system of inquiry. So, taking these things as known, they make them their hypotheses and do not think it worth their while to provide any justification for them to themselves or others, on the grounds that they are evident to everyone. And starting from these, they go on through the remaining steps and end up in agreement at the point they set out to reach in their investigation.

Yes, of course, I know all that!

So you'll also know that they make use of the visible forms as well and make their arguments about them, although considering not the actual things, but those they resemble, making their arguments on the basis of the square itself and the diagonal itself, but not the line they are drawing, and similarly with everything else. These very things they are forming and drawing, of which shadows and reflections in waters are images, they now in turn use as their images and aiming to see those very things which they could not otherwise see except in thought.41

Plato's Socrates distinguishes between two types of hypothetical reasoning. The first one, in which the soul makes use of images belonging to the visible world and proceeds from hypothesis to a conclusion, is assimilated to geometrical reasoning; the second one, in which the mind grasps an unhypothesized first principle by virtue of reason itself, is equated with dialectic. Geometers, in fact, use postulates, axioms, and hypotheses as cornerstones for their arguments, just assuming their validity without proof, since they hold them to be self-evident. Mathematical reasoning, in other words, is unable to escape from the non-demonstrability of its hypotheses, which it cannot transcend.

The dialectician, on the other hand, makes use of 'genuine' hypotheses as 'steps and starting points' (511b3-4), only to transcend them and to reach an unhypothesized first principle (ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος): once such a principle has been grasped, the argument can move backwards again, eventually comes down to a conclusion that is consistent with the first principle. In performing this upward-then-downward movement, the dialectician does not need to rely on sense perception or visible images at all.

If we now compare Galileo's 'analytic method', as outlined by Salviati in the First Day of the Dialogue, with Plato's 'dialectic method', as outlined by Socrates in the sixth book of the Republic, we can notice that both aim at reaching a non-hypothetical proposition, which can contribute (by way of successive logical implications) to demonstrate the conclusion (hypothesis) from which the reasoning started.42 This 'unhypothesized' proposition, however, need certainly not be 'self-evident' for Galileo, let alone an extra-dianoetic principle 'transcending' the hypotheses themselves.43 Salviati, in fact, makes it clear that the first principle reached by the analytic method can be an 'already demonstrated' proposition,

41 Trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy 2013: 2.99-100 (modified).
42 In his juvenile writings (especially the Additamenta), Galileo calls 'resolution ex suppositione' a type of reasoning in which 'a conclusion is resolved to principles that have been supposed, but which need not have taken the form of suppositions because they are capable of proof; then the resolution continues until any further suppositions that might be required for their proof are uncovered, and each of these is proved in turn, until one comes finally to principles that are most easily grasped and that require no supposition whatever” (Wallace 1984: 120).
43 Cf. e.g. McTighe 1968: 371.
or a truth independently known.

It has been suggested that one likely source of Galileo's association of the best method of research with geometrical demonstration is Pappus, *Collectio Mathematica*. Galileo probably knew Commandino's translation of Pappus, where resolutio is systematically used for the Greek term ἀνάλυσις. In antiquity, Plato himself was often credited with the invention of the geometric method of analysis. The latter, however, is now largely considered to have been common currency among Greek mathematicians of Plato's own time, and it has been convincingly shown that Plato's use of geometrical analysis as a heuristic method is primarily meant to provide a foil or model for philosophical inquiry.

The philosopher, for Plato, is meant to follow the geometers' example in proceeding from logically posterior to logically prior propositions, so as to discover the principles suitable to answering conclusively a certain question. In philosophical terms, Galileo's reminiscence of Plato's analytic method in the *Dialogue* might be part of a larger strategy, aiming at highlighting the superiority of geometrical demonstration over syllogistic, Aristotelian regressus. Galileo, in fact, seems to resist the syllogistic methodology of Zabarella and his contemporaries, while revitalizing a distinctively Platonic tradition of analytic reasoning, according to which the hypothetical method is endowed with a scientifically heuristic value (rather than just being part of a system of logic or a theory of causation).

To sum up, for Salviati, the natural scientist is required to have a preliminary grasp of the soundness of a hypothesis, before being able to embark on a full-fledged demonstration and define the truth-value of further propositions based on whether they logically agree or disagree with the hypothesis itself. The latter, in turn, must be supported by already demonstrated propositions, self-evident general principles, or statements independently known to be true. Unlike Plato, Salviati does not hint at the notion of a universal, all-encompassing, διάκρισις that transcends the dianoetic level of reasoning and ultimately serves to unify all sciences. In this respect, Salviati's conception of 'first principles' distances itself from the Platonic view, but his notion of hypothesis is remarkably indebted to the Platonic tradition.

Even before the *Dialogue*, Galileo had already approached the issue of hypotheses and conclusions in the brief, witty treatise *The Assayer* (1623). Among the numerous objections to his scientific procedures that Galileo has to confront, one point of concern is constituted by his use of new technological instruments. In fact, some opponents argued, Galileo would never have achieved his most important astronomical discoveries without the help of the telescope:

> Il Saggiatore, 13.29-30

Ma forse alcuno mi potrebbe dire, che di non piccolo aiuto è al ritrovamento e risoluzion d'alcun problema l'esser prima in qualche modo reso consapevole della verità della conclusione, e sicuro di non cercar l'impossibile, e che perciò l'avviso e la certezza che l'occhiale era di già stato fatto mi fusse d'aiuto tale, che per avventura senza quello non l'avrei ritrovato. A questo io rispondo distinguendo, e dico che l'aiuto recatomi dall'avviso svegli la volontà ad applicarvi il pensiero, che senza quello puo esser ch'io mai non v'avessi pensato; ma che, oltre a questo, tale avviso possa agevol l'invenzione, io non lo credo: e dico di più, che il ritrovare la risoluzione d'un problema segnato e nominato, è opera di maggiore ingegno assai che 'l ritrovarne uno non pensato né nominato, è opera di maggiore ingegno assai che 'l ritrovarne uno non pensato né nominato, perché in questo puo aver grandissima parte il caso, ma quello è tutta opera del discorso. (Galilei 2005: 156)

46 Pesaro, 1588: 157r-v.
47 Cf. e.g. Diog. Laert. 3.24; see further Sayre 1969: 23.
48 Cf. especially *Meno* 86d-87c. A scholion to the fifth book of Euclid's *Elements* attributes the content of the book itself, which mainly concerns the axiomatic construction of a theory of proportions, to Eudoxus of Cnidus, whose work is said to have been contemporaneous with Plato's (D32 Lasserre). Cf. also Procl., *In Eucl. El.* 67.2-8 Friedlein, where Eudoxus is credited with an increase in the number of 'general' (καθόλου) theorems. At any rate, it is more plausible that Plato was referring to a 'general tendency' in Greek mathematics rather than to a specific author, such as Eudoxus himself.
49 See e.g. Menn 2002: 216. For late-antique notions of analysis and method, cf. notably Morrison 1997.
51 Cf. e.g. *An. Post.* 76a16-18.
Perhaps someone will say, however, that in the discovery and solution of a problem it is of no little assistance first to be conscious in some way that the conclusion is true and to be certain that one is not attempting the impossible; and hence that my knowledge and certainty that a telescope had already been made were of so much help to me that without this I should perhaps not have made the discovery. To this I shall reply by making a distinction. I say that the aid afforded me by the news awoke in me the will to apply my mind to it, and without this I might never have thought about it; but beyond that I do not believe that such news could facilitate the invention. I say, moreover, that to discover the solution of a known and designated problem is a labor of much greater ingenuity than to solve a problem which has not been thought of and defined, for luck may play a large role in the latter while the former is entirely a work of reasoning. (trans. Drake 1960: 212)

Albeit highly polemical and rhetorical, Galileo’s self-defense tackles a crucial issue of epistemology, namely the role played by technological progress in a scientist’s work. His argument draws a clear distinction between the role of the telescope as an incentive, or ‘stimulus’, to apply his thought to an astronomical problem (which he acknowledges), and the centrality of the telescope in actually bringing about the new astronomical discoveries themselves (which he altogether denies).

In fact, for Galileo, even before starting to look for a solution to any given scientific problem, the researcher must be ‘aware, in some way’, of the validity of the conclusion that still needs to be proved. To be sure, new technologies can greatly help the scientist to find solutions to already known and familiar problems: but it is much more difficult to solve a time-honored problem than to ‘invent’ another one from scratch, since only the former can be adequately described as being a purely ‘discursive’ matter.52

It ought to be noted that, about ten years before the Dialogue, Galileo is already convinced that, in any matter of scientific reasoning, the validity of the conclusions must at least be preliminarily shown to be plausible before they can start being demonstrated: this is what Galileo considers, as we have seen, the hallmark of ‘demonstrative science’. In casting his epistemic procedures as ‘demonstrative science’, Galileo continues to ‘Aristotelianize’ his language: a terminological and conceptual palimpsest which was perhaps facilitated, in the case of his conception of hypothesis, by Ficino’s and Erizzo’s translation of Plato’s ὑπόθεσις as suppositio and “supposizione” respectively. A comparison between the above passage from The Assayer and Salviati’s reply to Simplicio in the First Day of the Dialogue (quoted above) can readily show how this idea is a constant element in Galileo’s epistemological thought, at least in its ‘mature’ phase.

More geometrico

Both Plato’s dialectics and Aristotle’s theory of first principles are heavily influenced by mathematical - and specifically geometrical - ideas, as H.D.P. Lee has shown.53 For Aristotle, in particular, first principles are true, indemonstrable, necessary, causal, and prior to the conclusions drawn from them. Principles can be of three kinds: axioms, definitions, hypotheses. Each science thus has a minimum of preliminary, indemonstrable assumptions that allow to deduce its propositions and conclusions logically. Axioms (or ‘common notions’) are shared by more than one science, and are presupposed before the reasoning process starts. Definitions, which are never ontological, are meant to answer the question τί ἐστι about any object of a particular science, whereas hypotheses assume the existence of the object in question (and are therefore ontological). Aristotle’s tripartite system can be mapped onto Euclid’s three types of first principle (which are all self-evident and assumed without proof): namely, common notions (κοινα ἔννοιαι), definitions (ὅροι), and postulates (ἀιτήματα).54

In the Posterior Analytics, Aristotle draws an important distinction between hypotheses, which are assumed without proof despite their being provable, and postulates, which he considers as illegitimate insofar as they are assumed without the preliminary consent of both the participants to the discussion. In fact, the very existence of hypotheses

52 Or an inquiry μετὰ λόγου, in Aristotelian terms?
53 Lee 1935.
54 In fact, Aristotle’s views on demonstration show the familiarity with geometric analysis in early Academic circles: see Menn 2002: 209.
and postulates presupposes a dialogue between a teacher and a learner:

Aristot., An. Post. 1.10, 76b23-34

That which necessarily is per se and which must necessary be held as existing
is neither a hypothesis nor an illegitimate postulate. In fact, demonstration is not
directed to external reasoning, but to the internal one that is in the soul, since
this is true of any syllogism. For it is always possible to raise objections to external
reasoning, whereas this is not always true of the internal one. On the one hand,
those propositions are hypothesized which, despite being provable, are assumed [by
the teacher] without proof, if the learner believes them; and they are not hypotheses
simpliciter, but only in relation to the learner. On the other hand, those propositions
are illegitimate postulates which [the teacher] assumes without the learner having
an opinion on them, or even if the learner has a contrary opinion. And this is the
difference between hypothesis and illegitimate postulate: the latter is the opposite
of the learner’s opinion, [whereas the former is] demonstrable, but assumed and
used without proof. 55

Aristotle’s conception of postulates, as outlined in this passage, is very different
from that of Euclidean mathematics: this might be due to the fact that what we call
‘Euclid’s geometry’ had not yet been systematized into a single chain of deduction
from first principles at the time in which the Posterior Analytics were written. 56 On
the other hand, the Aristotelian idea of hypothetical reasoning, in the Posterior
Analytics, is fundamentally comparable with the outline of geometrical arguments
offered by Plato in the Republic, except for the fact that Aristotle distinguished
between hypotheses simpliciter and those that - despite being provable - are assumed
without proof, whereas Plato conceives of geometrical hypotheses as unproven
propositions par excellence (cf. Aristotle’s ‘postulates’).

In fact, a major point of ‘agreement’ between the two thinkers - at least in
the domain of mathematics - lies in their similarly ‘sceptical’ judgment concerning
preliminary assumptions made without proof, 57 a substantial hint at the fact that
both Plato and Aristotle share a common image of geometrical reasoning. 58 At
any rate, as already observed, they both consider mathematics as a blueprint for
the main characteristics of any science claiming to be ‘demonstrative’: an idea that
Galileo, who doubtlessly conceives of mathematics as a ‘Euclidean’ - i.e. systematic
discipline, is hardly willing to abandon. Consider, for instance, the following passage
from the Two New Sciences (1638):

Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche intorno a due nuove scienze, 3.197

Le proprietà del moto equabile sono state considerate nel libro precedente:
ora dobbiamo trattare del moto accelerato. E in primo luogo conviene investigare e
spiegare la definizione che corrisponde esattamente al moto accelerato di cui si serve
la natura. Infatti, sebbene sia lecito immaginare arbitrariamente qualche forma di
moto e contemplare le proprietà che ne conseguono (così, infatti, coloro che si
immaginarono linee spirali o concoidi, originate da certi movimenti, ne hanno
lodevolmente dimostrate le proprietà argomentando ex suppositione, anche se di tali
movimenti non usi la natura), tuttavia, dal momento che la natura si serve di una
certa forma di accelerazione nei gravi discendenti, abbiamo stabilito di studiarne le

55 Translation mine.
56 Lee 1935: 117.
57 For Plato’s ‘scepticism’ concerning hypothetical propositions assumed without any test of their
validity, see e.g. Robinson 1980: 147.
58 It is also important to note that Aristotle’s conception of mathematics is largely based on the
(quasi-Platonic) idea of geometry as the study of universals, which are separable in thought from
tangible matter, but result from the combination of geometric properties and intelligible matter (see
The properties belonging to uniform motion have been discussed in the preceding section; but accelerated motion remains to be considered. And first of all it seems desirable to find and explain a definition best fitting natural phenomena. For anyone may invent an arbitrary type of motion and discuss its properties; thus, for instance, some have imagined helices and conchoids as described by certain motions which are not met with in nature, and have very commendably established the properties which these curves possess, arguing on the basis of their hypothesis; but we have decided to consider the phenomena of bodies falling with an acceleration such as actually occurs in nature and to make this definition of accelerated motion exhibit the essential features of observed accelerated motions. (trans. Crew 1991: 160, modified)

Strikingly enough, the 'first principles' (cf. "in primo luogo") of Galileo's treatment of uniformly accelerated motion are not hypotheses, but 'definitions'. We have already seen that, besides hypotheses and axioms, Aristotle similarly classifies 'definitions' as one of the possible 'first principles' of scientific reasoning: in fact, at An. Post. 75b31, he asserts that a definition (ὁρισμός) can be the ἀρχή of a demonstration. Yet Galileo's account includes a further proviso: in order for a demonstration to be valid (in the domain of mechanics), the preliminary definitions must 'correspond exactly' to the phenomena observed in nature.

A mathematician is always allowed, in fact, to 'hypothesize' arbitrary definitions (which do not correspond to any phenomenon empirically observable in nature) and logically deduce certain properties therefrom; but this type of ex suppositione argument cannot, of course, lead to any scientific theory capable of 'agreeing' with the phenomena. The idea that definitions must 'save the phenomena' might prima facie seem to be consistent with the Aristotelian theory (An. Post. 100b2 ff.) whereby induction, based on experience deriving from the accumulation of perceptions and memories, can lead to the formation of first principles. Now, Galileo is no inductivist: for him, the hypothesized principles of a

59 Galileo's knowledge of Aristotle's Posterior Analytics is well documented: as a young man, Galileo wrote a commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics, entitled Disputationes de praecognitione et demonstratione (cf. McMullin 1978: 217).

60 The need for a careful assessment of the validity of the initial hypothesis is expressed by Plato's Socrates at Crat. 436c-d: "if the giver [of names] made a mistake in the first place and then distorted the rest to meet it and compelled them to accord with him, it would not be at all surprising, just as in diagrams sometimes, when a slight and inconspicuous mistake is made in the first place, all the huge mass of consequences agree with each other. It is about the beginning of every matter that every man must make his big discussion and his big inquiry, to see whether it is rightly laid down (ὑπόκειται) or not; and only when that has been adequately examined should he see whether the rest appear to follow from it" (trans. Robinson 1980: 147).

61 For Galileo's language, cf. the well-known chapter 15 of Machiavelli's Principe (referring to Plato's 'imaginary' Republic): "seondo l'intento mio scrivere cosa utile a chia la intende, mi è parso più conveniente andare dietro alla verità effettuale della cosa, che alla immaginazione di essa. E molti si sono immaginati repubbliche e principati che non si sono mai visti né conosciuti essere in vero; perché elli è tanto discosto da como si vive a como si doverrebbe vivere, che colui che lascia quello che si fa per quello che si doverrebbe fare, impara più tosto la ruina che la persuasione sua [...]". It is likely that Galileo has Archimedes in mind when referring to those who "have imagined helices and conchoids", in the same way as Machiavelli alludes to Plato.

62 Cf. also Ptol., Almag. 9.2 (H212): "[...] and we know too that assumptions made without proof, provided only that they are found to be in agreement with the phenomena, could not have been found without some careful methodological procedure, even if it is difficult to explain how one came to conceive them (for, in general, the cause of first principles is, by nature, either non-existent or hard to describe); we know, finally, that some variety in the type of hypotheses associated with the circles [of the planets] cannot be plausibly considered strange or contrary to reason (especially since the phenomena exhibited by the actual planets are not alike [for all]); for, when uniform circular motion is preserved for all without exception, the individual phenomena are demonstrated in accordance with a principle which is more basic and more generally applicable than that of similarity of the
demonstrative science must have the status of necessary premisses. But how can a definition, or any hypothesized proposition, be 'necessarily' valid? This is left unexplained by Galileo. And even assuming that the initial definition does necessarily 'match' nature's phenomena, are the conclusions logically drawn from it not in need of empirical verification?

An important page written by Galileo shortly after the publication of his Two New Sciences, namely the letter to Baliani, can shed some light on this issue. In the letter, Galileo seems to argue that, once a correct definition of accelerated motion (i.e. one corresponding to the motion actually observed in nature) is established, the mathematical properties of motion deduced from it need not be empirically verified. He claims to be reasoning ex suppositione about accelerated motion defined in such a way that, "even though the consequences might not correspond to the properties of natural motion of falling heavy bodies, it would little matter to me, just as the inability to find in nature any body that moves along a spiral line would take nothing away from Archimedes' demonstration."64

In fact, he goes on to assert that he has been 'lucky' ("avventurato") in observing that the properties of falling heavy bodies correspond "puntualmente" to the properties demonstrated on the basis of his definition of uniformly accelerated motion.65 For Galileo, it seems, nature's intrinsic intelligibility is consequent upon its essentially geometrical structure, which makes experimental verification almost entirely superfluous (according to the letter to Baliani).66 To sum up, in Galileo's method, the resolutive or 'analytic' moment - which is based on the analysis of an experiential datum into its geometrical structure in order to reach a self-evident or per se notum principle - must be followed by composition or synthesis, which involves the mathematical deduction of further theorems from such a principle, without the need of empirical verification thereof.

Several interpreters of the letter to Baliani, and most notably W. Wallace (1974) have suggested the possibility of a different interpretation: in denying the need for 'saving the phenomena' (if not by a 'stroke of luck'), Galileo might be rhetorically adopting the persona loquens of the Archimedean mathematician, just as in the preface to the Dialogue he defended, for rhetorical purposes, the 'Osianderian' conception of the Copernican theory as a 'mere mathematical hypothesis'. Nevertheless, in earlier works Galileo similarly argues that geometrical demonstrations proceeding from well-grounded definitions need not be empirically confirmed. In fact, experience and experiment as regulative elements are almost entirely absent from Galileo's early writings,67 which are dominated by a marked confidence in the scientist's ability to reach solid first principles legitimizing a physical theory.

In order to defend the intellectual priority of his Two New Sciences over Baliani's hypotheses [for all planets]" (trans. Toomer).

63 See McMullin 1978: 235.
64 Cit. and trans. in Wallace 1974: 94. The main 'Archimedean' aspect of Galileo's method lies, according to Wallace, in his proclamation of the power of mathematics in physical explanation: Wallace sees the notion of ex suppositione as straddling the boundaries between physics and mathematics (Wallace 1974: 99; see contra McMullin 1978: 234).
65 If natural phenomena 'fail' to correspond to the expected properties, a 'Platonist' scientist may well make appeal to the 'recalcitrant' and 'imperfect' behavior of matter (see e.g. Molland 1976: 37; McMullin 1978: 230; Wallace 1984: 304). Cf. also Ptol., Almag. 13.2, H2.532: "For once each of the phenomena is preserved in accordance with the hypotheses, why should anyone think it strange that such complications can come about in the motions of heavenly things when they do not have a nature that produces hindrance, but one that is adapted to yield and give way to the natural motions of each, even if they are opposed to one another? Thus, simply, all the masses can easily pass through and be seen through all others, and this ease of transit applies not only to the individual circles, but to the spheres themselves and their axes of revolution. We see that in the models (εἰκόσιν) constructed on earth the intertwining and combination of these same [elements] in the different motions is laborious, and difficult to achieve in such a way that the motions do not hinder each other, while in the heavens no obstruction whatever is caused by such combination [...]" (trans. Toomer, modified).
66 See McTighe 1968: 374-375. For a similar point, cf. the letter sent by Evangelista Torricelli (one of Galileo's pupils) to M. Ricci on Feb. 10, 1646: "[...] che i principi della dottrina de motu siano veri o falsi a me importa pochissimo. Poiché se non sono veri, fingasi che sian veri, conforme abbiamo supposto, e poi prendansi tutte le altre speculazioni derivate da essi principi, non come cose miste, ma pure geometriche" (cit. in Torrini 1993: 241).
treatise De motu naturali gravium solidorum, which independently reached the same conclusions.68 Galileo advocates for the autonomous validity of mathematical reasoning with respect to empirical data. While the letter to Baliani certainly does not prove that Galileo regarded experimental confirmation as being completely extraneous to his ex suppositione arguments, these still remain solidly founded in logical demonstration proceeding from hypothesized ‘definitions’ (‘posto che...’), and can therefore be construed as hypothetical arguments in conditional form.69

In guise of a conclusion

Galileo’s use of the words (and concepts of) “ipotesi” and suppositio does not authorize us to interpret his epistemological statements in terms of the modern hypothetico-deductive method. Nor does he appear to have ‘one’ consistent view on the role of hypotheses and first principles in natural science: indeed, the very range of variation examined in this paper does not justify any particular ‘label’ (e.g. ‘Platonic’, ‘Aristotelian’, ‘Archimedean’, etc.) for his conception of science as a whole. For rhetorical reasons, or for the purposes of self-fashioning, Galileo sometimes adopts Osiander’s ‘reductive’ idea of astronomical models as mere mathematical hypotheses, by no means aimed at explaining the phenomena and at laying bare the language in which the ‘book of the universe’ is written.

Elsewhere, in a narrower sense, he refers to the ‘analytic’ method whereby an ‘intuitive grasp’ (based on observation) of the validity of the hypothesized conclusion leads, by way of subsequent propositions logically implying one another, to its ultimate confirmation. This strengthens the view that Galileo strove to attribute to physics (and mechanics in particular) the fully demonstrative status of a cognitio certa per causas.70 Galileo’s effort to turn mechanics into a demonstrative science is further shown by his - occasionally extreme - application of the language of mathematics (geometry) to hypothesized ‘definitions’ and ‘demonstrations’ concerning the properties of accelerated motion, even though Galileo himself could have purposefully ‘exaggerated’ his rhetorical denial of the need for empirical verification at the end of the demonstrative process.

In this paper, I have aimed to show the deep consonance between Plato’s hypothetical method (especially as it is described in the Phaedo) and the “metodo resolutivo” of Galileo’s Dialogue. To that end, I have argued that, in both cases, the hypothesis is simultaneously a premiss, of whose force the researcher is convinced, and a demonstrandum awaiting proof on the basis of higher, i.e. already known or proven, principles. In fact, I identify this conception of the analytic method, whereby the scientist is required to have a preliminary grasp of the soundness of the hypotheses themselves, as one of the main Platonic elements in Galileo’s scientific methodology. Furthermore, both Plato’s and Galileo’s hypotheses are causal-explanatory in nature: as such, they are the fundamental component of a heuristic process. Finally, the Platonic character of Galileo’s “metodo resolutivo” is deliberately and rhetorically clothed in ‘Aristotelian’ terms, familiar to the epistemology of Galileo’s contemporaries: on several occasions, his use of ‘Platonic’ hypotheses confirms the priority he assigns to geometrical reasoning over empirical proof.

However, even restricting our focus to any one of Galileo’s ‘mature’ works,

68 See E. Grillo in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (vol. 5, Rome 1963), s.v. Baliani.
69 In fact, Galileo assimilates definitions to “supposizioni” (= hypotheses) in an early treatise, Le Meccaniche: “Quello che in tutte le scienze demonstrative è necessario di osservarsi, doviamo noi ancora in questo trattato seguire: che è di proporre le definizioni dei termini proprii di questa facoltà e le prime supposizioni dalle quali, come da secondissimi semini, pullulano e scaturiscono consequentemente le cause e le vere dimostrazioni delle proprietà di tutti gli’strumenti meccanici, i quali servono per lo più intorno ai moti delle cose gravi. Però determineremo primamente quello che sia gravità” (Galilei 2002: 48).
70 See McMullin 1978: 250.
we notice that none of his conceptions of hypothetical reasoning is employed consistently throughout. This can be probably explained by considering the tension, constant in Galileo’s epistemology, between the demonstrative ideal that he inherited from the Greek tradition and the ‘retroductive’ or ‘analytic’ method, exemplified in discussions of phenomena whose causes are remote, enigmatic, or invisible. Galileo was required - not just by the Congregation of the Index, but by his own fundamental conception of ‘firm demonstration’ - to produce a necessary and demonstrative account of his astronomical tenets, based on the reduction of the complexity of observable natural phenomena to evident or certifiable first principles through the use of mathematical reasoning. In the (ultimately impossible) attempt to do so, he contributed to founding an entirely different, and eminently modern, methodology of science.

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È da tempo riconosciuto che il *Fedone* offre la versione più compiuta e dettagliata del metodo ipotetico nell’opera di Platone. In 100a3-8, Socrate introduce la dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima con una discussione metodologica volta a chiarire come ogni indagine filosofica debba basarsi su di una ὑπόθεσις iniziale, considerata come la più cogente (ἐρρωμενέστατον), dalla quale si parte per considerare “come vero tutto ciò che si accorda con essa, e come falso tutto ciò che non le si accorda.”
Poco dopo, in 101c9-102a1, Socrate precisa che un’eventuale obiezione mossa contro l’ipotesi stessa non va confutata prima di aver esaminato a fondo “le conseguenze [logiche] dell’ipotesi, per verificare se si accordano o meno fra loro.” Socrate assicura, inoltre, che un’ipotesi viene corroborata qualora la si deduca da una proposizione “più alta” (101d5-e3). In tal modo, l’ipotesi costituisce sia la premessa del ragionamento sia una conclusione da dimostrare - o refutare - sulla base di principi superiori (101e, 107b).

Analogamente, Filippo Salviati (il portavoce di Galileo nel Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo, 1632) afferma, nella Prima Giornata del Dialogo, che il fisico deve possedere una comprensione preliminare della validità delle proprie ipotesi, prima di poterne dare una dimostrazione mediante l’analisi delle conseguenze logiche dell’ipotesi stessa. Quest’ultima, inoltre, va sostenuta attraverso il ricorso a proposizioni già dimostrate, principi auto-evidenti, o affermazioni indipendentemente note come vere (Galilei 2001: 57-8).

Questo procedimento, definito da Salviati “metodo resolutivo” (o analitico), era già diffuso nella trattatistica scientifica antica e tardo-antica, come testimonia soprattutto Pappo nella sua Collectio Mathematica (2.635-6 Hultsch). Non poche corrispondenze concettuali, tuttavia, permettono di far risalire il metodo analitico di Pappo, almeno in parte, alla matematica greca del tempo di Platone (cfr. Menone 86d-87b).

L’interesse galileiano verso la questione delle ipotesi e dei principi primi è già evidente in opere scientifiche precedenti al Dialogo, come ad esempio il Saggiatore (1623). In entrambi i contesti, il carattere ‘platonico’ del metodo ipotetico delineato da Galileo è confermato dal tono polemico con cui lo scienziato contrappone le proprie linee di ricerca alle argomentazioni ex suppositione della syllogistica neo-aristotelica, adottando peraltro, con fini retorici, stili del linguaggio aristotelico in molteplici occasioni.

Il mio contributo mira dunque a mostrare la profonda consonanza epistemologica tra il metodo ipotetico del Fedone e il “metodo resolutivo” del Dialogo galileiano. A tale scopo, mi propongo di esaminare i seguenti punti fondamentali: 1) l’ipotesi, per entrambi gli autori, è tanto una premessa quanto un demonstrandum da confermare sulla base di proposizioni già note; 2) per entrambi, l’ipotesi svolge una funzione causale-espliicativa; 3) la natura platonica del metodo analitico di Galileo è deliberatamente e polemicamente contrapposta all’epistemologia aristotelica dei suoi contemporanei.
Immortality and Imperishability of the Soul in Plato’s *Phaedo*

Miura, Taichi

**Introduction**

In his final argument in *Phaedo* (102a-107b), Socrates makes the argument for the soul’s ‘immortality’ based on the theory of Forms and with introducing the concept of immanent character. However, due to his complex reasoning and challenging expressions, this final argument has been a common target of considerable criticism. One of the most important topics addressed in the texts is the relationship between the soul’s immortality and imperishability (106c9-e7).

Socrates asserts the soul’s immortality at 102b3-105e10. However, in the last part of the final argument (105e11-107a1), Socrates considers whether the immortal soul is also imperishable; eventually, Socrates and Cebes seem to reach an agreement that the soul is immortal and imperishable, and their souls are also kept in Hades (106e8-107a1). Some scholars have pointed out the problem in the soul’s ‘logical status.’ For example, Hackforth claims that between the discussion of immortality and imperishability, (probably at 105e10), Plato illegitimately changes the logical status from soul as form to soul as possessor of form.1 In the first part of the argument, Socrates seems to draw the soul’s immortality from its status as the immanent character of life, however, in the last part soul seems to be a substance possessing immortality and imperishability. Nevertheless, other scholars claim that Plato consistently deals with the soul as a kind of substance.2

These discussions seem to focus on the argument’s consistency as proof of the soul’s immortality. Surely, if we cannot fix the soul’s status, it is difficult to examine the connection between the soul and immortality or imperishability. Thus, we can generally find two kinds of interpretations in the final argument. One is that there is a transition of status of soul between the proof of immortality and imperishability in terms of the logical status of soul, then the final argument has a flaw. The other is that there is no transition between the argument of immortality and imperishability in that sense, because Plato thinks that soul is a thing or substance. However, as those scholars themselves admit, Plato does not use a word such as substance, and it is not clear whether he intends to introduce that distinction of existence. This paper maintains that there is a transition that is intentionally established, and we can positively understand the meaning of this transition by clarifying important contexts of the final argument.

We must focus on the following two contextual points. Firstly, Socrates’ claim is originally meant for Cebes’ counter argument: even if we admit the soul’s strong nature and prenatal existence, coming into the body or life in this world has a bad effect on the soul; eventually, the soul might be destroyed. For this counter argument, Socrates acknowledges that he must thoroughly examine the cause of becoming and perishing. He must adopt a strict rule to explain the causation. That is, Socrates avoids trying to observe things with senses directly, but rather follows his strongest hypothesis, which is the existence of Forms and examining truth in arguments (99e1-100a3).

Secondly, Socrates has several reservations about claiming the connection between immortality and imperishability. At first glance, it is easy to assume that immortality includes the notion of imperishability; however, Socrates has reservations about this idea (106c9-d1). On the other hand, Cebes, the discussant in this section, more positively states that the immortal is also imperishable (106e8-107a1). The contrast between Socrates’ reservation and Cebes’ comparatively hasty admission raises an important point: the word ‘immortal’ (athanatos) does not simply that the soul is indestructible. In Socrates’ discussion, this word

1 Hackforth, p.165. Keyt also thinks that Plato considers soul as form (Keyt, David, ‘The Fallacies in “Phaedo” 102a-107b,’ pp.167-172).
2 Schliller, Gallop, Frede. Furthermore, Weller thinks of the soul as “Cartesian substance”. An individual soul is the subject of psychological attributes. Weller, p.121.
must have some other meaning that prevents him from directly deducing the notion of imperishability itself.

Considering the first point, Socrates’ primary attempt is to provide a correct conceptual foundation in order to consider the soul’s immortality. Moreover, the second point shows that Plato himself consciously depicts that Socrates acknowledge the gap between immortality and imperishability. We must see how Cebes’ understanding follows Socrates’ primary attempt and the agreement of Cebes and Socrates is consistent with the foundation.

1. Immanent Character

The final argument on the soul’s immortality resumes at 102a11, after a very short intermission, toward the end of which, Phaedo, the reporter of this dialogue, states that two important points have been agreed upon: (1) each of the Forms exists and (2) other things participate in the Forms and are named after the Form they participate in (102b1-3). At this point in the dialogue, Socrates starts explaining how a thing becomes large or small; he introduces a new concept, explaining how the large or small are present in us, or the so-called “immanent character”.

Before exploring immanent character, it is important to understand why Socrates starts the discussion in the first place: he is trying to answer Cebes’ question. Socrates summarises Cebes’ argument: even if the soul is long lasting and existed previously for an extraordinary long time, that does not necessarily mean that the soul is immortal. Upon entering the human body, the soul begins to perish. The soul is condemned to live a life filled with hardship and eventually perishes in a so-called death (95c-e). Cebes’ question includes two important angles. Even the soul, defined as immaterial and the real cause of human beings, can suffer deterioration. Moreover, life negatively affects the soul. Socrates acknowledges this problem’s importance, and says that the cause of coming to be and ceasing to be must be investigated thoroughly (95e–96a). Socrates also confesses his past disappointment in the explanations of the causes by the natural science that does not seems to enough to explain the suggestion of the real cause (96a–99d). He argues for the need to investigate the causation in another way; he states the importance of taking refuge in theories and arguments and examining their truth. That means hypothesizing the strongest theory and positing as truth whatever harmonizes with that theory. The hypothesis is that:

…there are such things as a Beautiful alone by itself, and a Good, a Large and all the rest (100b6-7)³

He proposes another idea from the hypothesis:

It appears to me that if anything is beautiful other than the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful on account of nothing other than its having a share of that beautiful (100c4–6)

By adapting this supposition, Socrates does not admit a material way of explanation even in the very simple case, for example, about becoming large and small. Then, he does not admit the expression that one person is larger than another because of a head. It must be said that everything larger than something else is larger because of largess (100e–101a). This rule is a foundation of the final argument as this argument is reply for Cebes’ attack. Therefore, as we have already seen, that is confirmed at the beginning of the argument in the intermission.

After the intermission, Phaedo reports that Socrates asks about another problem:

So if that's you are saying, whenever you say that Simmias is larger than Socrates, but smaller than Phaedo, and smaller than Phaedo, don't you meant that at that time both of these, both largeness and smallness, are in Simmias?(102b3–6)

³ All texts of Phaedo are quoted from Sedley and Long’s translation.
Cebes agrees with Socrates. However, according to Socrates, the fact is different from saying that Simmias exceeds Socrates. Simmias does not naturally exceed Socrates because he is Simmias, but because of the largeness he happens to have. On the other hand, Simmias is exceeded by Phaedo because of the largeness that Phaedo has for Simmias’ smallness. Therefore, Simmias has the name of being large or small by being in the middle between them, offering his smallness to Phaedo’s largeness to be exceeded, but provide his largeness to Socrates, which exceed Socrates’ smallness (102c11-d2).

Furthermore, Socrates asks Simmias to agree to the following general definition: Not only shall the large itself never be large and small at the same time, but also, the large in us shall never accept the small nor be exceeded. When its opposite (the small) approaches, it will retreat or perish. It shall not stand and be different from what it was (102d5–e6).

Socrates gives an important feature to the immanent character in the example of Simmias. Simmias has ‘the name’ of being large and small. Against the wrong expression that Simmias exceeds Socrates, Simmias has “the name of being large”. Socrates does not simply say that Simmias is large or small; rather he assumes the case that we call a given existence as some character. This feature is kept in the following part. Socrates explains the object of this current argument to an anonymous person who raises a problem that this claim in the final argument is inconsistent with the cyclical argument that they agreed upon previously (103a4-c2). In the cyclical argument, they agreed that opposite things become from the opposite, as large things become from small ones. However, Socrates points out the difference in the object they discuss. In this current debate they consider the opposites themselves (e.g., large itself), by which we call the opposite things, whether they are in us or in nature. According to Socrates’ rule, by following their hypothesis of the theory of Form and immanent character based on the theory, we can call something correctly.

2. Carrier of the Opposing Character

In the previous passages, Socrates focuses on relative characters and introduces the immanent character. Immanent characters is different from Form, yet similarities also exist; neither can accept the opposing character. Socrates also introduces a new concept that shares the same feature: the Carrier of the opposing character.

Socrates asks Cebes:

(a) …Do you call something ‘hot’, and something ‘cold’?
Yes, I do.
Are they just what you call ‘snow’ and ‘fire’?
Certainly not. (103c10-d1)

What is called fire and snow are different from their relative qualities of hot and cold. However, as with relative character, fire cannot accept the cold and snow cannot accept the hot. Snow retreats or perishes when heat comes, and fire does the same when cold comes. Socrates summarises:

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4 When x has an immanent character f, x is not simply f, rather we should say that x has the name of f. This name of f-ness comes from the Form of F.
(b) "So is it true," he said, 'concerning some things of this sort, that not only does the Form itself merit its own name for all time, but there is also something else that merits it, which is not the same as the Form, but which, whenever it exists, always has the feature of that Form' (103e2-7)

Moreover, he adds another example of threeness to clarify what he means:

(c) Consider the case of threeness. Don't you think that threeness should always be called both by its own name and by name of the odd? The odd is not just what threeness is, but nevertheless threeness, fiveness, and an entire half of the number series are somehow naturally such that each of them is always odd, despite not being just what the odd is (104a5-b2)

Further these carriers have feature similar to immanent character:

(d) …not only do those opposites evidently not admit one another, but there are also all those things that are not opposites of one another, but always possess the opposites, and they too seem not to admit whatever form is opposed to the form inside them; instead, when it attacks, evidently they either perish or retreat (104b7-11)

These carriers also have another remarkable function for other things, such as the following:

(e) ‘Now Cebes,’ he said, ‘would they be the following: those that, whatever they occupy, compel it not only to have their own form in each case, but also, invariably, the form of some opposite of something as well?’(104d1-3)⁵

When considering the soul's immortality, it is important to remember its existential mode. Fire and snow are not simply material; Socrates still uses the word 'calling' in both cases. He argues that when we call something 'fire' we understand something about the relationship between the characters of fire and hot. In the case of threeness, Socrates more clearly focuses on the name. Threeness can be called by its own name (three) or as odd, but threeness and oddness are not the same.

However, there are disputes about how to understand the status of such carriers as fire, snow, and threeness. Although the example of three seems to be conceptual and the immanent character, the appearance of fire and snow is ambiguous, for they can seem to be some physical stuff. Some scholars think them as the immanent character,⁶ however, others consider them as the physical entities.⁷ Keyt suggests reasons why these carriers are forms:⁸ firstly, these carriers behave in the same way as the immanent characters when the opposing characters come to them, namely,

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5 ἀρ᾽ οὖν, ἔφη, ὦ Κέβης, τάδε εἴη ἂν, ἃ ὅτι ἂν κατάσχῃ μὴ μόνον ἀναγκάζει τὴν αὐτοῦ ἰδέαν αὐτὸ ἱσχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντίου αὐτῷ ἀεὶ τὰς ἀεὶ τινος;

This paper follows the Greek texts in the Oxford Classical texts edited by J. C. G. Strachan. Burnet shows the different texts according to the main manuscripts: "… ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντίου αὐτῷ ἀεὶ τινος;” However it is difficult to understand of the meaning of αὐτῷ (Cf. Rowe, p. 256.)

7 Gallop, p. 198. Frede, p.34.
8 Keyt, p. 168
they retreat or perish. Secondly, the principle at 103e2-5 is applied to fire and snow, and is restated at that passage above 104d1-3. This passage states that the carrier compels what it occupies to not only have its own form, but also some opposing form. This implies that fire and snow are also Forms. On the other hand, as Gallop criticizes some points, it is difficult to understand the carrier in the immanent form view. If fire and snow are immanent forms, we cannot understand the passage at 106a3-10, where Socrates say that if the un-hot were also imperishable, when someone brought hot to snow, that snow would ‘go away intact and unmelted’. In terms of fire, it is difficult to understand the expression that the fire would never be “put out”. Moreover, another serious problem is that it is difficult to understand the alternative actions for the carrier when some opposing characters come to it, retreat or perish. What can the “retreat” mean in the example of fire or snow? Gallop points out as following: “If fire or snow is immanent form, it would not be possible, as it was with the Large and Small, to think of “immanent character” as getting out of the way, when the relevant particulars were viewed in a different relation. For ‘snow’ and ‘fire’ are non-relational terms.”

Therefore, Gallop asserts that if fire and snow are not Forms, but physical stuffs, there need be no difficulty in understanding the alternatives. However, regarding the physical entity view, the passage (e), which support for the immanent character view, is hard to explain, for the carrier gives its character or form to things. In order to avoid this problem, Gallop suggests a different reading:

(e)-2
Would they, Cebes, be these: things that are compelled by whatever occupies them to have not only its own form, but always the form of some opposite as well?(104d1-3)

(e)-2 reverses the subject and object in (e), and understands the possessor of character as the occupied thing, not the occupying. However, as Gallop himself admits, it is difficult to explain αὐτὸ, because this reading destroys the correspondence between ὅτι and αὐτὸ.

However Gallop's second question is very serious and requires further investigation. This paper tries to comment about some confusing expressions attributed to fire and snow. We have already seen that this final argument follows Socrates’ rule, to investigate in arguments (logos). Socrates avoids seeing the real causation in the world, and rather tries to find consistency of the argument with his hypothesis of Form. Therefore, we do not have to literally understand the confusing expressions. In our cognition, when we acknowledge that something obtains or loses coldness, we can express that phenomena as snow retreating or melting. However, this final argument is primarily concerned with consistency in arguments based on the theory of Form; whether some entity really becomes is not direct problem in the final argument.

3. Soul as a Carrier of Life

The argument of the concept of carrier is applied to the soul. Just as with the carrier mentioned in the passage (e), when a soul comes to be present in any body, the soul makes the body alive (105c8–10). Therefore, whenever a soul occupies anything, it brings life. Life is the opposite of death; the soul will never let in death, which is the opposite of what it

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9 Gallop, p.198.
10 Gallop, p.198.
12 If we use the example of chess, pawns can occupy some areas; they retreat and are captured. We can reproduce those moves on a physical board and using chess pieces. However, the core of this game is conceptual, and can be interpreted without physical stuffs.
always imports. Just as we call that un-even which does not admit the form of even, we call that which does not admit death as ‘immortal’ (athanatos). Therefore, the soul is immortal.

We must note several things about this deduction. As Gallop correctly points out, the word ‘soul’ does not have any definite article in the Greek text is word ‘soul’ in the Greek texts within 105c10-e6. 13 Plato does not clearly explain why he left the article out. However, considering the definite article's function, at least some individuality in the soul is avoided here, and ‘soul’ could show more general concept of itself.14 Moreover, these texts also keep the factor of calling or naming by stating the case that we ‘call’ something athanatos. From these two supporting features of the texts, this discussion of the soul also focuses on how we apply correct concepts to the soul and immortality in the argument. Moreover, the concept given to the word “athanatos” is strictly limited. Based on the assertion of the immanent character and its carrier, Socrates only gives a limited meaning to life that is the opposite of the death. This athanatos or immortality does not simply possess the meaning of ‘eternity’ or ‘everlasting’ that we usually tend to give to it. Therefore, the soul's immortality can only have that limited meaning.

4. Immortality and Imperishability

Socrates concludes that soul is “immortal.” However, he further complicates the connection between immanent character and imperishability. If immanent character is imperishable;--for example, odd (un-even) or un-hot are imperishable, three things are also imperishable, and the snow will safely retreat and not melt when introduced to hot. Moreover, if the immortal is also imperishable, it is impossible for the soul to perish. Instead, Socrates provides a counter example:

“But”, someone might say, “Why shouldn't it be that, although the odd does not become even when the even comes to it, as was agreed, the odd perishes, and the even comes to be in place of it? “(106b7-c2)

Socrates admits that he cannot claim the odd does not perish, because the uneven is not imperishable. Therefore, if his opponents can agree that the immortal is also imperishable, then the soul is imperishable as well as immortal. Otherwise they need another argument (106a9–d1).

Cebes responds that this is not required, since 'there would hardly be anything else that does not admit destruction, if the immortal despite being everlasting, will admit destruction' (106d2–4). His answer by itself is not sufficient to be understood. Why, for instance, would it be problematic if there were nothing else that admitted destruction? It seems that Cebes is making use of Phaedo's cyclical argument. We must remember that Cebes is a discussant in the cyclical argument, which Socrates supports by stating that, 'For if living things came to be from the other things, and if the living things died, how could they be prevented from all being expended and ending up dead?'(72d1-d3). They reach at an agreement there must be cyclical reincarnation, which shows their denial that this world must be nothing, although its reason is not clarified.

However, when Cebes uses the cyclical argument, he overlooks a difference between the cyclical argument and the final argument. In a short intermission that takes place within the final argument, Socrates points out the difference between 'the opposite things' and 'the opposite itself' (103b2-c2). While the cyclical argument deals with the opposite things, the final one, which pertains to immortality, deals with immanent opposite characters.

As we have already seen, the meaning of ‘immortal’ is strictly limited to 13 There are several different reading depending on the manuscript, in regard to 105d3, d10, e4 and e6

14 Hackforth interprets this term as Form of soul.
the opposite of death in the immanent character of life. In this case, it is not clear whether immortality can include imperishability. If we try to bridge the gap and explain from the thing's-view point, we violate Socrates' rule regarding the Theory of Form and participation in the final argument.

In response to Cebes, Socrates provides some examples of immortality, including God and the Form of Life itself (106d5-7). Eventually, Cebes and Socrates agree that their souls really will exist in Hades (106e8–9). Socrates' examples are not simply immortal, but can also concepts that deny perishability. Thus, he does not commit the same mistake as Cebes. God and the Form of Life itself can conceptually oppose to perishing. However, this is still not direct solution to the problem of his final argument, which focuses on the immanent character. It is still problematic in terms of connecting the form or immanent character of immortality with imperishability.

Plato seems to be aware of this obstacle. Plato causes Socrates to have several reservations about the connection between immortality and imperishability. Moreover, he depicts Simmias as having some remaining doubts about what has been said, mainly due to the magnitude of the issue (107a2–7). Moreover, Socrates admits that doubt is valid, and encourages Cebes and Simmias to investigate their first hypotheses (pertaining to Form) that they made in the final argument (107b4-9).

The final argument has a unique effect on Cebes, since it suggests a completely different understanding of life. According to Cebes' objection, life comes into the body and is therefore a kind of sickness of the soul. In that sense, life is the suffering of the soul in this world. Instead, based on the agreement between Socrates and his discussants, the concept of life and death exists according to the theory of Form. Life is rather what the soul carries to the body and the soul must not admit death. Even if Socrates and his discussants cannot fully demonstrate the connection between immortality and imperishability, their arguments maintain the possibility of such a correlation.

[Bibliography]
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In seinem letzten Argument, diskutiert Sokrates die „Unsterblichkeit“ der Seele auf der Grundlage der Theorie der Formen. Dies stellt die Grundlage für Platons Phaidon. Jedoch ist dieses letzte Argument ein Ziel erheblicher Kritik

Der Kontrast zwischen der Reserviertheit von Sokrates und der eiligen Zustimmung von Cebes stellen zwei wichtige Punkte vor.

1. Das Wort 'athanatos', dass Sokrates in dem letzten Argument verwendet, bedeutet nicht einfach „unsterblich“. Dieses Wort muss einen anderen Sinn in seiner Diskussion haben, der verhindert den Begriff der Unvergänglichkeit von der Unsterblichkeit ableiten.


Durch die Untersuchung dieser beiden Punkte, diese Präsentation abzieren wollen wir die Bedeutung von „unsterblich“ (athanatos) im Zusammenhang mit dem letzten Argument in Phaidon zu klären. Das wird also anzeigen, in welchem Sinne unsere Seele ist Unsterblich und welcher Teil von uns dieses Unsterblichkeit und Unvergänglichkeit erhalten kann.
Las doctrinas o relatos antiguos – inconclusiones y conclusión posible

de Morais, Emilia

Nuestra suposición es que los términos palaiós lógos, aunque no tan frecuentes en los diálogos, remiten a cuestiones decisivas, llegando a constituir una afirmación de importancia capital en el conjunto discursivo socrático-platónico. La primera y más simple observación que debe ser registrada, pues no se trata propiamente de una cuestión por ser resuelta: las menciones relacionadas con los relatos antiguos no se restringen a los denominados “diálogos socráticos”, ni siquiera al personaje de Sócrates en los demás diálogos, pues es en las Leyes donde más las encontramos. Volveremos a este punto más adelante.

Esas menciones aparecen tanto en el Menón como en el Fedón en el contexto introductorio de la hipótesis de la anamēnsis, hipótesis que funda una inaudita concepción de epistéme. En el Ménon ella posibilitaría el conocimiento de aquello que desconocemos totalmente (apuntando a la superación del impasse aporético); en el Fedón, aparece en el enfrentamiento dialógico con respecto a la destrucción o separación del alma, como bien hizo notar M. Dixsault, y apuntando a lo que es y siempre permanece lo que es, pues no estaría sujeto a los cambios del mundo sensible 1.

Es notable que una hipótesis que debería ser aprehendida como algo inédito, surge bajo el signo de una doble nostalgia: ya sea evocando la sabiduría imemorial de una narrativa o incluso de una doctrina antigua, tal vez perdida en las brumas de algún tiempo histórico, o bien sugiriendo que el alma, por ser inmortal, tendría la capacidad de recordar una vida contemplativa pre-corpórea2.

Heródoto registra que fueron los egipcios los primeros en proclamar la supervivencia del alma y sus transmigraciones sucesivas por varios cuerpos3. En la Grecia antigua, con variantes más o menos específicas, esa creencia era difundida en los medios órficos y pitagóricos. Platón se refiere directamente a Egipto y los egipcios, a Orfeo y a los cultos órficos, en varios pasajes de los diálogos, pero cuando usa los términos palaios logos, no da indicaciones más precisas acerca de a cuál relato, enseñanza o doctrina estaría refiriéndose. Ante este sigilo y notoria omisión de las fuentes, algunos comentadores recomiendan también nuestro silencio, como es el caso de Monique Dixsault, o nuestra cautela, como es el ejemplo de Luc Brisson4.

El debate más encarnizado gira en torno de su filiación órfica y/o pitagórica. Ambas corrientes profesaban la separación entre cuerpo y alma. Nos recuerda Gadamer:

La visión moral y religiosa de la vida exige que el alma sea separada del

1 Ménon 81a e segs.e Fédon 70c e segs. e cfr. Carta VII, 335a.
3 HERODOTO, Historia, II, 123.
cuerpo, así como la ciencia matemática exige que ella se separe de la experiencia sensible. En ese sentido, la vida del filósofo es camino para la muerte, si la muerte es comprendida como separación del alma que se retira de lo sensible y de lo corporal⁵.

Así, el Fedón entrelaza de modo intenso y constante los dos dominios de la filosofía: epistemología y eudaimonia. Si la epistemología guarda relación apenas con los pitagóricos, la eudaimonia se vincula a ambas corrientes, orfismo y pitagorismo. Pero, ¿qué significaba ser órfico y/o pitagórico en los tiempos de Platón? ¿Sería posible reconstituir una visión homogénea de cada una de esas corrientes? ¿Podemos al menos saber si podían ser completamente distintas? Tratándose de los pitagóricos, ¿estaría la concepción de eudaimonia del Fedón más próxima de los akousmatici, mientras que la epistemología, incluso admitiendo la originalidad de la hipótesis de la anamnesis, estaría más próxima de los mathematici?

Sabemos que tanto órficos como pitagóricos eran adeptos de la creencia en la supervivencia del alma y de la metempsicosis. Por eso, pensadores antiguos como Olimpiodoro e Damascio, en sus escritos sobre el Fedón, atestiguaron que el palaios logos provenía de fuentes de una tradición conjunta, órfico-pitagórica⁶. En el siglo pasado, autores como Dodds y Guthrie supusieron que se trataba sobre todo de una herencia órfica; y W. Burkert distinguió rastros pitagóricos en esas creencias escatológicas⁷.

En nuestro siglo, al comentar los pasajes 69c y/o 70c del Fedón, A. Bernabé y F. Casadesús los aproximan a los escritos órficos:

(...) Para los griegos cuanto más antigua sea una idea, tanto más respetable es. De ahí, la mención típica de ‘antiguo relato’ (palaios logos) con que Platón prefere referirse a menudo a obras órficas. Así, Platón trata de garantizar la validez de sus propias ideas⁸.

A su vez, al examinar el Fedón, J.-L. Périllié pone en evidencia su contenido heraclítico y, por eso mismo, favorable a la inmortalidad del alma: si les âmes comme indique le Palaios Logos vont là bas et sont appelées à renaitre, cela signifie que toute chose naît de son contraire, que la vie provient de la mort, comme la mort de la vie. Al mismo tiempo resalta que, si Sócrates no identifica sus fuentes religiosas o poéticas, es porque invoca tradiciones cuyo contenido, apuntando al eudemonismo, tendría

carácter secreto o iniciático.

En relación a los pitagóricos, Leonid Zhmud aborda la deconstrucción del orfismo y la chamanización del pitagorismo a partir de Wilamowitz; sin embargo, reconoce que los descubrimientos más recientes, como el Papyros de Deverni, no dejan duda: el orfismo fue un movimiento religioso real y no un constructo artificial. Admitiendo que la cuestión del origen de la metempsicosis permanece no resuelta, todavía sugiere:

La creencia en la metempsicosis no implicaba, para los pitagóricos, la adhesión a una religión de salvación: así, para los pitagóricos, pudo no tener la misma significación que la que tenían para los participantes de los misterios orícticos. Nosotros podemos apenas presumir su extensión entre los pitagóricos.

Ante esas diversas opiniones, nos contentaremos apenas con retener que la creencia en la inmortalidad del alma era compartida tanto por los adeptos al orfismo como por los pitagóricos. En el Fedón, al justificar esa creencia, el maestro de Platón aparece como su traductor y, más aún, como su guardián. No obstante, al designar una “cierta narrativa antigua” (tis palaios logos), Sócrates no nos informa sobre sus orígenes religiosos o filosóficos, y así ocurre también en los demás escritos en que aparece la expresión. ¿Cuál es el alcance de esas antiguas creencias extra-racionales, más próximas de lo verosímil y alejadas de aquello que se puede demostrar como verdadero?

Sabemos que, en la búsqueda de lo justo y de lo verdadero, la confrontación teórica más desarrollada o más recurrente de los diálogos fue con la sofística, y que Platón no dudó en crear o recrear fábulas para elaborar y contraponer, a través de los variados personajes de sus diálogos, sus hipótesis discursivas. Pero no siempre la fábula o la narrativa mítica se hacen presentes para introducir o concluir cuestiones relacionadas con la justicia o el conocimiento.

En las discusiones del Protágoras, tenemos una recreación del mito de Prometeo, transmutado en antropología política como fábula fundadora de la democracia; tal vez, por eso mismo fue relatada, no por Sócrates, sino por el pensador de Abdera, al reconstituir la condición primordial de los seres humanos. Todas las implicaciones epistémicas de las hipótesis relativistas, asociadas al ἄνθρωπος métron, fueron más intensa y particularmente discutidas en el Teeteto, sin que para eso Sócrates recurriese a cualquier narrativa mítica. También en el Sofista, a lo largo de la cerrada argumentación acerca de las siete definiciones propuestas para el mayor rival del filósofo, Platón no apela a nada que nos haga recordar los palaioi logoi.

Al proponer la distinción entre falsos y verdaderos jueces ya sea en la Apologia,

11 Protágoras, 322a e segs.
12 Teeteto, 151e-155d
o en el Górgias, al final de su larga discusión con Cálicles, Sócrates evoca los antiguos relatos concernientes al juicio y al destino final de los muertos\textsuperscript{13}. En dichos escritos, esas alusiones conciernen a la discusión más estricta sobre la justicia. En el Mênon y en el Fédon, sin embargo, los palaioi lógoi, asociados a la hipótesis de la reminiscencia, componen la noción misma del conocimiento.

En el Filebo, al introducir a Protarco en el proceso de la dniaresis de lo uno e de lo múltiple, por lo limitado (peras) e lo ilimitado (apeiron)\textsuperscript{14}, Prometeo también es recordado por su fuego de intenso brillo. Sócrates integra la narrativa mítica a los fundamentos ontológicos, al considerar a la dialéctica como un don divino a los humanos a través de los seres superiores y antiguos que habrían vivido más cercanos de los dioses. Seguir la ruta de esos antiguos (palaioi) sería, por consiguiente, volvernos también menos distantes de la divinidad, la cual se alejó de nosotros y de la cual también nosotros nos alejamos\textsuperscript{15}. Así, el paradigma socrático platónico de lo divino nunca se sitúa en el presente ni se proyecta para el futuro; remite siempre a un pasado indefinido y originario.

¿Deberíamos considerar todas esas referencias a una sabiduría inmemorial apenas como un adorno literario jocoso, como afirma Charles Khan\textsuperscript{16}? Khan no explica por qué no confiere importancia discursiva mayor a los pasajes relacionados del Filebo, del Menón o del Fedón que evocan antiguas tradiciones. No se detiene siquiera a esbozar las reservas más difundidas sobre el discurso no dialéctico y monológico de los mitos: relatos extraños a cualquier verificación, presuponiendo apenas la autoridad de la propia tradición, imponiéndose, sin embargo, como técnica pedagógica cuyos efectos psicagógicos se adecúan más a los jóvenes iniciantes en las discusiones filosóficas\textsuperscript{17}.

Si ese fuese el caso, ¿no deberíamos también considerar como meros adornos literarios jocosos las menciones socrático platónicas a los homoiosis theoi, en la denominada digresión del Teeteto, o al divino métron, bajo el signo de lo perfecto, en el libro VI de La República\textsuperscript{18}? Porque, en síntesis, es de eso mismo que se trata cuando, por veredas reflexivas, Platón rememora antiguas tradiciones. En el caso de Sócrates, personaje dramático del Fédon, significó la completa atención a la mayor obra de arte que le cabía realizar en vida, inspirada por las musas (mousikē), y la debida atención al significado del canto divino de los cisnes en la inminencia de su fallecimiento\textsuperscript{19}. En la secuencia del diálogo, como había sido anticipado en el anuncio de la segunda navegación socrática\textsuperscript{20}, Símias se vale de la imagen de un barco necesario para el viaje de la travesía de la vida y aquí no hay desacuerdos entre los intelocutores del Fédon, pues Símias también requiere y vincula la mejor palabra o discurso humano (ton goun beltiston tôn anthrōpinōn logōn) a una palabra o discurso divino (logou theiou

\textsuperscript{13} V. Apologia, 40e-41c e Górgias, 123a y siguientes.
\textsuperscript{14} Tudo o que se pode dizer existir, é constituído do um e do múltiplo e traz, em sua natureza a limite e ilimitado (16c).
\textsuperscript{15} Tal como es descrito en el mito de los ciclos alternados, cósmicos e humanos: Político, 268e-274e.
\textsuperscript{18} Teeteto, 176 b e República , 500c-d e 504c.
\textsuperscript{19} Fédon, 61a e 84e-85c.
\textsuperscript{20} Fédon, 99d y siguientes.
Los hilos conductores que llevaron a Sócrates a iniciar a sus interlocutores en los laberintos de la anamnesis, en el Menón y en el Fedón, incitándolos ya sea a la aprehensión de las entidades matemáticas transcendentes, o bien a la contemplación de lo eterno o de las Formas inteligibles, llegan hasta las Leyes de un modo decisivo.

En relación con ese aspecto, Thomas M. Robinson señala las estrechas conexiones entre el Fedón e las Leyes:

Particularmente, la modalidad de entusiasmo religioso que arde viva en el Fedón aún está muy encendida. Aquel ‘barco más seguro’ de la Revelación Divina allí mencionado (85d3) parece, a veces, contar mucho más que el argumento filosófico. La vida es un proceso de purificación y asimilación a lo divino (716c-e); el alma es el yo verdadero y disfruta de una inmortalidad personal. El hombre justo es recompensado en la vida futura y hay sanciones reservadas para el malo. Se presupone que existe una distinción básica substancial entre el alma y el cuerpo, y los ‘placeres son nuevamente tratados con desconfianza’.

Justamente el pasaje de las Leyes aquí recordado (716c) se encuentra precedido de una de las variadas alusiones que el diálogo hace a los palaoi logos. Propondremos una hipótesis sobre la importancia gnosiológica de esas antiguas o míticas creencias. No no se trata aquí de la iniciación en la hipótesis de la anámnesis, ni de cualquier discusión epistemológica, como en el Menón y en el Fedón. Recordemos el inicio del largo discurso que, según el ateniense, habría de ser proclamado a los colonos de Magnesia:

Varones», hemos de decirles, el dios, como dice también el antiguo dicho (palaiós lógos) que tiene el principio, el fin y el medio de todos los seres, avanza con rectitud, mientras lleva a cabo sus revoluciones naturales. Lo acompaña siempre la diosa Justicia que castiga a los que han faltado a la ley. El que ha de ser feliz se aferra a ella y la obedece, humilde y ordenado.

Y, en los pasajes subsiguientes:

¿Cuál es pues la acción que agrada y acompaña al dios? Una, y que tiene un antiguo dicho (logon arkhaion): que lo semejante ama a lo semejante si es mesurado, pero que las cosas que carecen de medida no se aman entre sí ni a las mesuradas. Para nosotros, el dios debería ser la medida de todas las cosas; mucho más aún que, como dicen algunos, un hombre. Es necesario, por tanto, que el que ha de llegar a ser querido por él se convierta lo más posible también él en un ser de esas características.

Leemos, entonces, una alusión explícita al hombre Protágoras y al precepto protagórico del anthrópos metron; la expresión palaios logos, inserta en 715 y en el pasaje 716c, resurge a través de un proverbio, logon arkhaion, registrado desde Homero

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21 Fedón, 85c-d.
23 Para as passagens relativas à sabedoria ou aos relatos dos antigos, v. Leis, 738c, 865d, 872e, 881a, 886c, 890d, 927a.
24 O discurso se estende entre os livros IV e V do diálogo: Leis, 715e-734c.
25 Provável alusão a um poema órfico.
27 Leis, 716c (misma tradução)
y presente en otros diálogos platónicos. Como se trata de la mejor ordenación de la pólica, y no más de proposiciones epistemológicas, tal como en el Menón y en el Fedón, la mención de la sabiduría antigua reaparece en las Leyes más cercana a la exhortación a la moderación y a la prudencia, presente en la confrontación discursiva entre Sócrates y Calicles en el Górgias. En fin, proponemos como hipótesis que el recurso del palaios logos se hace imprescindible para la respuesta final a los sofistas. Si el último escrito de Platón fue su al mismo tiempo su más extenso diálogo, as Leis, podemos inferir que: cuando el discurso mítico reviste al logos, se impone como soporte para una crítica conclusiva y, tal vez, la más incisiva hecha por Platón al relativismo protagórico. Es como si Platón, al final, nos hubiese dejado un aviso tajante: fuera de la apelación al paradigma de lo divino, no hay escapatoria posible del laberinto discursivo de la sofística.

Paying the Price: Contextualizing Exchange in *Phaedo* 69a-c.

Morgan, Kathryn

1. Introduction

This paper investigates a difficult passage of Plato's *Phaedo* (69a-c) as a case study in the advantages of reading Plato's dialogues with maximal attention to their historical and cultural context. A significant part of Plato's philosophical project, I believe, was devoted to exploring contemporary ideologies and suggesting that they might be altered and transformed. Plato's process of cultural interrogation, together with its goal of ethical transformation, involved redefining and reissuing as philosophical a whole series of cultural phenomena ranging from religion to economics.

*Phaedo* 69a has perplexed and irritated a variety of commentators. Socrates contrasts the philosophical way of life with that of the many by focusing on *phronēsis*, thought or wisdom. He asserts that the right exchange for virtue is not to exchange pleasures for pleasures or pains for pains, like coins. The only correct currency is *phronēsis*. Everything else is shadow painting. In fact, *phronēsis* is a type of purification: only the purified and initiated will live with the gods after death. Even this simplified summary is enough to show the complexity of the passage. Socrates uses three metaphors (coinage, painting, and initiation) in close succession. The connections between them are not immediately evident, nor is it clear precisely how the coinage analogy is meant to work. Examining how Plato uses money and coinage elsewhere in the corpus and how his usage resonates with older literary and cultural traditions will help to clarify why it was helpful to deploy the coinage metaphor in our *Phaedo* passage. Reading the passage against its immediate context in the dialogue will demonstrate its integration into the broader strategies of Socrates' "defense." We shall see that the coinage metaphor makes a multifaceted contribution to the project of elaborating a system of values associated with the body. But it does more than that: it offers a way to explore the interconnection of and rivalry between the economic (and physical) order and the ethical order. It allows the interlocutors to investigate the qualities of different value systems and what it means to give primacy to any one of them. Finally, it generates a set of associations rooted in the contrast between purity and impurity, associations that enable Plato/Socrates to deploy notions of religious/metaphysical sanction and reinforce the superiority of the philosophical life.

2. The coinage analogy in *Phaedo* 69

*Phaedo* 69a-c comes towards the end of a sequence of dialogue that is sometimes called "Socrates' defense." Reproached by Simmias and Cebes for not being upset at the thought of leaving them and leaving the service of the gods who preside over this life, Socrates must try to defend himself and show that someone who has spent his life in the pursuit of philosophy should die with confidence and in the belief that he will meet with the greatest goods after death. Starting at 64a he mounts his case by showing that a life of philosophy is practice for death. A philosopher focuses not on the body but the soul and turns away from corporeal pleasures. The body and its senses are an impediment to the operation of intelligence, so the philosophical soul despises the body. The senses, moreover, do not have access to the Forms. Only in death can we purify ourselves of the effects of the body and obtain wisdom, *phronēsis*. Socrates, therefore, hopes that once he is dead he will attain his goal of *phronēsis*; it would be ridiculous, therefore for him to resent or fear death. At 68c5
he takes a slightly different approach: both courage and moderation properly belong to the philosopher: the common conception of courage is a strange one: people fear death, but endure it because they are afraid of greater evils. They are thus brave through fear. Men who are orderly resist one set of pleasures because they are afraid of being deprived of greater ones: they resist pleasure because they are conquered by it.

My dear Simmias, I suspect that this is not the right exchange for virtue, to exchange pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains and fear for fear, greater for lesser, like coins, but that this alone is the correct coin, for which we must exchange all these things: wisdom, and when everything is bought and sold for this and with this, namely with wisdom, it really is courage and moderation and justice, and in a word, true virtue; pleasures and fears and all other such things may be present or absent. On the other hand I suspect that when things are separated from wisdom and exchanged for each other, virtue of this sort is a kind of shadow painting and is in reality slavish and has nothing healthy or true about it, and that in real actual truth moderation and justice and courage are a kind of purification from all such things, and wisdom itself is a rite of purification. And it’s likely in fact that those who set up initiatory rites for us were no trivial practitioners, but in truth they were riddling long ago when they said that whoever arrives in Hades uninitiated and unperfected will lie in the mud, but the one who has been purified and perfected will live with the gods when he arrives there. For as those who are connected with the mysteries say, “Many are the narthex-bearers but few are the Bakchoi.” And these are in my opinion no others than those who have philosophized correctly.

Socrates has every expectation that he is one of these purified philosophical Bacchants. In any case, he will know the truth soon enough. This is his defense.

3. Plato on money, material values, and the sophists

Understanding the coinage metaphor is no simple matter. Julia Annas writes in a trenchant footnote: “The passage has caused much trouble, partly because of the fact that coinage serves, rather ineptly, as the metaphor both for the inferior attitude (weighing up pleasures and pains) and for the better attitude (turning to wisdom and ignoring the relevance of pleasures and pains).”¹ John Burnet thought that there could be no question of exchanging pleasures or pains for virtue and judged that the sentence that begins at 69b1 was an interpolation.² Although few have followed him here,³ there is still discomfort at the notion that wisdom is exchanged for the virtues and that they are bought and sold with it.⁴ It is all very well to say that we cannot buy virtue by exchanging pleasures with pleasures and fears with fears, but when we comes to the desirable type of purchase, there is a further difficulty in using phronēsis as a currency. When we buy something with money our stock of money is decreased, but how could we say that our stock of phronēsis is decreased?

If, however, the coin metaphor is so problematic, why use it in the first place? One possibility is that the coinage metaphor had such advantages that Plato wanted to use it despite (or perhaps because of) its difficulties. Its rich associations offered a perfect way to juxtapose two different ethical economies: one of the body and the other of the soul. Both in the Phaedo and elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, money is a key element in elaborating a value system associated with the body. The coinage metaphor of 69a-c is not the first time that money has made an appearance in Socrates’ defense. The entire defense is structured by the opposition between the soul

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² Burnet 1911: 42-43.
⁴ Dorter 1982: 30 with a review of scholarship.
and the body, and also between the opinions of the many and those of philosophers. At 66b-c Socrates reconstructs what he imagines legitimate philosophers must think about the obstacles posed to philosophy by the body. They conclude that war and faction is caused by the body and its desires because wars occur in order to acquire *chrēmata*, that is, money and other stuff, and the body forces us to acquire *chrēmata*. A little later (68b) Socrates himself declares that someone who fears death will be a lover of the body (*philosōmatas*): either a lover of money (*philochrēmatos*) or a lover of honor (*philotimos*) or both.

This combination of ideas has rightly reminded interpreters of the oligarchic and timocratic men of the *Republic*, as also of the discussion in that dialogue of the appetitive part of the soul as money loving, because money is the principal means of satisfying the appetites (9.580d-581a). As Malcolm Schofield has observed, in his discussion of the appetitive part of the soul, Plato was echoing elements of a long Greek reflection on “greed as a prime force for destructiveness in human affairs, whether in fueling stasis within a city, or in powering and then destroying imperialistic ambition, and in focusing particularly on the power of money.” Schofield’s analysis of the money-loving soul and of psychic tripartition in the *Republic* acknowledges this section of the *Phaedo*, with its “[trichotomy of love of learning, love of honor, and love of money,” as an important predecessor. We should also note that on Schofield’s reading, money ceases to have a merely instrumental use. The desire of the appetitive part of the soul for money is naturally insatiable, both as a means and as an end in itself. It is, he argues, a way of giving effect to the insatiability of appetite. There seems to be, then, a fundamental connection between money and somatic materialism, so that the transactional order of the body gravitates towards expression in financial terms. Money has a privileged relationship with the phenomenon of attachment to the body. It is right after the introduction of the *philochrēmatos* in the *Phaedo* that Socrates decides to prove that the common understanding of courage and moderation is misguided; this is the segment that ends with the currency metaphor.

Why should Plato use the metaphor of coinage at all when it comes to laying out an approved system of value and talking about the virtues? Because money was, by its very nature, conceptualized as a measure of value, the means by which everything can be measured against everything else. Even more crucial, however, is that the acquisition of excellence, *aretē*, was already problematically ensnared in the realm of commercial exchange. Plato’s sustained polemic against the sophists and their educational practices problematizes their acceptance of pay for teaching, and the troublesome relationship between money and *aretē* comes up in a variety of contexts, such as Meno 78d, where Socrates parodically declares that Meno has declared that *aretē* is the acquisition of gold and silver, or *Apology* 20a-b, where Socrates narrates how he told Kallias that Euenos of Paros could teach human and political excellence for the sum of five minas. Plato is prone to view a sophist as a kind of merchant, as he does at the beginning of the *Protagoras* and in *Sophist* the sophist is a wage earner who (only) claims to deal with people for the sake of virtue, a kind of a wholesaler for the soul (ψυχεμπορικῆς).

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8 Resp. 371b; Aristotle Eth. Nic. 1133b [15]
9 χρυσίον δὲ δὴ καὶ ἄργυριον πορίζεσθαι ἄρετή ἐστιν, ὡς φησὶ Μένων
11 Here Socrates defines a sophist as a “merchant or a dealer in the wares by which the soul is nourished.”
The sophists are not explicitly an issue in the *Phaedo*, but given the importance of the sophist as a negative paradigm in Plato's construction of intellectual activity we can perhaps see why issues of financial exchange came to the fore as soon as the conversation focused on the relationship between wisdom and the world. Socrates must move to show that admired virtues arise from the deployment of wisdom rather than through any kind of material calculus. We would be mistaken, however, to conclude that concerns over the potential clash between *aretê* and money were original to Plato. They were a longstanding theme in the poetic traditions inherited by him, and, as we shall see, they underwent new transformations due to developments in the sphere of Athenian coinage in the late fifth and early fourth centuries.

4. Wealth and Ethics, Politics and Coinage

The transformations of the polis in the Archaic period resulted in great strain on the language of ethical evaluation. In the poetry of the Theognidian corpus class struggle is reflected in the pervasive language of the “good” (*agathos*/*esthlos*) and the “bad” (*kakos*/*deilos*). Hereditary elites, it seems, clung to the vocabulary of “good” and “noble” in the face of social challenges by the newly rich. Money enables a transformation from “bad” (social status) to “good” (social status), but it is more problematic to gain and exercise the values associated with status. At Theognis lines 314-317 the poet refuses to exchange wealth for *aretê*.

Many bad men are wealthy, and good men are poor,
But we will not exchange wealth for excellence with these men,
Since the one is stable always,
But different men have money at different times.13

In this elegiac reality, ethics, politics, fortune, and wealth have interacted to create a situation where standards of value are confused. This explains his desire to test men with the *basanos*, the touchstone, and find out who is really pure gold like himself, and who is counterfeit. A broad problematic is in play here, one that worries over the non-congruence of the economic and ethical realms. If this is right, Plato’s problems with money and the material order it represents are the direct descendents (in the philosophical realm) of aristocratic social and economic prejudices in the Archaic period, reworked to find a firm basis in human psychology.

One of the interesting things about the phenomenon of money is thus that it will not stay confined to a financial context but almost inevitably bleeds over into ethical environments. The potential for such a “universal regime of comparative evaluation” (to use the words of Richard Seaford) meant that money could have great force as an instrument of paradox, used to emphasize values to which it was properly opposed or might be thought to be opposed. I cite as an example two Euripidean passages that focus on *aretê*. Euripides Fr. 542 (Kannicht) declares that as well as silver and gold, *aretê* is a currency (*nomisma*) for mortals:

Pale silver is not the only currency
nor is gold, but virtue has also been laid down

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12 Giovanni Cerri (1968: 11, 16-18) has demonstrated how these adjectives express judgments of both value and of social standing, inextricably entwined. Theognis describes a “good” man as one who is just (143-144), but the vocabulary of the “good” and the “bad” (*agathoi* and *kakoi*) are also correlated with social class.

13 Πολλοί τοι πλουτοῦσι κακοί, ἀγαθοὶ δὲ πένονται,
 ἀλλ’ ἡμεῖς τοῦτοι σ’ οὐ διαμειψόμεθα
 τῆς ἀρετῆς τὸν πλοῦτον, ἐπει τὸ μὲν ἔμπεδον αἰεί,
 χρήματα δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἄλλοτε ἄλλος ἔχει.

15 Theognis 417-418, 449-452.
16 Seaford 1998: 121
as a currency for mortals, which we should use.\textsuperscript{17} Here the two currencies are not mutually exclusive, although Fr. 527 (Kannicht) declared that money cannot buy nobility or \textit{aretē}.\textsuperscript{18} The relationship (or lack of relationship) of money with qualities like nobility or \textit{aretē} was almost a commonplace for more than one poetic genre. It is not surprising that poets of all varieties lingered on the proper role to be played by wealth in mortal life. What is suggestive is the idea of virtue as itself a currency and an object of exchange. This is one reason why Socrates’ currency analogy at \textit{Phaedo} 69 would not have seemed inept to an ancient audience; it was a familiar move. To be sure, in the \textit{Phaedo} it is \textit{phronēsis} that is the currency and virtue the object of exchange, but when Socrates contrasts the opinions of the many about what can and cannot be bought with material currency with a more refined perspective that views ethical currency as incommensurate with material goods and coinage, he is harnessing a traditional set of oppositions to his philosophical purposes.

Historical developments in the Classical period gave a further edge to questions of acceptable currency. A decree regulating the use of coins, standards, and weights throughout the Athenian Empire has been dated at various points in the second half of the fifth century,\textsuperscript{19} and is widely thought to have mandated the use of Athenian silver coinage as well as other Attic weights and measures, within the empire and to have been intended to stop independent minting by the allies. There is no general scholarly agreement concerning the impetus behind these measures. The goal may have been simply to increase trade, but there may also have been an intention to reinforce symbolically Athenian hegemony.\textsuperscript{20} Whatever the purpose, this is good evidence for an Athenian desire to establish a uniform system of value measurement within its sphere of influence, an interesting development in a world where multiple coinage standards coexisted. If we were to date the composition of the \textit{Phaedo} some time in the late 380s, this would put it one, or at most two, generations after the promulgation of the standards decrees. The decrees would thus offer a precedent for the quasi-hegemonic assertion of the primacy of one system of currency: owls for the Athenians map onto \textit{phronēsis} for the philosopher.\textsuperscript{21}

By the end of the fifth century the financial situation in Athens had changed due to the city’s travails at the end of the Peloponnesian War. In 407/6 the city issued new coinage in both gold (sourced from melting down golden victory dedications

\textsuperscript{17} οὔτοι νόμισμα λευκός ἄργυρος μόνον / καὶ χρυσός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ κἀρετή βροτοῖς / νόμισμα κεῖται πᾶσιν, ἥ χρήσθαι χρεών.
\textsuperscript{18} μόνον δ’ ἂν αὐτὰ χρημάτων οὐκ ἂν λάβοις / γενναιότητα κἀρετήν.
\textsuperscript{19} IG I1453 \textsuperscript{3} has been assigned to the 440s, 420s, or even 413 BCE.
\textsuperscript{20} SEG 59 81, 56 77, 51 55.
\textsuperscript{21} It is attractive to speculate on the possible resonances of Attic owl coinage for a fourth century philosopher such as Plato. This coinage had the head of Athena on the obverse, and Athena is connected in the etymologies of the \textit{Cratylus} with \textit{nous}, \textit{noēsis}, and \textit{dianoia} (\textit{Cra.} 407b. The goddess seems to have been allegorized at a fairly early stage in Homeric criticism as \textit{phronēsis}: the scholiast to the battle of the gods in \textit{Iliad} 20 associates this move loosely with Theagenes of Rhegion, who was active towards the end of the sixth century (DK 8.2). Sophocles’ satyr play \textit{Krisis} seems to have featured Athena as embodiment of \textit{phronēsis}, \textit{nous}, and \textit{aretē} (Ath. 687c), although it seems that the attributes were characters rather than the goddess herself (Bakola 2009: 287). When Socrates says that \textit{phronēsis} is the only true currency he may be creating a sort of pun: just as the Athenians value and attempt to impose coinage stamped with a representation of a goddess who could be read as \textit{phronēsis}, so Socrates wants to impose the currency of \textit{phronēsis} as the only useful means to assess value and acquire \textit{aretē}. }
on the Acropolis\textsuperscript{22}) and bronze. The latter was recalled from circulation in the late 390s.\textsuperscript{23} This instability was problematic for a polis as proud of its currency as Athens and, fascinatingly for our purposes, was reflected in the parabasis of Aristophanes' \textit{Frogs} in 405 BCE, where the chorus, speaking for the poet, draws a parallel between Athenian politics and coinage (lines 718-735):

"It's often struck us that the city deals with its fine upstanding citizens just as with the old coinage and the new gold. Though both of these are unalloyed, indeed considered the finest of all coins, the only ones minted true and tested everywhere among Greeks and barbarians alike, we make no use of them; instead we use these crummy coppers, struck just yesterday or the day before with a stamp of the lowest quality. Just so with our citizens: the ones we acknowledge to be well-born, well-behaved, just, fine, and outstanding men, men brought up in wrestling schools, choruses, and the arts, we treat them shabbily, while for all purposes we choose the coppers, the aliens, the red-heads, bad people with bad ancestors, the latest arrivals, whom formerly the city wouldn't readily have used even as scapegoats. But even at this late hour, you fools, do change your ways and once again choose the good people. . . "\textsuperscript{24}

As was the case with Euripides fragment cited above, we are dealing with juxtaposed systems of value seen through the lens of coinage and once again the language of coinage is used to express ethical concerns. For the Aristophanic speaker ethics and politics are inextricably linked: the current leaders of the city are like base bronze coinage and have displaced virtuous elites represented by both the traditional silver owls and the more recent gold coinage. These idealized virtuous coinages were not counterfeit, but were the finest of all currencies, the \textit{only} ones struck correctly and universally accepted. Actual people are symbolized by coins, as Aristophanes resumes an analogy that, as we have seen, stretches back to Theognis and his touchstone. The salvation of the city and its citizens depends on picking the correct ethical currency.

The Athenians are said to have approved of this advice so much that the play was reperformed but the city’s coinage continued to face problems. In 375/4 BCE Nicophon’s law on silver coinage enforced acceptance of silver owls that had been passed by a public tester.\textsuperscript{25} The goal of this law was, it seems, to facilitate commerce and maintain the high reputation of Athenian silver coinage in the face of counterfeiting and unofficial issues.\textsuperscript{26} The historical circumstances that led up to the law are not entirely certain and the restoration of the text is fraught, yet it seems evident that there had been trouble among Athenian merchants, and that this trouble had something to do with the differing types of Attic owls in circulation.\textsuperscript{27}

The fifth-century decrees and the fourth-century law are the products of differing situations: the first, arguably, imperialist (that is: in the areas controlled by Athens everyone shall use one currency) and the second economically defensive, protecting the value of Athenian currency and ensuring valid transactions. Taken together, however, they show that issues of currency were a longstanding pre-occupation in Athens. This is important background for understanding the coinage analogy in the \textit{Phaedo}. Plato’s Socrates is speaking in a world where there was not

\textsuperscript{22} Schol. Ar. Ran. 720.
\textsuperscript{23} Ar. Eccl. 821-822.
\textsuperscript{24} The translation is that of Henderson 2002: 123-125.
\textsuperscript{25} Agora Inventory I 7180
\textsuperscript{26}Editio princeps: Stroud 1974. SEG 26 72, 54 107, 55 134, 58 88, 61 118.
\textsuperscript{27} Stroud 1974: 185, “The Athenians apparently found themselves in the awkward position of having their hitherto respected silver coinage rejected in their own marketplace.”
just one currency, but several. All of them could be genuine or counterfeit, and even in the case of genuine coinage, there could be questions of equivalence and exchange. Within the Athenian sphere of influence there was, ideally, to be only one currency used by all.

The parabasis of the *Frogs* shows how easily such financial matters could be transformed into ethical and political ones, especially given previous poetic traditions that had problematized the relationship between ethical and financial currency. These traditions, as well as the ongoing concerns reflected in the classical laws on coinage, created a climate that facilitated (1) consideration of coinage as an embodiment of a value system that should ideally be extensible over the widest possible area in order to perpetuate that value system (2) consideration of multiple currencies as mutual competitors (3) consideration of the problem of commensurability between currencies (4) consideration of the problem of counterfeit currency, and distinguishing it from genuine coinage (5) the connection of counterfeit or debased currency with debased ethical types. All these concerns have their part to play in our *Phaedo* passage.

### 5. Reevaluating the coinage analogy in the *Phaedo*

We can now see why the use of the coinage metaphor at *Phaedo* 69 might be said to be over-determined. Traditional poetic discourse had agonized over the corrosive moral and social effects of money and had (almost as a kind of defensive reflex) tried to upstage the monetary economy by imposing a superior moral economy on it. Plato’s intellectual heritage included this discourse, and his lifetime saw complex maneuvering over the status of Athenian coinage as a system for assessing value. Plato added to this cocktail his disapproval of the sophists and a binary opposition between the material and the spiritual world. This opposition invited conceptualization in terms of differing and colliding transactional orders. As shown above, the idea that material/financial and ethical orders might clash and that the resultant value systems competed for primacy was by no means a Platonic invention. His devaluation of the material world did, however, make the opposition particularly stark. *Phaedo* 69 complicates the traditional picture and ties it more thoroughly to the body by speaking not so much of the exchange of money for *aretē* as of the exchange of pleasures and pains for *aretē* as if they were coins. Paul Gooch has rightly remarked that the coins of pleasure have no real value; they are monopoly money. The issue in the *Phaedo* is not how the totals add up — this may well be an insoluble problem — but what sort of currency we are using. Distress at Plato’s use of the coinage metaphor for pains and pleasures and for the “purchase” of *aretē* is misplaced.

Another possible advantage of connecting *phronēsis* and coinage emerges if we return briefly to Schofield’s observation that the appetitive part of the soul in the *Republic* has an insatiable desire for money both as a means and as an end in itself; it is seen as intrinsically valuable as well as being an instrument for acquisition. Commentators on our *Phaedo* passage have sometimes been perplexed by the coinage metaphor because they conceive of coins as having only token value. Gooch seems to me to be on the right track when he observes that coins may be thought to have either intrinsic or instrumental value and that it is a dangerous oversimplification to conclude that *phronēsis* has only instrumental value: “an adequate interpretation

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29 Dixsaut 1991: 84.
30 Thus Archer Hind (1894: 24) thinks that one reason the metaphor breaks down is that “money is of value only for the sake of what it can buy,” whereas it is the presence of *phronēsis* that gives virtue its value. Hackforth (1955: 193) too is worried that wisdom seems to be both a means and an end. Cf. Dixsaut 1991: 85.
can allow for both kinds of value without straining the text.”31 In the material world, then, money can be both a means and an end. In the world of the philosopher the same is true of phronēsis.

The implications of nomisma as “coinage” or “currency” go further still: it represents a socially embedded system in which people must place their faith or confidence. Silver and gold coinage was not merely token money; the metal in the coins was a commodity in and of itself. There was indeed a disparity between intrinsic and conventional value, and in the later fifth and fourth century there was an increase in purely fiduciary coinage. Yet in most cases there was a combination of intrinsic and socially conferred value.32 The combination of intrinsic and socially-conferred value (the latter, of course, reinforced by the very word nomisma) is attractive when we consider the workings of phronēsis. Phronēsis is both a virtue and can be used to acquire other virtues. For the purposes of the discussion in the Phaedo, the notion of socially conferred value is important: it is not just a question of deploying phronēsis to acquire the virtues, though this will indeed occur, but of creating an entire system, the philosophic way of life, where wisdom is the accepted currency. The coinage analogy provides an excellent opportunity for thinking about the nature of different value systems.

Enough has been said by now, I hope, to indicate the riches of a contextualizing approach to Phaedo 69. What still remains unclear is how the currency of phronēsis is to be connected to the other images that follow. To recapitulate: Socrates says that without phronēsis the exchange of pleasures and pains is kind of shadow painting (skiagraphia), and is slavish (andrapodōdēs) and unhealthy. Moderation, justice, and courage are in fact the state of being purified from such things and phronēsis is a rite of purification. Perhaps those who set up initiatory rites were riddling long ago when they said that whoever arrives in Hades uninitiated will lie in the mud, but the one who has been purified will live with the gods. People connected with the mysteries say, “Many are the narthex-bearers but few are the Bakchoi,” and Socrates thinks that the Bakchoi are those who have philosophized correctly. In rapid succession he evokes painting, slavery, purification and mystery initiations. How do we get from the marketplace to mystery initiation?

One way of dealing with this progression is to ignore it and focus instead on the religious language. Thus in 2006 F. C. White maintained that, contrary to the interpretations of the majority of commentators, Socrates’ defense is not one integrated piece of argumentation but two arguments. White’s analysis of the defense makes the first “philosophical” argument run from 64c2-68c4; the second, “largely religious” argument stretches from 68c5 to 69e2.33 These two arguments are “mutually isolated, Socrates taking little or no account in his religious argument of points that he establishes in his philosophical argument.”34 It is worth pausing briefly to underline the methodology that has been applied here. This commentator has taken a stretch of text and drawn a line of discontinuity at the place where he thinks the text ceases being “philosophical” and starts being “religious.” He thinks that the religious argument is “less than lucid” and is there to pay off the promise to show that the dead philosopher will meet with good gods and masters after death. What is most startling about this line of interpretation, however, is that it ignores 69a-c entirely. The examination of the “currency” of wisdom is not obviously conceived

32 As Richard Seaford puts it (2004: 142) “the confidence engendered by the stamp and the intrinsic value of a coin might enable coinage to circulate well outside the area of its issuing authority.”
34 White 2006: 457.
within a religious framework; this may be why the article makes not mention of it. The larger question here is: is it legitimate to carve up the dialogue into pieces of argumentation that we take seriously (in this case, the “philosophical” argument) and those that we dismiss or don’t bother with? The better solution may be to embrace the thickness of Plato’s narrative texture.

Is it really the case that the material from 68c5 onwards (including our coinage passage) is separable from what has gone before? White thinks that Crito’s intervention at 63d-e to warn Socrates about the disadvantages of becoming intellectually overheated before drinking the poison facilitates a change in the direction of the discussion. Before Crito speaks, Socrates has promised to show that there is good reason to hope that he will be with good gods and perhaps men after death. After Crito’s intervention he returns to the general theme of the philosopher’s willingness to die and mounts what White calls his philosophical argument to show that a philosopher will meet with the greatest goods after death (megista agatha, 64a). We have moved from talking about meeting with good gods and good men to knowing the greatest goods, an abstracting move. White thinks that this argument concludes in 68, and it is only then, at the eleventh hour, that Socrates returns to the questions of good gods, showing that he has reason to believe he will dwell with the gods because he has been truly purified. This stretch of text is, White says “different from the philosophical argument in its premises and conclusion. It is also different from it in its religious aura, resting as it does upon religious beliefs, quoting religious sources, and arriving at a religious conclusion.”

It argues all over again, that is, redundantly, the points that a philosopher is pure and possesses wisdom. It makes the trivial argument that Socrates will be with good gods and friends after death; trivial, that is, in comparison to the previous argument that after death the philosopher will attain wisdom and truth. Why does Plato do this? “No doubt because he was anxious to reinforce the case for saying that Socrates was not irreligious.”

I want to insist that to call this whole stretch of argument from 68c5 on “religious” and trivial is to misrepresent what is at stake here. Religious tropes there are, but they are carefully integrated into an argument whose chief concern is to present a value system that competes with popular notions of what is valuable. This system establishes itself by deploying sets of overlapping cultural resonances, both economic and religious, and explores them in terms that do not seem trivial when we run across them in the Republic and elsewhere. Let us now reexamine the progression of images in Phaedo 69a-c.

Socrates’ first move after elaborating his coinage comparison is to call counterfeit virtue a kind of shadow painting. The image reinforces the deceptiveness of the popular conception of virtue and may remind us of the illusionistic wares of the sophist, who will be compared to an illusionistic painter at Sophist 234a-b. It also resonates with Republic 9.583b, where Socrates declares that apart from the pleasure of a knowledgeable person, the pleasure of others is neither real nor pure; it’s a kind of shadow painting.

Socrates can oppose purity and shadow painting in this passage because shadow painting achieved its illusionistic effects by juxtaposing patches of contrasting colors which, looked at from a distance, gave the impression of a different color. The

37 οὐδὲ παναληθῆς ἐστὶν ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ἡδονῆ πλὴν τῆς τοῦ φρονίμου οὐδὲ καθαρά, ἀλλ’ ἐσκιαγραφημένη τις, ὡς ἐγὼ δοκῶ μοι τῶν σοφῶν τινὸς ἀκριβοῦναι.
Phaedo’s illusory virtue that works by the calculation of pleasures and pains and uses a base currency corresponds to the impure pleasure of the Republic espoused by the lovers of honor and profit. The purity of philosophical pleasure in Republic 9, corresponds to the “true” coinage of the Phaedo. The oppositions evoked here are overlapping: purity vs. impurity, shadow-painting and illusionistic color vs. pure color, the currency of philosophy vs. regular coinage.

The language of purity in the Phaedo allows Socrates to pivot the argument back into religious territory. At the end of passage, 69c-d, moderation, justice, and courage are identified with katharsis, and phronēsis is a katharmos (rite of purification). Mystery scenarios of the fate of the initiated and uninitiated in Hades are mapped onto philosophical and non-philosophical life and death: non-initiates will lie in the mud in Hades and initiates will live with the gods. Socrates quotes with approval the saying “Many are the narthex-bearers but few are the Bakchoi,” but adds that in his opinion the Bakchoi are those who have philosophized correctly. Are we, then, to conclude that at this point Socrates has left philosophical argument behind?

We are not. To start with we should observe that the vocabulary of purity enters Socrates’ defense early on,39 as Socrates establishes that the soul has the best access to truth when the body does not interfere with it. This is when it will understand “most purely”.40 At 67a5 Socrates imagines how philosophers will say to themselves that they must purify themselves from the body.41 At 67b2 the language becomes religious in a more robust sense, where, at the conclusion of the philosophers’ self address, they declare that after death, and having been purified of the body, they will know the truth, “for it is not allowed by divine law that what is impure touch what is pure.”42 Immediately afterwards Socrates reinforces the lesson of the philosophers’ speech by defining purification (katharsis) as the separation of the soul from the body, adding that this is what has been said long since in the logos —where, no doubt intentionally, it is unclear whether the logos is a religious account or the preceding argument.43

Now, White wants to cordon off the use of purification vocabulary before 68c5 on the grounds that Socrates in fact makes no use of religious notions in the first part of the defense; he [Socrates] means epistemological preparation for wisdom. Purification vocabulary in the first part of the defense, and its intensification at 67a-b, merely, he says, “prepares the mind for a transition to an argument based on religious beliefs.”44 Yet the argumentation that follows the transition at 68c5 is economic and value-oriented and has no religious colouring at all until end of 69b. There the mention of shadow painting prepares us for a return to purity themes (since we remember that it gains its effect by mixing colors and not allowing them to be pure). Then the talk of phronēsis as a purificatory rite marks the culmination

39 The theme is, in fact, introduced right at the start of the dialogue, where we learn that Socrates’ execution has been delayed because the city must keep itself pure (kathareuein, 58b5-6) during its embassy to Delos (cf. Gallop 1975: 75, Schefer 1996: 133). The city keeps ritual purity, but Socrates has spent his entire adult life in true purification. For the parallel between Socrates and Theseus, in whose honor the embassy to Delos takes place, see Edmonds 2004: 202-203.
40 katharōtata, 65e6; καθαρώς τι εἴσεσθαι, 66d8; καθαρώς γνῶναι, 66e5. 41 cf. 67a7, “escaping, pure, from the folly of the body.”
42 μὴ καθαρῷ γὰρ καθαροῦ ἐφάπτεσθαι μὴ οὐ θεμιτὸν ᾖ
of the language of purification that has intensified as the argument progresses.

To what extent is the argument based on religious beliefs? Not at all. Although Socrates talks of initiations, underworld punishments and heavenly rewards, he is perfectly clear that purification is equivalent to rational thought, and that the purveyors of post-mortem stories of punishment and reward were riddling. His proposal for their meaning is that the uninitiated (the impure) are those who are attached to bodily pleasures and pains, and the “mud” of Hades must therefore represent material contamination. Those who will live with the gods are the philosophers. The argument is not religious; rather, just as Socrates appropriates the language of coinage he appropriates also the language of initiation and religious sanction to express a philosophical truth. This gives the conclusion to his defense greater rhetorical impact but it does not alter his argumentative strategy.45

I have suggested that one reason Socrates’ peroration ends with the language of initiation is to deploy the solemnity of supernatural (or more properly speaking, metaphysical) sanction. This is not merely a rhetorical move: the purification of the rational part of the soul was for Plato a fundamental imperative, and we have seen how various aspects of Phaedo 69 prepare for this “religious” turn. Yet we can specify even further the connection between the coinage and purification metaphors. It is, for example, no accident that the language of purity can also be used when evaluating gold and silver coinage and speaking of the refining of metals.46 Even more significant was the tendency to understand the relationship between gods and mortals in terms of good and bad economic exchange relationships, although I do not have time to address this today.47 For Plato, the most genuinely “religious” purification would be the most genuinely philosophical.

6. Conclusions

At Phaedo 68c5 the focus of Socrates’ “defense” speech narrows to popular misunderstanding of sōphrosynē and andreia and we move into the imagery of coinage, shadow painting, and purification. This passage completes Socrates’ treatment of the general misprision of philosophical life by those who have not internalized philosophical values. The first part of his defense discussed how the many do not understand the way in which philosophers are practicing for death and explained why he faced death with confidence. Just as the many misunderstand the “moribund” nature of philosophers, so they misunderstand the nature of courage and its relationship to fear. The coinage analogy at 69a-b is particularly apt because the language of nomisma focuses our attention on the conventional belief systems

47 See Republic 2.364b-365a, where Adeimantos complains that religious quacks besiege the rich in order to sell them purifications (katharmoi) for their misdeeds and impieties. These bogus religious rites are, moreover, explicitly described in terms of bodily pleasures. See also Seaford 2004: 162-163 on the perversion of religious ritual by money (cf. Tell 2011: 55-58). The idea that our relationships with the gods can be reduced to a kind of commercial exchange receives critique also in the Euthyphro (14e).
that philosophical discourse aims to deconstruct. The reason that Socrates cycles so swiftly through metaphors of coinage, painting, and initiation, is that they all, in their different ways, engage with ideas of purity, genuineness, and deception. Taken as a group, the metaphors illustrate a disjunction between popular and philosophical ways of looking at value. We can only see this, however, if we take them seriously and animate them with our best sense of their contemporary resonance. Platonic philosophy works to reconfigure cultural forces: slowly to disembowel the reader from them and to render her an expert cultural critic as well as a formidable analyst of argumentative structure.

Résumé

Cette présentation part d’un passage problématique du Phédon (69a-c) pour explorer ce que nous pouvons gagner, si notre lecture de Platon tient compte de son contexte culturel. Socrate dit que la conception commune du courage est étrange, car les hommes ont peur de la mort, mais ils l’acceptent parce qu’ils trouvent autres maux encore plus terribles. C’est donc à cause de la peur qu’ils sont courageux. Il nous interdit d’échanger les plaisirs, douleurs, ou craintes plus grands pour des autres, plus petits, comme des monnaies. Il dit plutôt qu’il y a une seule monnaie, pour laquelle nous devons échanger toutes les choses, c’est à dire la sagesse (phronēsis). La nature précise d’un tel échange a intéressé les commentateurs de ce passage. Quelques-uns d’entre eux ont trouvé inapte la métaphore monétaire; d’autres ont décrit l’argument comme «religieux» et peu sérieux. Mon présentation prend en examen une série de problèmes liés entre eux: (1) le lien entre la monnaie et le matérialisme somatique, (2) le fait que, pour Platon, les valeurs financiers et éthiques ne sont pas commensurables, (3) les métaphores financières qui relient dans le monde en dehors de Platon la monnaie et l’éthique, (4) la valeur intrinsèque de la monnaie et la valeur d’usage, et (5) les lois athéniens à propos de la monnaie, les poids et les mesures et comment ces lois témoignent d’une inquiétude sur l’avilissement de la monnaie dans le Ve et au début du IVe siècle. Mon étude prend ce passage du Phédon comme le produit d’un climat sociologique et politique qui a facilité de considérer la monnaie comme l’incarnation d’un système de valeurs et associe la monnaie avilie avec une éthique avilie. Pour les athéniens au début du IVe siècle l’équivalence d’une monnaie à une autre, l’avilissement de la monnaie, et la contrefaçon étaient des questions de grand moment. Je crois qu’entendre ce fait rend les métaphores monétaires de Socrate moins déroutantes pour nous. Les métaphores employées dans ce passage du Phédon—la monnaie, la peinture, l’initiation de culte—jouent avec les notions de la pureté, l’authenticité, et la tromperie. Dans leur ensemble

48 Note how, as Archer-Hind 1894: 20 observes, the philosophers at 66c press and transform the implications of a popular saying: "the result is that because of it [the body], as the saying goes, it's really truly not possible for us ever to think about anything at all" (ὡστε τὸ λεγόμενον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῷ ὄντι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ φρονήσαι ἡμῖν ἐγγίγνεται οὐδέποτε οὐδέν).
elles impliquent un vaste parti de la culture populaire contemporaine, et Platon les utilise pour illustrer le dégagement entre les conceptions philosophiques et populaires de la valeur.

Works Cited


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Ancient Greek ethics was egoistic. That is, all or almost all ancient Greek moral philosophers held that the actions of a fully rational agent have as their ultimate aim that agent's own welfare or *eudaimonia*.

This view of ancient Greek ethics goes back at least to Zeller and Sidgwick in the 19th century, and is widespread today. Most scholars today, I think, believe that Socratic ethics was egoistic. When Vlastos defended the thesis that Socratic ethics was egoistic he called it “the Eudaimonist Axiom”, so what I will call “egoism” in this paper is often referred to in the Anglophone literature as “eudaimonism”. Many, but not all, scholars hold that Plato's ethics rests on an egoistic foundation. Anyway it is not rare for scholars today to hold some version of the strong thesis endorsed by Sidgwick. Since my topic today is Plato, I quote just one example, from Chris Bobonich: Plato, throughout his career, including the *Laws*, held the principle . . . of rational eudaimonism: For each individual, the ultimate end of all her rational actions is her own (greatest) happiness. It is important to keep in mind that this “rational eudaimonism” is a thesis about the structure of the agent's motives—one's own happiness is ultimate—and not a substantive thesis about the agent's good. This egoism about motives is compatible with many different substantive views about the human good, including views that make an individual's happiness depend essentially on the happiness of others, or an individual's happiness partly consist in the happiness of others. So egoism about motives is not inherently “selfish”, and it is compatible with an intrinsic concern for the welfare of others, e.g. if the welfare of others is a component of one's own good.

On the other hand, the *Phaedo* contains a clear example of purely altruistic action, namely Socrates' description of the activity of Anaxagoras' Nous in shaping the world. This example is matched by its parallel in the *Timaeus*, namely the Demiurge's activity in giving structure to the world. In this paper I will look at the altruism of Anaxagoras' Nous. The philosophical focus of this episode is the nature of scientific explanation. I will be asking what the passage has to say about the theory of rational action.

One day I heard someone reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, and saying that it is Nous that directs and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with this cause and it seemed to me good, in a way, that Nous should be the cause of all. I thought that if this were so, the directing Nous would direct everything and arrange each thing in the way that was best. If then one wished to know the cause of each thing, why it comes to be or perishes or exists, one had to find what was the best way for it to be, or to be acted upon, or to act. On these premises then it befitted a man to investigate only, about this and other things, what is best. The same man must

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2 “Eudaimonism” is given somewhat different meanings by different scholars. But Vlastos' usage has been very influential. (*Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, 1991, p. 103)
3 Cf. Gomez-Lobo, *Socratic Ethics*, p. 7 (on “the whole tradition of Greek ethics”).
inevitably also know what is worse, for that is part of the same knowledge. (97c1-d6)

Socrates portrays Anaxagoras’ Nous as powerful and wise and good. Nous has the power to direct and arrange everything in the cosmos. Nous uses this power to arrange everything in the way that is best. How things are determines how they react and behave, so Nous directs the cosmos so that everything exists and is acted upon and acts, always for the best. To have this power, Nous must know which arrangements and activities would be better or worse for all possible circumstances. That is, Nous must have a thoroughly comprehensive knowledge of the good (and its correlate bad). Nous is the cause that makes everything in the cosmos good, and it never is the cause of any bad. What always and everywhere is the cause of goodness is itself good, hence Nous is good.

Nous does not create, it arranges. Nous takes pre-existing material and orders it into wholes that as good as possible.

Later on Socrates gives more information about the sort of explanation he would expect from Nous:

I never thought that Anaxagoras, who said that those things were directed by Mind, would bring in any other cause for them than that it was best for them to be as they are. Once he had given the best for each as the cause for each and common good of all, I thought he would go on to explain what is the best for each individual and for the common good for all, . . .(98a7-b3)

The goal of Nous is to make the world good as possible at every level. Nous makes each item good; it organizes larger wholes so that they contribute to the common good of their parts and are themselves good. This process of ordering-for-the-sake-of-the-good, carried out from the smallest parts to the largest whole of all, makes the cosmos as a whole good.

This is Socrates' story of the role that Anaxagoras’ Nous ought to play in the cosmos. Let us now ask a crucial question: Why does Anaxagoras’ Nous behave this way? Why does Nous choose to order and arrange everything in this optimizing way?

Anaxagoras’ Nous is no egoist. Nous is inherently wise and good. Thus Nous's state is already as good as it can be. There is no hint in the text that activity of crafting the cosmos makes Nous any better than it otherwise would be. So Nous has no self-interested reasons for its action. The activity of Nous in shaping the cosmos is thus a case of pure altruism.

This is a strong claim. Two objections must immediately be addressed. The first is that Nous here is a cosmic causal principle, but not an agent. Nous does not act intentionally, and therefore Nous does not have motives. And if Nous does not have motives at all, it is wrong to call the causal activity of Nous altruistic.

Now, Socrates does not explicitly say, “Nous thought ABC and therefore decided XYZ.” To evaluate this objection, we must look at the language Socrates uses and ask what that language implicitly implies. Let’s begin with the term “Nous”. Now the history of the word is complicated, but it is fair to translate Nous as Mind or Reason. Everywhere in Plato Nous is cognitive. Unless the text gives us special reason to think otherwise, we must suppose that Socrates imagines Nous, not as a

5 “Power” and “wisdom” are implicit: Nous can order the cosmos as it chooses (power) and it has the full knowledge of good and bad (wisdom) needed in order to dispose of the cosmos for the best. [5

6 Here I interpret the “common good” in Socrates’ remarks to apply not just at the cosmic level, but at intermediate levels as well.

7 The literature on the meaning of nous is large. See now a special issue of Methodos: (16) 2016, La notion d’intelligence (nous-noein) dans la Grèce antique. Also e.g. Lesher, “The Emergence of Philosophical Interest in Cognition”, OSAP (12) 1994.
more primitive force, but as a mind that acts for reasons. Now let’s look at what Nous is said to do. Socrates says that Nous “orders” things (kosmein, diakosmein 97c1, 5) and places things in whatever way is best (97c). When Nous is said to “place things in whatever way is best” (τιθέναι ταύτῃ ὅπῃ ἂν βέλτιστα ἔχῃ) this implies intelligent, and thus intentional, action.

The second objection is that the text does not explicitly say that Nous does not benefit from its ordering activity, or that it, alone by itself, is as good as it can be. This is a more serious charge than the previous one. The first response to make is that Socrates does not say that Nous benefits itself in its activity. He gives a concise summary of the benefits of Nous’s activity: the things ordered by Nous are made as good as possible, each thing individually and in common. If Socrates had thought that Nous itself benefited, he should have added that explicitly. The second response depends on inferences using standard Socratic and Platonic normative principles. Whoever knows everything about what makes things good and bad is fully wise, and whatever is fully wise is perfectly good. We are entitled to assume that the character Socrates in the Phaedo up holds these principles and would apply them in this case.8

And remember: what interests us is Socrates’ version of Anaxagoras’ Nous, and not the views of the historical Anaxagoras. The historical Anaxagoras’ views, so far as we know them from fragmentary testimony, introduce some complications, which I leave aside here.

Nous is a god. For Socrates in the Phaedo, it is an imaginary god. Socrates is not sure that Nous exists and orders the cosmos. Socrates simply wishes that there were a Nous ordering the cosmos in that way, because then the cosmos would be the best possible and would have a rational structure that permits the most satisfying physical explanations.

I now turn to the question, what does the altruism of this imaginary god Nous tell us about human psychology?

Scholars who say that Plato’s ethics is egoistic give various justifications for this. The most common and philosophically powerful justification grounds it in a theory of rational agency: Plato thought that it is a principle of agency that every rational agent acts with the ultimate aim of promoting his or her own welfare or goodness.9 Although Socrates is not sure that Nous is actual, he certainly believes that Nous is possible: it could be the case that the cosmos is ordered by an all-wise cosmic Nous of this kind. This possible Nous is an agent that is both perfectly wise and purely altruistic in its actions. Therefore Socrates in this passage implicitly denies the principle of rational agency that many scholars appeal to in explaining Plato’s supposed egoistic psychology.

Socrates’ implicit theory of rational agency denies egoism. That is a negative claim. There is also a strong positive claim. Let’s go back to the first passage:

I thought that if this [that Nous is the cause of all] were so, the directing Nous would direct everything and arrange each thing in the way that was best.(97c4-6)

Socrates thinks that Nous—Mind or Reason—would arrange everything for the best. Socrates believes that Nous acts according to the principle of Universal

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8 In his discussion of why Anaxagoras’ Nous is motivated to act, Sedley speculates: “it is a least a possibility that he thinks of worlds as created by nous out of motives of pure self-interest.” (Creationism, p. 24) But why Sedley thinks this is a possibility is not clear. Perhaps Sedley supposes that it is an advantage to nous to have human beings to distribute parts of itself into?

9 Scholars who hold that for Plato, egoism is a principle of rational agency include: Bobonich, quoted above; Gomez-Lobo, Foundations of Socratic Ethics p. 7; Irwin, Plato’s Ethics, 1994 pp. 55, 62. Penner and Rowe, Plato’s Lysis p. 218, and elsewhere.
Beneficence:

Universal Beneficence-Nous: Do what will make things as good as possible.

Cosmic Nous is pure Reason. Whatever Nous does is what the purely rational agent would do. Therefore Socrates is assuming that Universal Beneficence is a principle of rational agency. Nous is the cause of all. The version of the principle that applies to lesser creatures like us is:

Universal Beneficence-Us: Do what will help to make things as good as possible.

This is the maxim of rational agency for human beings that Socrates implicitly endorses in this passage.

[Consider the Platonic ideal “become like a god”. If we apply that motto to Socrates’ conception of Nous, the conclusion for human action is that we ought, as much as possible, help the cosmos become as good as possible in all ways small and large.]

Can we learn from Socrates’ description of Nous anything about the motivations that Nous would give to human beings? Socrates’ remarks at 98a-b give a basis for speculation. Socrates imagines that Nous would govern the cosmos in such a way that each thing is as good as it can be. Living creatures are self-regulating systems: Nous arranged that living beings are provided with a biology and physiology that function to promote the good, i.e. the continued existence and health, of that being. In the case of rational living beings such as humans, Nous would accomplish the same object, namely arranging a successfully self-regulating system, by providing each person with a strong desire for that person’s own welfare.10 Making sure that each of us has strong self-regarding motives is essential to the cosmic project of making each thing as good as possible.

Does Nous have reason to give us further fundamental motives? That depends in part on the meaning of “the common good for all” at 98b2. One interpretation of “the common good for all” might be “the overall structure of the cosmos, on which the goodness of each individual depends.” A more expansive interpretation—the one I employed above—is: the common good, wherever such exists. On this interpretation, Nous is said to pay attention not just to the largest common good, the overall structure of the cosmos, but also to every smaller common good, such as a spring on which nearby creatures depend for water; and for human beings, the laws of the city and social harmony. Now, the actions of individual human beings have causal effects on common goods: a person can poison a spring; help pass good laws, or create ill-will among neighbors. Since Nous is ordering the cosmos in such a way as to promote all sorts of good, including intermediate-scale goods, it would make sense for Nous to provide human beings with motivation to do their part in promoting intermediate-sized goods. Therefore, the sort of Nous that Socrates wants should give human beings both self-regarding and other-regarding motives.11

This speculative reconstruction of what motives cosmic Nous would allocate to human agents is compatible with the example of human action Socrates discusses, namely himself. Socrates assumes that he has nous (98c4) and that the correct explanation of his actions (98e1) should be of the same type as those of cosmic

10 A reasonable interpretation of Anaxagoras’ Nous is that the Nous in each person which is responsible for that person’s practical reasoning is part of cosmic Nous. But that fact does not matter to the explanation of human motives I am developing.

11 Objection: This shows that Nous has reason to design things so that we have these motives, but they need not be fundamental. They could be derived motives, but they would need to be natural, i.e. generally common to human beings, to do the needed job.
nous. Explaining why Socrates is sitting by appeal to skin and bones and sinews is inadequate. Cosmic nous acts for the sake of the best; so does Socrates:

[Because the Athenians condemned me] I too have decided that it is better to sit here and more just to stay put and suffer whatever punishments they decree.” 98e1-4

Socrates “decided it is better to sit here”. Scholars have seen in this sentence evidence for Socratic egoism.12 “Decided that it is better” is interpreted by them to mean, “decided that it is better for me”. But there is no justification in the immediate context for this reading. It is true that Socrates elsewhere argues that there is no conflict between justice and self-interest, that “justice pays”. But there is no hint of that doctrine here.

The dramatic context is provided by the Crito, where the main argument is that Socrates owes it to the city to avoid damaging its laws. The arguments in the Crito are complex, and I can’t discuss the complexities here. But the Crito has a strong deontological element: If it is wrong, don’t do it. The consequentialist lesson of the dialogue is, stated abstractly: do what is best for the whole of which you are an integral part. And as we have seen, that is a motive that Nous would put into human beings so that they can help him maintain cosmic order at all levels. 13

II

The Timaeus is Plato’s attempt to give an account of the cosmos that meets the standards Socrates lays out in the Phaedo. The counterpart in the Timaeus to Anaxagoras’ Nous is the Demiurge. Like cosmic Nous in the Phaedo, the Demiurge is perfectly good and wise and rational. Like cosmic Nous in the Phaedo, the Demiurge’s activity in bringing order to the cosmos is a case of pure altruism.

Before beginning, I should say a word about the notoriously difficult topic of how literally Plato meant us to take his description of the Demiurge. There are many interpretations which the Demiurge a mere metaphor, or a principle too abstract to be a genuine agent. I cannot discuss this issue here. I will simply assume that Plato means the Demiurge seriously, so that the cosmos could have been made by a perfectly good creative agent as Plato describes.

The crucial text comes at 29d7-30a7:

Now why did he who framed this whole universe of becoming frame it? Let us state the reason why: He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything. And so, being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as was possible. In fact, men of wisdom will tell you (and you couldn’t do better than to accept their claim) that this, more than anything else, was the most preeminent reason for the origin of the world’s coming to be. The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible . . .

Looked at carefully, this passage contains three slightly different statements of the Demiurge’s motive. The first explanation why the Demiurge created order in the world is negative. “He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything.”

Here Timaeus explains the Demiurge’s creative activity by the absence of a motive, jealousy (phthonos).14 Now phthonos is a species of jealousy or ill will, which

12 Rowe ad loc., Crisp in “Socrates and Aristotle on Happiness and Virtue” p. 57.
13 Of course the Crito has consequentialist elements as well. Socrates argues that it is in his interest to stay. Sorting out these strands of argument in the Crito is not easy. The main point for us is that the text of the Phaedo here does not force or depend on any particular resolution of these issues in the Crito.
14 Cf. Brisson, “La Notion de PHTHÓNOS chez Platon”, Lectures du Platon, 2000,
leads a person to deprive another person of goods, often for fear of being equaled, or surpassed by that other person. If God declined to create the cosmos due to phthonos, he would do so because he didn’t want to see the world, or any part of it, rival (or perhaps resemble?) his goodness. This “comparative” aspect of phthonos is highlighted when Timaeus says “... being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as possible.”

But absence of a motive cannot by itself motivate action. Timaeus’ Demiurge is free of jealousy. So is Aristotle’s Prime Mover. Yet Aristotle’s Prime Mover is not motivated to make the rest of existence as good as possible. He is content to eternally contemplate his navel. Something more is needed to explain why the Demiurge chooses to create the cosmos, rather than, for example, devoting all of his conscious activity to contemplating eternal Forms.

Timaeus provides the needed extra motive (almost as if it is an explication of absence of envy, which it isn’t): “The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad.” Timaeus asserts that the Demiurge’s motive is

Universal Beneficence: Do what will make all things be as good as possible.

The two dialogues are consistent. Anaxagoras’ Nous in the Phaedo and the Demiurge in the Timaeus have the same fundamental motive.

Timaeus gives us an explanation for the Demiurge’s beneficence that is somewhat different than the explanation I described as implicit in the Phaedo. The explanation implicit in the Phaedo relied on the meaning of Nous: Nous acts to make things as good as possible, because acting for the sake of the sake of the good is a fundamental principle of rational agency.

Timaeus give a different explanation. He says: “Now it wasn’t permitted (nor is it now) that one who is supremely good should do anything but what is best.” (30a6-7)

Let’s leave themis aside for the moment. Timaeus is telling us that:
(A) Anyone who is perfectly good will only do what’s best.
(B) The Demiurge is perfectly good.
(C) The Demiurge will only do what’s best
(D) The Demiurge wants everything to be as good as possible, and nothing bad.

Notoriously, Neo-Platonizing interpretations have been given of this text, e.g. by A.E. Taylor: “It is of the very nature of goodness and love to ‘overflow.’” (ad loc.)

What I shall argue is that this text gives us a picture functionally equivalent to the Neo-Platonizing interpretation, but without “overflowing love”. Underlying Timaeus’ remark is this explanatory principle:

(1) One who is perfectly good will eo ipso, that is, because of his goodness, want to make things as good as possible.

III

Self-interest plays no role in Timaeus’ explanation of the Demiurge’s behavior.

219-234.

15 On the goodness of the demiurge, see also 61-37e2. On the interpretation I am putting forward, the fundamental fact about the Demiurge’s act of creation is that he is good. There is another strain of interpretation, put forward e.g. by Johannsen in Plato’s Natural Philosophy and Sedley in Creationism (p. 109): the fundamental fact is that the Demiurge is a craftsman.

16 These Neo-Platonizing interpretations were firmly slapped down in mainstream scholarship, but may gain strength as interest in NeoPlatonism grows!

17 Timaeus does say at 36c5 that the Demiurge is pleased and delighted by his creation. But there is no suggestion that the prospect of being delighted was a motive,
For example, there is no sign in the text that the Demiurge “acted well” in creating the cosmos in a way that would give us Aristotelian sort of reason for thinking that the divine craftsman has the egoistic motive of being benefited by his creative activity. It is essential to the story that the craftsman was perfectly good before his act of creation.

The Demiurge is rational as well as good. There is reason to think that the Demiurge is Nous (though this could be debated). \(^{18}\) So the creator gods of the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* seem to be the same god, i.e. have the same essential properties, even though one dialogue begins from the claim that the god is Nous, and the other from the claim that the god is good. Does this difference matter? Let us raise the deep and fascinating question, What is the relationship between Nous and Goodness? Menn *Plato on God as Nous* claims that “Nous acts for the sake of the best” is analytic (p. 7). \(^{19}\) I believe Menn is correct that it is a necessary truth for Plato that “Nous acts for the sake of the good”. But I do not believe that this truth is basic or fundamental. Let me attempt—as an exercise in amusing speculation—an account of why Nous acts for the sake of the good. Notice that “For the sake of” here is, in philosopher’s jargon, *de re* and not *de dicto*: Nous acts for the sake of the truly good, not the apparent good. Why is this? Because Nous is Good. Why is Nous good? Let’s try this: Nous is “analytically” Reason or Rationality. Reason or Rationality just is the ability to judge or create the proper order among elements. Now, the goodness of a state of affairs just is the proper ordering of its elements. So this is why Nous acts for the sake of the good. The mediating concepts are reason or what reason does, and goodness, what it consists in.

Let me conclude with a final speculation. Can the psychology of the *Phaedo*’s Nous and the *Timaeus*’ Demiurge’s psychology be generalized? Does Plato hold—perhaps consistently through the dialogues—that all fully rational agents are Universally Beneficent? I believe that Plato does maintain this principle. Of course, to defend this claim would be a large project.

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\(^{18}\) Menn, *Plato and God as Nous*, p. 10. Some relevant texts: *Timaeus* 39c, 46r, 48a.

\(^{19}\) Note, just as a curiosity, what Sedley says about Socrates’ version of Anaxagoras: “...accounting for a cosmic structure by explaining why that was the rational, in other words the best, way to construct it.” *Creationism*, p. 21. Cf. p. 87.
Nous tiene el poder para dirigir todo en el cosmos. Nous usa este poder para arreglar todo de la mejor manera: mejor para cada cosa individual, mejor para el cosmos entero, y mejor para todos los grupos intermedios.

Lo que nos concierne no es el Anaxágoras histórico, sino el Anaxágoras como lo imagina Sócrates en el Fedón. Pero es claro que para ambos el Anaxágoras histórico y para Sócrates, Nous es algo distinto que el cosmos al que le da forma. Nous ya es sabio y bueno. El estado de Nous ya es tan bueno como puede ser. Por tanto, Nous no tiene razones egoistas para su actividad. La actividad de Nous al darle forma al cosmos es entonces un caso de altruismo puro.

Pero ¿qué nos dice el altruismo de Nous sobre la psicología humana? Eruditos dan varias justificaciones para el egoísmo Platónico, pero la justificación más común y filosóficamente sofisticada está en la teoría de acción racional: Platón pensaba que es un principio de la acción que todo agente racional actúa con el fin último de promover su propio bienestar. Aunque Sócrates no está seguro de que Nous existe, ciertamente cree que Nous es posible. Este posible Nous es un agente que es a la vez perfectamente racional y perfectamente altruista. Esto niega el principio de acción racional que eruditos citan para explicar el supuesto egoísmo de Platón.

La teoría de acción racional que Sócrates implícitamente sostiene niega el egoísmo. Esta es una tesis negativa. Pero también hay una fuerte tesis positiva. Sócrates piensa que Nous—‘Mente’ o ‘Razón’—organizaría todo de la mejor manera. Sócrates cree que Nous actúa según el principio de la Beneficencia Universal:

Beneficencia Universal-Nous: has lo que hará las cosas tan buenas como sea posible

El Nous Cósmico es Razón pura. Lo que sea que Nous hace es lo que el actor puramente racional haría. Por lo tanto, Sócrates supone que la Beneficencia Universal es un principio de acción racional. La versión de este principio que aplica a criaturas menos poderosas—como nosotros—es el siguiente:

Beneficencia Universal-Nosotros: has lo que ayudará a hacer las cosas tan buenas como sea posible

Este es el principio de acción racional para los seres humanos que Sócrates afirma implícitamente en este pasaje.

Desde el artículo clásico de Sedley (originalmente un ensayo de la IPS!), eruditos le han dado más y más atención a la idea Platónica de “volverse como dios,” como fin para los seres humanos (sobre todo el Teeteto 176a-c y Timeo 90cd). Las implicaciones de esto para la teoría de la acción practica son lo opuesto del egoísmo: volverse como Nous en el Fedón (y como el demiurgo en el Timeo, ver abajo) es el adoptar el principio de acción de dios a la mayor manera posible, que quiere decir escoger lo mejor, lo más que uno pueda.

En 98c2-99b2 Sócrates aplica su teoría de explicación a su propia decisión de sentarse y aceptar su castigo en vez de escapar. Algunos eruditos han visto en este pasaje una confirmación del egoísmo. Explicare porque este no es el caso.

Al concluir este ensayo, ampliaré la perspectiva más allá de este pasaje en dos direcciones. Primero, diré un poco sobre Nous generalmente en Platón. Menn en su Plato on God as Nous (p.2) dice que en Platón es “analítico,” es decir una verdad conceptual, que Nous escoge lo que es mejor. Argumentare que, si en Platón se trata como una verdad obvia, necesaria, que Nous escoge lo que es mejor, esta no es una verdad immediata. No es un hecho fundamental que no admite de mas explicación. Se puede explicar, y la explicación es: el Nous divino es (completamente) bueno, y lo que es completamente bueno actuará para el bien, es decir, escogerá lo que es mejor.

La segunda ampliación será hacia el texto paralelo más importante: el de la obra del Demiurgo en el Timeo. Como el Nous de Anaxágoras, el Demiurgo es bueno, sabio, y le da forma al cosmos para que sea tan bueno como sea posible.
La actividad del Demiurgo es también un caso del altruismo puro, y Sócrates le imputa Benevolencia Universal al Demiurgo. Por tanto, los dos pasajes se confirman los unos a los otros. Pero, hay diferencias. Por ejemplo, el Demiurgo está, de alguna manera, fuera del cosmos. Además, la propiedad fundamental del Demiurgo es la bondad, no la racionalidad.

Está también la complicación de que la historia del Demiurgo se puede interpretar de varias maneras. Algunos eruditos la ven como meramente metafórica. No tomaré una posición sobre ese tema, excepto afirmar que se supone que la historia del Demiurgo debe ser realista. Es decir, los motivos y la actividad del Demiurgo, según Platón, son aquellos que un agente divino tendría en estas circunstancias.
Strategie esegetiche neoplatoniche: qual è lo skopos del Fedone?

Motta, Anna

«C’è una sola strada per coloro che vogliono decidere bene, sapere ciò attorno a cui è il progetto, altrimenti è inevitabile sbagliare in tutto»1. È con una significativa citazione tratta dal Fedro che, negli anonimi neoplatonici Prolegomeni alla filosofia di Platone (metà v d.C.), si apre il nono κεφάλαιον che delinea le modalità attraverso le quali è possibile individuare correttamente lo skopos dei dialoghi. La questione dello skopos, così introdotta, si rivela già in via preliminare fondamentale, perché viene ricondotta all’auctoritas di Platone ed è ricavata da un dialogo – il Fedro appunto – il cui unitario intento sembra paradossalmente sfuggire tanto agli esegeti antichi quanto agli studiosi moderni2. L’esortazione a trasformare l’inizio della ricerca nell’individuazione dell’essenza dell’oggetto in discussione rientra nella storia delle letture in classe dei classici, storia il cui inizio potrebbe farsi risalire a una pratica tradizionale degli antichi che attraversa non soltanto le scuole di filosofia di epoca imperiale e quelle medioplatoniche ma che tocca anche la filologia ellenistica3. Per quanto concerne nello specifico lo skopos, e senza mettere sullo stesso piano il forte valore metafisico che assume con Giamblico (iii-iv d.C.), il proemio alle Bucoliche virgiliane di Elio Donato (iv d.C.) – in cui il commentatore traduce, rilevandone l’importanza, il termine greco con intentio libri4 – mostra l’impresscindibilità, da parte dei commentatori, dell’adozione di griglie interpretative alla base dell’analisi testuale di qualsiasi testo e, di conseguenza, contribuisce a confermare l’esistenza di una tradizione scolastica, più ampia di quella confinata alla sola filosofia, la quale ha fornito i modelli didattici su cui poggiare alcune norme prescrittive e descrittive di lettura.

Rimanendo nell’ambito della tradizione filosofica platonica gli esempi di numerosi Neoplatonici, come Proclo (v d.C.), Ermia (v d.C.), Olimpiodoro (v d.C.) e Damascio (v-vi d.C.), riescono a chiarire che l’applicabilità a testi filosofici tardi di schemata scolastici con la relativa adozione di un vocabolario tecnico non implica un fedele e sempre costante uso di essi e non vieta la creazione di nuovi

1 Anon. Proll. 21, 3-6 Westerink-Segonds. Il passaggio di Pl. Phdr. 237c 1-3 è variamente ripreso anche da Alb. Intr. I 147, 10-15 Reis; Olymp. in Grg. 17, 2-5; 40, 8-11 Westerink; El. in Poprh. 41, 4-5 Busse; in Cat. 127, 7 Busse; Dav. in Porph. 95.19 Busse; Phlp. in de An. 33, 21-23; 43, 8-10 Hayduck; Simp. in Ph. 75, 4-6 Diels.
2 Così Trabattoni 2005: 67-86. Cf. anche Herm. in Phdr. 9, 12-14, 15 Lucarini-Moreschini.
punti capitali o la soppressione di alcuni di essi. L’utilità dei succitati Prolegomeni riguarda anche il fatto di essere il testo che conserva il più alto numero di questioni preliminari inerenti all’unitario cosmo platonico: tra i dieci punti capitali, appunto il nono riguarda lo skopos ed esso, a differenza degli altri, non può mai mancare. La spiegazione di questa affermazione è sia letteraria sia filosofica. Se, infatti, da un punto di vista letterario un dialogo non può essere privo di un intento preciso che ne determini al contempo unità e vitalità, da un punto di vista metafisico il dialogo, il più bel cosmo letterario, in quanto analogo al miglior essere vivente, immagine del suo paradigma intelligibile, ha come esso un unico fine che è il Bene. Lo skopos è quindi la causa finale cui ogni sezione e aspetto del testo mirano e da cui traggono significato, come ogni cosa trae essere e valore dall’Uno-Bene: infatti, l’identificazione con l’Uno diventa ancora più chiara nella definizione dello skopos non come ciò per mezzo del quale, ma ciò in vista di cui, cioè il fine stesso. Presentata in questi termini, l’esegesi si configura come una scienza che, in quanto tale, si costituisce di un metodo e di regole le quali – ed è questo il caso – appaiono analoghe proprio a quelle della scienza teologica. La serie di dieci norme letterarie che l’Anonimo riporta, costruite e ricalibrate sulla base delle acquisizioni della metafisica neoplatonica, sono orientate al riconoscimento di quel principio finalistico che regge anche l’universo dialogico. Nel contesto teoretico ed esegetico neoplatonico, dunque, lo skopos, un principio metafisico-letterario, consente, una volta individuato, di cogliere la divina unità di disegno che regge il testo e, attraverso di essa, mostrare l’unità dell’intero cosmo.

Ipotizzare che un dialogo abbia più di uno skopos vuol dire non solo contravvenire a una regola letteraria, a uno dei fondamenti della disciplina esegetica scolastica, ma soprattutto non riconoscere validità al Primo principio metafisico. Pertanto sbagliano – scrive l’anonimo autore alessandrino – coloro i quali affermano che il Fedone, preso a esempio in questa sezione dei Prolegomeni a Platone, presenta tre propositi, ossia trattare dell’immortalità dell’anima, della nobile morte e della vita filosofica. Benché nei Prolegomeni non venga mai detto quale sia lo skopos del...
Fedone, è possibile formulare alcune ipotesi in proposito, tenendo in considerazione i commenti neoplatonici a questo dialogo. Pur avendo il Fedone attirato l’attenzione di numerosi filosofi neoplatonici, possediamo soltanto alcune notizie delle discussioni che sul dialogo fece Giamblico\(^{14}\), sappiamo che Proclo trasse hypomnemata dal corso di Siriano sul Fedone\(^{15}\), abbiamo testimonianza dell’esistenza di una monografia su questo dialogo scritta da Ammonio\(^{16}\) e conserviamo i Commenti al Fedone di Damascio e Olimpiodoro\(^{17}\). La ricerca non è, però, priva di difficoltà le quali sono legate, in primo luogo, alla mancanza di accordo tra i Neoplatonici sul modo corretto di individuare lo skopos\(^{18}\) e, in secondo luogo, al fatto che, nei testi di Damascio e Olimpiodoro – testi che, in quanto vicini alla tipologia del fortlaufender Kommentar\(^{19}\), ci sarestimo aspettati essere di inequivocabile chiarezza – è andata perduta la parte iniziale, quella dedicata di norma alla discussione dell’unico skopos.

Tuttavia ciò che sembra inevitabilmente andato perso non lo è totalmente: può essere recuperato se, nella lettura del Fedone, si seguono le strategie esegetiche neoplatoniche, quelle che, in virtù di quanto detto e in virtù di quanto dice lo stesso Platone sulla composizione organicamente armonica del testo-miglior essere vivente-cosmo\(^{20}\), mirano a un unico e solo obiettivo, a mostrare cioè come tutti i suoi costituenti, organizzati alla stessa maniera degli elementi del cosmo, giungano a conferire unità al dialogo.

Se questo obiettivo lo si persegue in relazione agli altri dialoghi, cioè se si considera il dialogo parte di un cosmo e non già esso stesso un cosmo, va riconosciuto al Fedone un carattere catartico\(^{21}\): nella progressione curricolare il dialogo segna, infatti, l’acquisizione, da parte dello studente, della virtù purificativa ed è posto per questo da Giamblico dopo il Gorgia\(^{22}\) – testo, quest’ultimo, politico – e prima di Cratilo e Teeteto i quali consentono il raggiungimento delle virtù teoretiche\(^{23}\).


\(^{15}\) Cf. Marin. 12, 9-15 Saffrey; Olymp. in Phd. 9 § 2 Westerink.

\(^{16}\) Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 8 § 17, 5-10 Westerink. Sull’interesse dell’allievo di Ammonio, Giovanni Filopono, per il Fedone: cf. Phlp. in APo. 215, 3-5 Wallies.

\(^{17}\) Simplicio non scrive alcun Commento al Fedone, ma ne dà una sua interpretazione in diversi luoghi dei suoi scritti: cf. Gavray 2015.


\(^{22}\) L’ordine Alcibiade, Gorgia e Fedone è confermato da Olymp. in Grg. 6, 1-6 Westerink e in Alc. 177, 19-22 Westerink. Sul Fedone cf. Dam. in Phd. II § 82 Westerink; Olymp. in Phd. 2 § 14, 1-3; 4 § 11, 1-4 Westerink. Sull’aspetto catartico del Fedone cf. Sedley 1996: 102.

\(^{23}\) Nella scala neoplatonica dei discorsi, che – seguendo il curriculum giamblicheo
Conseguire il livello di virtù catartica è possibile se si attua la purificazione di quell’anima che è stata colpita da una duplice ignoranza. Quale sia quest’anima è presto detto da Olimpiodoro. Innanzitutto, mentre è impossibile pensare che esista una vita in continua estasi, nulla impedisce di trascorrerla interamente in contemplazione e teoresi. Ciò è possibile perché il supremo (κορυφαῖος) filosofo, cioè colui che è colpito da una duplice ignoranza, ignoranza che è superiore alla conoscenza, accetta il corpo come un “vicino chiacchierone” (φλύαρον γείτονα) e in tal modo non accade che si faccia disturbare nei suoi pensieri. Il senso di tale affermazione è connesso alla considerazione relativa alla capacità dell’Intelletto di illuminare un’anima filosofica nella fase immediatamente precedente a quella in cui il pensiero e le sue azioni si dirigono verso la libertà, libertà che deriva dalla completa acquisizione delle virtù teoretiche e che pertanto permette all’anima di agire in unione con l’Uno. Il fatto che il telos del dialogo sia la purificazione che conduce più vicino possibile alla conoscenza teoretica è reso evidente dal luogo in cui esso è ambientato, cioè il carcere, e dal paragone di esso con il tribunale degli uomini, luoghi della giustizia terrena funzionali a spostare gradualmente il discorso e il cammino dell’anima verso un altro tipo di giustizia, quello verso cui Socrate indirizza lo sguardo dell’anima e che essa può raggiungere quando sceglie di esercitare le sue proprie funzioni e cioè quando diventa conscia della sua vita separata e della sua immortalità.


26 Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 6 § 3 Westerink.
28 Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 6 § 11 Westerink.
29 Questa difesa riuscirà più di quella affrontata di fronte al tribunale ateniese perché Socrate 1) si rivolge a discepoli pronti ad apprendere e non alla massa da persuadere e 2) partirà da termini generali e non dalla sua vita in particolare: cf. Olymp. in Phd. 2 § 16 Westerink.
dialogico del solo Fedone, vale lo stesso discorso o dobbiamo cercare un più preciso skopos? Abbiamo già accennato al fatto che i Neoplatonici conoscono l'esistenza di discussioni attorno ad almeno tre skopoi: l'immortalità dell'anima, la nobile morte e la vita filosofica. Se si presta attenzione alla testimonianza contenuta nel Prologo di Albino, l'ultimo degli skopoi indicati nel testo dei Prolegomeni corrisponde proprio alla chiave di lettura che i Medioplatonici usavano per il dialogo. Per l'ordine di lettura calibrato in base alle qualità dello studente Albino propone quattro dialoghi: l'Alcibiade, il Fedone, la Repubblica e il Timeo. Dopo il dialogo che porta alla conoscenza e alla cura di sé è opportuno «guardare in un bel modello chi è il filosofo».

Albino motiva, pertanto, la scelta del Fedone e spiegando che da quest'opera emerge «chi è filosofo e qual è il suo modo di vita» e si apprende che «il discorso sul modo di vivere del filosofo è basato sull'immortalità dell'anima».

La spiegazione neoplatonica, che, però, sembra andare nella stessa direzione, è meno esplicita e per individuarla si procederà alla maniera dei commentatori tardo-antichi, quella suggerita dai Prolegomeni, che riconosce l'esistenza di materia, forma, natura, Anima, Intelletto e Divinità nel testo di Platone: infatti, se accettiamo che il dialogo è un cosmo e il cosmo un dialogo, quanti sono gli elementi che costituiscono il cosmo, altrettanti saranno anche gli elementi che costituiscono i dialoghi. Sia nel macrocosmo-universo che nel microcosmo letterario i costituenti del cosmo fisico e metafisico possono essere studiati anche su base causale: tuttavia, sebbene quelle metafisiche siano le reali cause di ogni dialogo, è soprattutto a quelle fisiche del Fedone che ci si vuole dedicare, a quelle cause cioè che rimandano a ciò da cui esse dipendono, ossia al reale, unico e unificante skopos del dialogo, perché Platone «celebra in questo modo la Divinità per il fatto che è Unità» e lo fa utilizzando, come il Demiurgo, anche la materia (i personaggi, il tempo e il luogo), la forma (il modo della conversazione) e la natura (gli strumenti che danno forma alla materia).

Il primo costituente fisico da analizzare è, quindi, la materia che costituisce innanzitutto i personaggi i quali riproducono a livello microcosmico la struttura


33 Cf. Alb. Intr. V 150, 3-5 Reis.


35 Cf. Anon. Proll. 16-17 Westerink-Segonds.

36 Anon. Proll. 21, 25 Westerink-Segonds.

37 Cf. Anon. Proll. 16, 8-12 Westerink-Segonds: «Nel dialogo alla materia sono analogni i personaggi e il tempo e il luogo nel quale Platone li ambientò. Ma mentre è possibile avere chiara conoscenza dei personaggi in ogni dialogo, invece non possiamo stabilire anche il tempo e il luogo in ognuno di essi». Personaggi, tempo e spazio rappresentano quindi la causa materiale, ciò di cui il dialogo è fatto, appunto
del macrocosmo-universo: questi personaggi, le cui voci diverse rappresentano le
differenti nature del cosmo, non hanno né un carattere completamente storico né
sono completamente inventati, poiché altrimenti non avrebbero potuto rappresentare
la strada che conduce alla verità. Prendiamo in esame i casi di Fedone, Critone,
Cebete e Simmia, solo alcuni personaggi dell’affollato cosmo del *Fedone*.

Discutere del personaggio di Fedone comporta, però, necessariamente una
riflessione su un aspetto della forma della conversazione che corrisponde alla
natura, la quale nel sistema procliano – modello dell’Anonimo – è assimilabile a
una causa demiurgetica, la produttrice delle manifestazioni delle realtà trascendenti.
Nel nostro caso la forma del “dialogo nel dialogo” attraverso Fedone, narratore
diretto dei discorsi che si tengono nell’ultimo giorno di vita di Socrate, perché ad essi
egli assiste personalmente, consente di rendere immediatamente visibile un aspetto
essenziale del cosmo. «Proprio tu c’erai, o Fedone […]»; o ne udisti da qualcun altro?
è la domanda tutt’altro che incidentale posta ad apertura di dialogo da Echecrate. Si
può, infatti, stabilire a partire da essa un ordine dei personaggi (e di conseguenza dei
discorsi che ad essi appartengono) analogo a quello degli esseri. Come nel cosmo
non c’è un quarto grado di livelli di realtà, ma si arriva fino al terzo così l’articolazione
del racconto diventa di notevole importanza per evidenziare ciò, perché – scrive
l’Anonimo dei *Prolegomeni* – ci sono personaggi che, in quanto chiamati a discutere
con Socrate in prima persona, sono analoghi agli esseri noetici, personaggi che,
ascoltatori diretti, corrispondono ai dianoetici, e gli ascoltatori indiretti somiglianti
egli esseri sensibili. La risposta di Fedone «Proprio io c’ero» colloca quindi anche
la narrazione del filosofo di Elide in alto nella scala dei racconti, ma non all’apice
di essi. Lo stile – che pure è un aspetto della forma in quanto si avvicina di più a
ciò che può essere detto la sua causa formale, cioè a ciò secondo cui il dialogo viene
scritto – non è perciò quello dei dialoghi teologici, ma potrebbe rientrare in quello
che l’Anonimo definisce «misto per giustapposizione (κατὰ παράθεσιν)» poiché
la trattazione procede per questioni che poi confluiscono in un mito, il quale, però
– dice Olimpiodoro quando spiega la presenza nel dialogo di avverbi quali “forse”

la materia senza la quale un dialogo non sarebbe tale, come del resto mostra la
definizione stessa («Il dialogo è un discorso redatto in prosa costituito da domanda
da risposta di personaggi eterogenei […]») presente anche in Alb. *Intr.* I 147, 18-21
Reis; D.L. 3, 48 Marcovich.
39 Se i personaggi di Platone fossero soltanto delle figure storiche, non potrebbero
toccare il lettore così da vicino come invece essi fanno: quelli platonici sono
indirizzano verso la dimostrazione di una questione, alla maniera dei pittori che
scelgono i colori adatti per la pittura di una figura». Cf. Pl. *Grg.* 503e4-504a1.
41 Cf. Motta 2014: 26-34.
dei personaggi e per la sua applicazione nei testi della tarda antichità cf. Procl. *in R.*
I 6, 7-12 Kroll; *in Ti.* I 9, 13-22 Diehl; *in Prm.* I 628, 14.1-630, 18.13 Luna-Segonds;
*in Cra.* X 5, 6-24 Pasquali; Dam. *in Philb.* § 8 Van Riel; Olymp. *in Grg.* 6, 21-7, 21
Westerink.
e di formule dubitative che rimandano al finale del Fedone –, piuttosto che rivelare contribuisce a celare49.

Diversa è poi la scala dei personaggi all’interno del dialogo raccontato, benché essa appaia sempre tripartita. Critone, l’amico fedele di Socrate, si fa portavoce delle raccomandazioni che colui che prepara il veleno rivolge a Socrate. Mentre Socrate è il modello della vita intellettuiva e purificativa, Critone rappresenta – scrive Olimpiodoro – la vita secondaria, che dipende da quella intellettuiva e purificativa, perché è l’intermediario tra chi prepara il veleno e Socrate. Il suo ruolo in questo caso è fondamentale, in quanto mostra che la struttura del reale impedisce che ci sia un contatto diretto tra i bassi e gli alti ordini di esistenza50. Simmia – personaggio che l’interpretazione moderna legge come sinceramente interessato alla filosofia, e che è riconosciuto dallo stesso Socrate come un interlocutore intelligente51, è secondo Olimpiodoro, inferiore a Cebete, il quale ultimo è collocato dall’esegesi neoplatonica quasi al livello di Socrate52. Ciò è ben evidente nella πρᾶξις che riguarda la pagina di Phd. 62c9-63e8, in cui Olimpiodoro riconosce che i progressi di Cebete sono determinati dal fatto che quest’ultimo è più “scientifico” di Simmia dato che il suo ragionamento e le sue obiezioni procedono per linee generali (ἐπὶ τοῦ καθόλου), mentre gli interventi di Simmia tendono piuttosto a mostrare il sentimento di amicizia che lo lega a Socrate. Il filosofo neoplatonico divide l’argomentazione di Cebete per ridurre all’assurdo la posizione di Socrate sul desiderio del filosofo di morire in due sillogismi, l’ultimo dei quali è palesemente un paralogismo, perché parte da premesse contradditorie (ξε αντικειμένον53):

Il filosofo desidera morire, colui che desidera morire fugge dai buoni padroni, chi fugge dai buoni padroni è uno stolto, dunque il filosofo è uno stolto (Olymp. in Phd. 2 § 1, 8-10 Westerink).

Il filosofo fugge dal bene; nessun filosofo fugge dal bene […]; il filosofo dunque non è un filosofo (Olymp. in Phd. 2 § 1, 14-16 Westerink).

Ora, anche Simmia rivolge la stessa obiezione a Socrate, ma omette – scrive Olimpiodoro – la premessa maggiore “quest’uomo è uno stolto” per evitare di criticare Socrate il cui esempio egli tende a portare direttamente nella discussione a differenza di quanto fa Cebete, il quale ultimo, invece, proprio come Socrate, ragiona in termini generali. Così Olimpiodoro sintetizza l’argomentazione di Simmia:

Dunque Socrate desidera morire abbandonando amici e padroni.

L’invito che i Neoplatonici colgono nel testo di Platone è quindi a seguire Cebete, un uomo ζητητικός, che va al cuore delle cose54 e che, a sua volta, va dietro

50 Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 2 § 8 Westerink.
51 Cf. Pl. Ph. 86d.
53 Cf. Dam. in Phd. I § 26 Westerink.
54 Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 2 § 12 Westerink.
l’esempio di Socrate, modello anche di Platone definito nei Prolegomeni il più scientifico dei poeti-teologi e il più ispirato dei filosofi\(^55\). Ed è, infatti, dietro i gesti e le parole di Cebete che Platone nasconde lo skopos del Fedone. Per i Neoplatonici anche le esclamazioni e i giuramenti sono elementi fondamentali nell’economia di un testo e, invero, sono essi a diventare nel Fedone indicativi di quel tema centrale che viene riconosciuto nella nozione di vita. È così possibile spiegare il ricorso frequente all’esclamazione “Per Zeus!”, perché Zeus, come mostra l’etimologia suggerita da Proclo e ripresa da Olimpiodoro, è «colui attraverso il quale il vivere è proprio di tutti gli esseri viventi»\(^56\). Essa viene per la prima volta pronunciata proprio da Cebete e nel suo dialetto beotico mentre accenna a un sorriso, perché Socrate ha definito il suicidio un suo benefattore. Mentre l’uso del dialetto ha una interpretazione legata all’ammirazione «naturale e nativa» di Cebete per Socrate, la scelta di giurare sul dio, riconosciuto da Proclo nel principio causale del più bel’essere vivente\(^57\), è riferita – come si accennava – al fatto che

Verosimilmente, essendo il discorso intorno alla vita [corsivo mio], giura su Zeus (τὸν Δία), poiché Zeus è detto colui attraverso il quale c’è vita (δι’ οὗ τὸ ζῆν) (Olymp. in Phd. 1 § 20, 5-6 Westerink).

Questa esegesi appare strettamente legata al passaggio in cui Olimpiodoro coglie in una omissione di Socrate – quella alla pagina di Phd. 68b5-c4 – l’indicazione a riconoscere il filosofo non da come muore ma da come vive e arriva alla morte:

[Socrate] dice che se un uomo è un filosofo egli non ha paura di fronte alla morte, ma non aggiunge che se uno non ha paura della morte, anche questi è un filosofo (Olymp. in Phd. 7 § 4, 13-14 Westerink)\(^58\).

Lo skopos, ossia l’aspetto più universale del testo, l’intero e non la parte, emerge a ogni livello del dialogo, in quanto pure gli elementi, per così dire, fisici – comprese le particelle, le formule dubitative, le omissioni, le riprese argomentative\(^59\) – rimandano all’unità testuale e sono immagine dell’unitaria costituzione del cosmo. Il riferimento alla vita dice, però, ancora di più: connette infatti il telos catartico allo skopos argomentativo, perché la vita filosofica, quella dei portatori di tirso\(^60\), non è altro che l’esempio di una esistenza catartica, un esercizio di morte in vita che è come dire un continuo purificarsi dalla molteplicità, e tuttavia non è già morte

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56 Cf. Pl. Cra. 396a 2-b 2. Come mostra lo studio condotto su Proclo da Abbate 2001: 99-101, il teonimo Zev ch ha una duplice forma di accusativo θεία e θεία che rivela la vera essenza di Zeus e il suo carattere diadico, ossia il fatto di essere il primo principio della pluralità. Nel Commento al Cratilo (CI 52, 4-7 Pasquali) l’ accusativo Δία viene ricondotto alla preposizione διά e va sciolto come τὴν δι’ οὗ aitia («la causa per la quale»), formula che esprime la causalità efficiente del dio, mentre ζήν rimanda all’ infinito ζήν «vivere» e, quindi, alla capacità di generare esseri viventi. Zeus è pertanto principio causale del vivere, ma è anche colui per via del quale il vivere è proprio di tutti i viventi.
57 Cf. Procl. in Ti. I 315, 7-8 Diehl; Theol. Plat. V 80, 5-6; V 81, 1-2 Saffrey-Westerink.
58 Cf. Dam. in Phd. I § 136 Westerink.
59 Nulla è superfluo nel testo di Platone: anche quelle che sembrano essere delle inutili ripetizioni hanno una precisa finalità: cf. p.e. Olymp. in Phd. 1 § 18; 7 § 2, 7-15; 7 § 10 Westerink.
60 Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 7 § 10, 12-18 Westerink.
poiché essere morti significa essere Bacchi ossia aver raggiunto un livello di esistenza teoretica, ovverosia completamente libera da ogni genere di affezione61.

Summary
The aim of this paper is to discover the target of Plato’s Phaedo by following the exegetical strategies familiar to the Neoplatonists that could also better our own understanding of the structure of Plato’s literary and metaphysical cosmos. As Iamblichus, Olympiodorus, Damascius and the anonymous author of the Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy point out, in Late Antiquity the commentators focus their attention to the thematic unity of the dialogue that reflects the metaphysical unity of the Neoplatonic cosmos. Although modern readers of dialogues are seduced by dazzling interplay of unity and multiplicity, the Neoplatonists claim that only their unity is able to charm and by charming lead to the One. In fact, after having quoted the passage of the Phaedrus, where we read that «there is one starting-point for anyone who is going to deliberate successfully: he must know what it is he is deliberating about, or he will inevitably miss everything», the anonymous author of the Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy says that Plato could not treat more than one theme in a dialogue, because he praises the deity for the very reason that it is one. Besides, he says that if every well-written piece of literature can be compared to a living being, the dialogue is comparable to a living being, and a living being has only one purpose, i.e. the Good, accordingly, the dialogue must also have one purpose, that is, one theme, i.e. the skopos. Approaching Plato’s dialogues through this rule – the first of ten rules listed by the Anonymous in order to discover the right goal of every dialogue – means not only translate the principle of the organic composition (that suggested by the Phaedrus at 264c) into an interpretative one, but also accept to read the dialogues in a theological and teleological way that implies to recognize in them (and themselves like) a cosmos, a unitary literary cosmos. So the analysis of some passages of the surviving commentaries of Plato’s Phaedo is useful to clarify that in a cosmos where each dialogue is taken to correspond to a well-defined stage within an ascending scale of virtues the Phaedo is supposed to be concerned with the cathartic virtues. Furthermore, by looking for the central goal or skopos at every level of the text, we learn that from a Neoplatonic point of view the subject of the discussion is life and life is the concept on the basis of which the dialogue as a whole has to be interpreted and to which it owed its place within the curriculum.

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61 Cf. Olymp. in Phd. 3 § 3, 3-6 Westerink e Dam. in Phd. I § 126-127 Westerink: la morte non si identifica con la purificazione, ma con la separazione (cf. anche Mouzala 2014). Su questa sezione del Fedone nella lettura dei Neoplatonici e in particolare su Pl. Phd. 69c3-d3 cf. Demulder –Van Riel 2015.


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Are the *Phaedo* or Platonism life-denying?

**da Motta, Guilherme**

In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates' opinion about what can be expected from death or, more precisely, from his own imminent death, is summarized in one of the speeches delivered by the dialogue's title character at the beginning of the work. Phaedo says to Echecrates:

For my part, I had strange emotions when I was there. For I was not filled with pity as I might naturally be when present at the death of a friend; since he seemed to me to be happy, both in his bearing and his words, he was meeting death so fearlessly and nobly. And so I thought that even in going to the abode of the dead he was not going without the protection of the gods, and that when he arrived there it would be well with him, if it ever was well with anyone. (Pl. *Phd*. 58e-59a)

When recounting the events to Echecrates, Phaedo often recalls Socrates' remarks on death, remarks which only confirm this first impression. Early on in the narrative, Socrates asks Cebes to greet Eveno and also to encourage him to follow his own footsteps as soon as possible, in what could be interpreted as a literal calling to seek death, had not Socrates immediately added that suicide is forbidden to man (61d-62a). As a matter of fact, this could be considered the first of Socrates' many statements in the dialogue that could be taken as meaning that death would be preferable to life. And this interpretation could very well lead to the wrong belief (as, indeed, happened) that Plato's philosophy embraces a morbid denial of life. In this paper, I will advocate the idea that such an interpretation is deeply flawed, and can only be upheld if one systematically removes Socrates' assertions from their natural context.

Aiming at the correct contextualization of Socrates' statements about death contained in the *Phaedo*, we must, first of all, bear in mind that they are made by none other than the Socrates. And this is of utmost importance since Socrates is a very special character, carefully constructed by Plato throughout his dialogues to be the very paradigm of the philosopher, a human type whose complexity can only be correctly appreciated in the light of the entirety of the dialogues.

If we are to contextualize Socrates' statements about death in the *Phaedo*, a second crucial point that needs to be considered is that each and every time he claims that death could be preferable to life, he is clearly talking about the philosopher's life, which means that this is only applicable to the philosopher.

The third thing that needs to be done in order to correct understand Socrates' views on death is to take into account what Socrates has to say about life and its pleasures; and, apart from the mere speeches, it is also advisable to focus on how Plato depicts the character of Socrates experiencing such pleasures in his dialogues.

My aim here is to show that the combined consideration of these three points contributes to attenuate the force of Socrates' claims that death might be preferable

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1 Cf. Pl. *Phd*. 64a; 66a-c; 67d; 68a-c; 80d-81a; 95b-c; 118a.
3 See the *Phaedo* passages mentioned in footnote n.1.
to life, in a manner which also challenges the view that Platonism is a kind of philosophy intrinsically committed with the denial of life.

Given the distinctive traits portrayed by Socrates in the *Phaedo*, even if, by a huge struck of misfortune, all other platonic dialogues were lost to us, the *Phaedo* alone could provide us with more than enough information to reconstruct this key platonic figure. *Phaedo*’s Socrates states that he devoted his whole life to philosophy and, as such, he thinks of himself as an initiated (tetelesménoi), and someone who is inspired (bákkhoi). At some point, he states to Phaedo:

And I fancy that those men who established the mysteries were not unenlightened, but in reality had a hidden meaning when they said long ago that whoever goes uninitiated and unsanctified to the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. For as they say in the mysteries, ‘the thyrsus-bearers are many, but the mystics (bákkhoi) few’; and these mystics are, I believe, those who have been true philosophers. And I in my life have, so far as I could, left nothing undone, and have striven in every way to make myself one of them. (Pl. *Phd.* 69c-d)

If we consider the explicit manner in which the above passage talks about Socrates’ own life, they are only paralleled by some parts of the *Apology*, which also testify Socrates’ enormous level of commitment to philosophy.

But the *Symposium* also bears witness to the initiation process that Socrates went through and which finally turned him into who he is. The final part of Diotima’s speech in this dialogue (209e–212c), in which the famous “ladder of love” is presented and which corresponds to the process that an initiate in Philosophy goes through, does not refer explicitly to Socrates. Yet, the references to the many encounters he claims to have had with the priestess seems to imply that he, Socrates, went through a much similar process, having been guided, in fact, by her. Even if the encounter with Diotima is fiction within fiction, it is still a fact that, by what is said in the *Phaedo*’s passage quoted above, Plato wants the reader to see Socrates, the very personification of the philosopher, as an initiate. That such an initiation has also turned him into an erotic man is a point to which I will come back to latter on.

If we look to the *Phaedrus*, it contains the thesis that philosophy is the highest form of inspiration, that even takes shape of a love euphoria which is irresistibly awakened in the face of its proper object. Well, according to what Socrates says about himself in the *Phaedo*’s lines quoted above, all that the *Phaedrus* says on philosophy as a kind of love euphoria seems to apply to him, Socrates, as well.

For all that has already been said, one thing should be clear: the character of Socrates is far from being an ordinary man. Quite on the contrary, he is an extraordinary man, erotic, atypical, inspired, an initiate prone to long moments of self-absorption.

The referred eroticism of Socrates constitutes a key element to understand this fundamental figure, being a trait that is simply inseparable from his whole character. In the part of the *Symposium* (209e-212c) where Diotima describes the initiate’s ascent toward the Form of Beauty, this initiate is taken by a very special kind of éros,

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5 See: Pl. *Smp.* 207a-c
6 On the characterization of philosophy as a kind of “philosophical mania” which leads to an ecstatic state similar to that of an initiate, see: Pl. *R.* 490a-b; *Phdr.* 249c-253c; *Smp.* 218b. See also: MACPHERRAN, 2006.
7 See: Pl. *Phdr.* 249c-253c.
8 See: Pl. *Smp.* 175a-d; 220c-d.
one which the dialogue describes, however, in an exceedingly elliptic fashion.

Diotima’s account (210a) of the erotic ascent is equivalent to the dialectical ascent toward the Form of Beauty: both are driven by éros and are dependent on the initiate having a “good guide”. In this context, to be driven by éros means to be driven by a desire for the highest objects of knowledge, i.e., the Forms, or, in the Symposium’s specific case, to be driven by the Form of Beauty. However, this dialogue does not specify which process is actually capable of making someone come to desire such objects.

It seems to me that two conditions must be met before one reaches the kind of desire described in Diotima’s last words. Before one can desire to have the knowledge of these objects, that is, of Forms, in the first place one must necessarily be aware that they exist and, in the second place, one must recognize the value of knowing them. But both to be aware that such objects exist and to acknowledge their value depend on a previously traveled philosophical path and on the acquisition of a specific ability.9

As such, the éros described in Diotima’s Greater Mysteries – one that could be rightly called “philosophical éros”10 – depends on the obtainment of a very specific dýnamis which, if present, brings with itself an unstoppable desire for the good discovered in the objects which came to be known and whose value is then acknowledged. This is why the philosophical path is so many times described by Plato as the analogue of an initiation, as it, in some sense represents the initiate’s total conversion, who from that moment on cannot fail to see things from a completely new perspective. It is remarkable that Plato has chosen to relate the word éros to such a conversion; the intention seems to be not to leave any room to doubt that this process implies an extremely intense desire for something that comes to be perceived as the highest good and the object of desire par excellence.

It is only in the Republic that is offered a less elliptic approach to the philosopher’s education process which culminates in that desire. In it we are told (525a-535a) that this process depends on selecting the appropriate natures and also on extensive training in mathematical disciplines and dialectic. But it is not surprising that the same work also treats the obtainment of a philosophical dýnamis as a total conversion. On that subject, Socrates asserts:

“...But our present argument indicates,” said I, “that the true analogy for this indwelling power [dýnamis] in the soul and the instrument whereby each of us apprehends is that of an eye that could not be converted to the light from the darkness except by turning the whole body. Even so this organ of knowledge must be turned around from the world of becoming together with the entire soul, like the scene-shifting periact in the theater, until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of essence and the brightest region of being. And this, we say, is the good, do we not?” (Pl. R. 518c)

Given Glaucon’s affirmative answer to his question, he continues:

“...Of this very thing, then,” I said, “there might be an art, an art of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul, not an art of producing vision in it, but on the assumption that it possesses vision but does not rightly direct it and does not look where it should, an art of bringing this about.” (Pl. R. 518d)

This conversion, which provides the intellect with the ability to effectively “see”

9 On this topic, see: MOTTA, 2013.
10 Concerning the term “éros”, see: KAHN, 1996.
objects that previously could not be seen, thus making the soul apt to desire them, is heavily dependent on a philosophical education. It seems correct to assume that at a given moment the character of Socrates went through a process at least analogous to this one, having acquired the “philosophical éros” and having irreversibly become an *erotic man*, that is, someone animated by an unstoppable desire for the highest objects of knowledge.

The use of such a vocabulary of desire to refer to the practice of philosophy suggests that the proper objects of philosophy, the objects that are perceived only through pure thinking, occupy the summit of the hierarchy of values to a philosopher. Or at least this was the way in which Plato represented the paragon of a philosopher, so that it must be taken into account in the present discussion.

But there is something else which would not be futile to consider regarding the highest objects of knowledge. On the one hand, such objects occupy the summit of the philosopher’s hierarchy of values, but, on the other hand, they constitute a source of pleasure to him. On this particular, Plato, in the *Republic* (580d), makes the character of Socrates asserts that if the soul has three parts, there must also be three forms of pleasure (*hedoné*) and of desire (*epithymía*). It must, then, be acknowledged the existence of a specific pleasure belonging to the rational element of the soul. However, in addition to the mere statement of its existence, Socrates goes on (580d-587b) to build an elaborate defense of the idea that the very special pleasure inherent to philosophical life is the greatest there is.

And to confirm the idea that there is a specific pleasure belonging to philosophy, yet another passage can be quoted. Socrates says:

“But, again, we surely are aware that when in a man the desires [*epithymíai*] incline strongly to any one thing, they are weakened for other things. It is as if the stream had been diverted into another channel” (Pl. *R.* 485d-e)

And he proceeds:

“So, when a man’s desires have been taught to flow in the channel of learning [*mathémata*] and all that sort of thing, they will be concerned, I presume, with the pleasures of the soul in itself, and will be indifferent to those of which the body is the instrument, if the man is a true and not a sham philosopher.” (Pl. *R.* 485d-e)

Now, as every desire is inclined to good, it is only natural for the philosopher’s desire to be turned preferably toward the objects he considers to be among the greatest goods and, as I believe I can now add, to the greatest pleasures. This does not mean, of course, that other things which are in some way good and sources of pleasures are not also desired. And among these, of course, are included goods pertaining to sensation, goods which are felt as sensory pleasures and are experienced through the body, some of which are simply unavoidable to all corporeal beings and whose nature makes Plato relate them to what he calls “necessary desires” (R. 558d-559d).

Given all this, since death, in the context of the *Phaedo* (66a-67b), means the separation of body and soul, it amounts to a liberation from the last hindrances to

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11 It is worth observing that there is much discussion regarding the topic of the alleged superiority of the pleasures that stem from philosophical life over all other pleasures. See, for instance: Pl. *R.* 580d-587b. On this issue, see also: LEFEBVRE, 2011, p. 134-138; GOSLING, 1982, p. 97-128; PAPPAS, 2001, p. 166-169; SANTAS, 2006, p. 318.

12 I will come back to this issue when I handle the question of how Socrates deals with these pleasures.
the full and continued enjoyment of the goods that Plato considers to be the greatest ones, namely, the goods related to pure thinking. Therefore in that sense, and only in that sense, death would be preferable to life; even so, it is necessary to point out that this holds good only to those who share with Socrates all the above mentioned features, namely, being a true philosopher, that is, someone who went through a radical conversion that is much like an initiation, having gained the capacity to acknowledge the existence of the highest objects of knowledge and the value inherent in knowing them; someone who, in addition to that, finds in philosophical contemplation the greatest of pleasures.

Having made all these specifications, we must add that it would still be a mistake not to consider that the words death and life, in the context of the *Phaedo*, must be understood with an important qualification: death signifies, in this case, a life of unrestricted thinking, which makes it a form of life, namely, the life of pure contemplation that the soul can enjoy without the body. And “life” in the sentence “death is preferable to life” also means, of course, life, but a life which is restricted to the enjoyment of bodily goods but lacks the complete fruition of the greatest goods, the goods of the intellect, of which even the philosopher has a limited access during his corporeal existence.

Death qualified in such a way, that is, understood as contemplative life, can only be preferable for those who have the ability to recognize its good and to enjoy it\(^\text{13}\), that is, as Socrates never tires of insisting on, it is preferable to the philosopher who, thanks to the aforementioned initiation or conversion, acquired such an ability.

If the philosopher is a person who is able to enjoy contemplative life and appreciate the good pertaining to it, his experience is, nevertheless, limited by bodily needs. As such, it is only natural that he regards a contemplative life without any constraints as a far greater good than a restricted experience of contemplation, that is, corporeal existence.

Concerning this point, it is not futile to mention Aristotle’s testimony:

> […] whereas the activity of the intellect is felt to excel in serious worth, consisting as it does in contemplation, and to aim at no end beyond itself, and also to contain a pleasure peculiar to itself, and therefore augmenting its activity: and if accordingly the attributes of this activity are found to be self-sufficiency, leisuredness, such freedom from fatigue as is possible for man, and all the other attributes of blessedness: it follows that it is the activity of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness—provided it be granted a complete span of life, for nothing that belongs to happiness can be incomplete.

Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine; and by as much as this something is superior to his composite nature, by so much is its activity superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man’s thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him; for though this be small in bulk, in power and value it far surpasses all the rest. (Arist. *EN* 1177b19-1178a2)

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\(^\text{13}\) When Socrates, in the *Republic*, insists that only a philosopher can experience the pleasure of intellectual contemplation, that implies that he is the only one who can judge its value by comparing it to the many other kinds of pleasures. See: Pl. *R.* 581c-582d.
Plato, however, seems to be quite aware that this specific shortcoming, the limitation that the body represents to contemplative life, is not the only relevant aspect of corporeal life. As the *Philebus* 20b-23c makes clear, he understands that human life includes not only thinking but also the pleasure derived from our bodily dimension, which is not *per se* bad.

There are, therefore, two sides to the philosopher’s corporeal life: on the one hand, it means that the bodily needs hinder the higher pleasures of thinking; on the other, it means that an experience of certain bodily pleasures is necessary. And this experience of bodily pleasures is often the result of the interruption of the pleasures of pure thinking, which must necessarily at some point be disturbed by other more urgent and pedestrian needs. One could cite, for example, the pleasure felt in eating when hungry, hunger being the sign of a bodily need that may interrupt the highly pleasurable activity of thinking.

It is, therefore, clear from what Socrates says in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic* (580d-587b) that the philosopher would rather have the pleasure which results from intellectual contemplation than the pleasure that comes from satisfying hunger. Thus, when he interrupts a philosophical activity to eat, for instance, he is necessarily exchanging a higher pleasure for a lower one. This does not mean, of course, that he is someone who does not appreciate the bodily pleasures at all. Exactly how this applies to Socrates, we shall see very soon.

Before that, it is necessary to take a closer look at an important distinction contained in the *corpus platonicum*, one that deals with types of desires and their respective pleasures. This is a distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires, the understanding of which is crucial to grasping the admixture of contemplation and bodily pleasures which defines the philosopher's life.

Concerning the necessary desires, Socrates claims in the *Republic* (558d-e):

> Well, then, desires that we cannot divert or suppress may be properly called necessary, and likewise those whose satisfaction is beneficial to us, may they not? For our nature compels us to seek their satisfaction. Is not that so?

As to the unnecessary desires, he says:

> And what of the desires from which a man could free himself by discipline from youth up, and whose presence in the soul does no good and in some cases harm? Should we not fairly call all such unnecessary? (Pl. *R*. 559a)

The necessary desires are, therefore, those strictly related to the preservation of life, while the unnecessary ones are desires which either aim at superfluous pleasures or desires whose strength can lead to rampant impulses, harmful disturbance and even sickness, both to the philosopher and to the non-philosopher. Indeed, Socrates adds that they are harmful to body and soul, common sense and continence. This is a fundamental point: a life of excessive pleasure and devoted to satisfying unnecessary desires is not good both to the philosopher and to the non-philosopher. However, the existence of the body is still an undeniable fact, and it entails the existence of pleasures linked to the necessary desires that both philosophers and non-philosophers must necessarily experience.

Now, the bodily pleasures, those connected to the necessary desires, must and will be experienced as pleasures, amounting to goods even for the philosopher. The main difference between the philosopher and an ordinary moderate man is that the

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latter has never had truly intellectual pleasures and so has nothing to compare with the more common necessary bodily pleasures. For him, and for the philosopher as well, it would be impossible not to experience necessary pleasures and to enjoy them. The important difference is that the philosopher also acknowledges the existence of higher pleasures and clearly prefers them, just as he would rather experiment them without any interruptions whatsoever.

It should be stressed that there is nothing in the platonic dialogues to possibly suggest that life or bodily (necessary) pleasure is an evil in itself. Rather, such a pleasure seems to be a good which, if enjoyed in moderation, should even be celebrated, be it by the ordinary man or by the philosopher.

In the Symposium, Socrates only arrives at the drinking party’s place after a very considerable delay, since, on his way to Agathon’s home, he was so intensely taken by some thought that it prevented him from even stirring. When he finally arrives, supper is finishing. It is most likely that he managed to eat something and derived pleasure from it, but it is also true that on the top of his priorities was another kind of good or pleasure, since he did not bothered to arrive very much late for supper. Neither the character of Socrates, by the way he is portrayed, or Plato’s dialogues in general, by what they have to say about life, can be seen as contrary to the enjoyment of life. Much on the contrary, both convey, in many respects, an invitation to celebrate life in all its dimensions.

A very good illustration of this attitude of celebration of life and of its pleasures can be seen in the Republic, when Plato describes the way of life of the so-called sane city. Socrates says:

First of all, then, let us consider what will be the manner of life of men thus provided. Will they not make bread and wine and garments and shoes? And they will build themselves houses and carry on their work in summer for the most part unclad and unshod and in winter clothed and shod sufficiently? And for their nourishment they will provide meal from their barley and flour from their wheat, and kneading and cooking these they will serve noble cakes and loaves on some arrangement of reeds or clean leaves, and, reclined on rustic beds strewn with bryony and myrtle, they will feast with their children, drinking of their wine thereto, garlanded and singing hymns to the gods in pleasant fellowship, not begetting offspring beyond their means lest they fall into poverty or war? (Pl. R. 372a-c)

Glaucous then complains that Socrates made men feast without meat, to which he answers:

I forgot that they will also have relishes—salt, of course, and olives and cheese and onions and greens, the sort of things they boil in the country, they will boil up together. But for dessert we will serve them figs and chickpeas and beans, and they will toast myrtle-berries and acorns before the fire, washing them down with moderate potations and so, living in peace and health, they will probably die in old age and hand on a like life to their offspring. (Pl. R. 372c-d)

There is nothing morbid or life-denying in the life of the inhabitants of the city.

16 See: Pl. R. 581c-582d.
17 On this topic, it should be noted that, in the Symposium, Alcibiades compliments Socrates for being able to abstain from food with no great suffering when the situation calls for it, for instance, in a military campaign; but Alcibiades also points out how Socrates fully enjoyed food in other situations. See: Pl. Smp. 220a.
made out of lógos and the philosophers\textsuperscript{18}, of course, by taking part in the city’s way of life will not refrain from the enjoyment of necessary pleasures which constitute bodily life.

That bodily pleasures will be enjoyed by philosophers until the very last moment they possess bodies is quite clear by what Socrates says in the \textit{Phaedo} (60a-b) at the very final moments of his life: he makes comments on the unavoidable pleasure he feels in being unchained, and surely there is not a trace of avoiding enjoying such pleasure. The most iconic moment is, however, a scene from the \textit{Phaedrus}, in which Socrates compliments the title-character for the excellent choice of setting for their conversation. Socrates says:

\begin{quote}
By Hera, it is a charming resting place. For this plane tree is very spreading and lofty, and the tall and shady willow is very beautiful, and it is in full bloom, so as to make the place most fragrant; then, too, the spring is very pretty as it flows under the plane tree, and its water is very cool, to judge by my foot. And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, judging by the figurines and statues. Then again, if you please, how lovely and perfectly charming the breeziness of the place is! and it resounds with the shrill summer music of the chorus of cicadas. But the most delightful thing of all is the grass, as it grows on the gentle slope, thick enough to be just right when you lay your head on it. (Pl. \textit{Phdr.} 230b-c)
\end{quote}

It is hard not to see in this passage a clear proof that the philosopher, while endowed with a body, will not cease to be affected by the pleasures that necessarily result from his corporeal condition and will also enjoy them.

When Socrates states in the \textit{Phaedo} (80e-81a) that the philosopher’s pure soul is prepared to die since it never kept a voluntary trade with the body\textsuperscript{19}, he can only be referring to the voluntary search for unnecessary pleasures or even the overestimation of the necessary ones\textsuperscript{20}. And the reason why the philosopher does not overestimate even the pleasant experience of necessary pleasures lies in the simple fact that he has already acquired the capacity to discover other goods, greater and more worthy of being desired, goods that constitute a source of superior pleasure\textsuperscript{21}.

When all that is taken into account, to simply accuse Plato of being morbid or life-denying for having put in Socrates’ mouth some of the speeches contained in the \textit{Phaedo} would amount, in a certain way, to a spiritual provincialism, for it implies undervaluing or even ignoring the good that is proper to contemplative life, and also the pleasure that results from it, even when Plato has insistently talked about it. In addition to that, such an attitude also implies deflating the extraordinary character of Socrates, and that in clear disregard to the text, since the idea that “death is preferable to life” can only be defended for someone like Socrates himself. Plato is fully aware of how foolish it would be investing on a thesis such as the denial of life simpliciter, and the prohibition of suicide contained in the \textit{Phaedo} 61c-62e seems to indicate exactly that. And in the \textit{Philebus}, precisely because he understands man as a blending of body and soul, Socrates accepts that the very best life for man would

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\textsuperscript{18} Even if philosophers are not explicitly referred to as citizens of the sane city, I see a reasonably clear continuity between the “two cities” described in the \textit{Republic}. In fact, we should talk about a single city that is progressively modified throughout the book. Thus, the finished form of the city is nothing more than the last stage of refinement of a city which was initially called the sane city.

\textsuperscript{19} See also: Pl. \textit{Phd.} 67c-d, a passage that must be interpreted in the same way.

\textsuperscript{20} On this topic, see also: OLIVEIRA, 2007.


be one that blends pleasure and thought. And since man is bound to experience necessary bodily pleasures, he may, through the discovery of more intense but superfluous bodily pleasures, very easily end up focusing only on their enjoyment and neglecting his rational faculties. On the other hand, a man is also capable of restricting himself to the necessary pleasures and to develop his cognitive abilities up to a point in which he is able to acknowledge the intellectual goods and pleasures as greater than the bodily goods and pleasures. Given the right context, the philosopher's voluntary detachment from the bodily dimension does not represent a denial of life, but its affirmation, in that it represents an adjustment to the conditions that are required to the discovery and enjoyment of a dimension of life that is not per se available to everyone, but one which needs to be pursued with a kind of desire and force that can only be characterized as deeply vital. This is precisely why Plato chose the word éros to name the force that propels the philosopher and makes philosophical life possible.

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22 See: Pl. Phlb. 20b-23c.
23 On this, see: TAYLOR, 2001, p.182.
Cambridge University Press.


Mouroutsou, Georgia

Verum gaudium res severa est.
Seneca

I. The Importance and the Meaning of the Question

Plato's agenda in the *Phaedo* is to prove that the soul is immortal and to draw the correct conclusions about how one should live and die. He does not strain this agenda by pursuing a contest between knowledge and pleasure, the adjudication of which would require additional analysis to define pleasure and an evaluation of different kinds of pleasure. Instead of offering a critique of pleasure by means of scientific rigor and an exhaustive dialectic, all of which is carried out in the *Philebus*, Plato is particularly concerned with the detrimental consequences of the bodily pleasures on the soul. Bodily pleasures hinder the philosopher's undertaking of purification, and are, therefore, deprecated.

Against this background, pleasures of learning are mentioned in the *Phaedo*. Socrates refers to them most explicitly after narrating the long story about the afterlife, when he underlines that philosophers should purify their lives of bodily pleasures, and study the pleasures of learning, instead. This is not a slip of the pen: in his defense of the philosophers' undertaking as a study of dying, he did not say that all pleasures are bodily, nor that the philosophers' endeavors will be devoid of all possible affectivity, rendering the philosophers "men or women of stone", but that the philosophers must detach themselves from the realm of the body and its pleasures, which, alas, go hand in hand with pains.2

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1* An initial draft, aired at the Plato Workshop at UWO, March 2016, has benefited a lot from the comments made by and the good discussions with Devin Henry, Rusty Jones and Ravi Sharma. In this still short version, I do not pursue Ravi's excellent recommendation to analyse affectivity and check for instances of pain in the rest of the Socratic narration. Let it suffice to communicate the result of my further investigation: because I find no trace of pain (the instances of fear mentioned are actually cases of precaution), there is nothing, I take it, that jeopardises the constancy of the philosophers' joy throughout their adventurous quests. ἀλλὰ τούτων δὴ ἐνεκα θαρρεῖν χρὴ περὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῇ ἄνδρα ὡς ἀλλοτρίους τε ὄντας, καὶ πλέον θάτερον ἡγησάμενος ἀπεργάζεσθαι, τὰς δὲ περὶ τὸ μανθάνειν ἐσπούδασέ τε καὶ κοσμήσας τὴν ψυχὴν οὐκ ἄλλοτρίῳ ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῆς κόσμῳ, σωφροσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀνδρείᾳ καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, οὕτω περιμένει τὴν εἰς Ἅδες πορείαν (ὡς πορευόμενος ὅταν ἢ εἰμαιριμένη καλῇ).

But now surely, because of all this, a man should have no fear about his own soul, who renounced the pleasures of the body and its adornments in his life, because he thought that they are alien to him, and that they do him more harm than good, and was concerned with the pleasures of learning and adorned his soul with no alien adornment, but with its own: with temperance and justice and courage and freedom and truth, and, in this way, awaits that journey to Hades that he will make whenever destiny calls him (114d8-115a2). All translations are mine.

2 See: *mete algedon mede tis hedone*, 65c6f.; see also later, 83c5f., 83d3 and 84a4f. Whenever pleasures are coupled with pains, they are bodily or of the body, and experienced through the body (*peri to soma, dia tou somatos*).
To date, Platonic research has thrown up some fascinating debates about Plato's pleasures of learning and knowing. The predominant areas of interest have been the arguments for and against the discrepancy between the philosopher's life as the most pleasant life in Rep. IX and the intellectual pains that are or seem to be included in such a life, and the riddle of pure intellectual pleasures in Rep. IX and the reconstruction of its relation to the puzzle of pure pleasures in the Philebus. The Phaedo has not attracted much attention in the discussion of these intellectual pleasures, though researchers have pointed out a clearer recognition of them in this dialogue, which hints at their distinctive role in the good life, and thereby goes beyond what is offered in the Gorgias and points forward to the picture drawn in the Republic. What has been debated in the Phaedo, above all, is the evaluation of bodily pleasures, with the focus on the question: does Plato think that they are bad in themselves, or is it rather a particular attitude toward them that we should reproach?

My question in this paper is whether Phaedo's pleasures of learning are pure: whether we should understand them as being pure, since Plato does not focus on their analysis, and Socrates never characterizes them as pure. This question, is legitimate, for, purification is the general framework in the Phaedo; Moreover, it is a question that, though to my knowledge it has not yet been asked, is very important for the development of Plato's critical project on pleasure, a project that goes hand in hand with the critique of different types of hedonism: for, the pleasures of learning are characterized as pure in both the Republic and the Philebus. According to Plato's philosophical project on pleasure, as I reconstruct it on the basis of the Republic and the Philebus:

Pure pleasures (be it of sensation, or of learning and knowing) are not cessations of pains; to be more precise, they are not cessations of their opposite pains; in both the Republic and the Philebus, they are introduced as a piece of evidence against all pleasures' being cessations of pain.

3 See Warren on the pleasures and pains of learning in the Republic: he elegantly solves the above discrepancy, but does not consider that, when experiencing pure intellectual pleasures, we are necessarily not caught up in a vicious circle of pains following upon pleasures; for, he does not focus on the Phaedo: nor does he interpret the Philebus' lines (51e7-52b9) in this light; though he offers very helpful remarks about the conditions of a lack being painful with the aid of first- and second-order knowledge, he is not interested in discussing what kind of pain makes a pleasure of learning not pure. Though my focus differs, I can say that, in contrast to Warren, I do not presuppose any utilitarianism in my reading, and, differently from Warren, who follows the traditional view, I find Plato reaching his limits in the Philebus, and realizing that the pleasures of learning are not to be understood according to the model of filling the stomach's lack, but not able to offer a way out.


5 The hedonic calculus (Phd. 68c-69c) has been hotly debated, in its comparison to the hedonic calculus in the Protagoras. See Weiss' critique of Gosling and Taylor, and Gosling and Taylor's reply and correction: they have been representing the view that the Phaedo is compatible with hedonism. I disagree with Gosling and Taylor, since I do not find any traits of comparisons of pains and pleasures in Socrates' autobiography; and there is more than this argument ex silentio: consider 82c and 83b-c, according to which the true philosophers will not avoid bodily pleasures and pains on the basis of calculating any possible unwelcome effects: like wasting their possessions and money, falling into poverty or illness, but because they consider what Socrates labels "the greatest evil of all" (on which see fn. 8) that arises when one decides to succumb to bodily pleasures and, inevitably, to the opposite pains involved.

6 Though the Phaedo and the Gorgias offer more on Plato's critique of different types of hedonism than on his critique of pleasure, we can also draw conclusions about the latter aspect of the Platonic project.
Pure pleasures of learning – with the aid of the more authoritative Philebus – are unmixed with pain in their nature, which means that necessarily they are not mixed with pain; not that they are not necessarily mixed with pain, but sometimes they are. That said, there might be pains occurring before and after pure pleasures of learning, if and only if these pains are not a constitutive part of these pleasures' nature, which would be the case if the pleasures of learning were the cessation of their opposite, precedent pains. There can be pain preceding pure pleasures of attaining knowledge, for example, due to aporia, or pain following pure pleasures of knowing, when, for instance, we realize we need a piece of knowledge we had acquired but we have forgotten it. But pleasures of learning will be pure if and only if they are not cessations of the opposite pain: that is if and only if the respective pain is not like the pain felt when we feel hunger, which Socrates makes explicit: in the pure pleasure of learning there is no hunger for the objects of knowledge someone desires to acquire, and there is no pain of hunger occurring before, a pain that will be relieved and whose relief will give rise to the opposite pleasure. If one is pained by aporia after having realized one's ignorance, and eagerly wishes to acquire knowledge in order to get rid of this pain of being stuck in aporia, and, therefore, understands and experiences the pleasure of learning as a relief of the precedent pain, one is not taking pure pleasure in learning, but impure. Moreover, any subordination of learning to utilitarian calculations would deprive one of the experience of the pure pleasure of learning: for example, if someone fervently wishes to expand her CV, and if being devoid of this expansion causes distress in her, and, when attaining – and applying- knowledge, she is relieved of this particular pain, this pleasure is not a pure pleasure, according to my reconstruction of Plato's sketch.

My answer to the above question is “yes,” the pleasures of learning are pure. Here I leave aside the question of whether the Phaedo's pleasures of learning are free of the body and its realm, a question that I also answer “yes”, and confine myself to answering my question by precisely delineating the purity as freedom from pain. In support of my view, I highlight something that is clearly underlined in the Phaedo: a new observation in research, which enriches Plato's analysis of pleasure: namely, that the Phaedo's pleasures of learning are, in contrast to bodily pleasures, necessarily not preceded and necessarily not followed by pain, but necessarily free of pain. To do so, I will focus on the initial example of pleasure that Socrates introduces, in the first section of the second part of the paper. In the second section, I consider Socrates'
autobiography: throughout his philosophical adventures and despite all twists and
turns, his joy of learning, in its own nature, has been free of pain. The philosopher’s
freedom has many aspects: among others, the philosopher, or the lover of learning, breaks free of the natural, and, very often, vicious circles of depletion and restoration.

   Pleasures of Learning as Pure of Pain
   IIa. A Significant Example of Bodily Pleasure

   Nowhere in the Phaedo do we find an analysis or a model of bodily pleasure, but we do encounter a significant example of such a pleasure at the very beginning of the narrative. Socrates wonders at the phenomenon of what people call pleasure after he is released from his fetters:

   How strange does it seem to be what people call a pleasant thing, he said, my friends! How remarkable is its relation to what seems to be its opposite, namely what is painful! They are not willing to be present in us, both at the same time, but if one pursues one of them and grasps it, one is almost always compelled to grasp the other, too, like two creatures attached to a single head. It seems to me, he said, that if Aesop had reflected upon it, he would have composed a fable that god wanted to change their enmity for friendship, but, because he could not, he fastened their heads together; because of this, when someone has one of them, then the other follows. This seems to be happening to me: after pain was caused in my limb due to the fetter, now pleasure seems to be following.

   I will focus on two questions that are relevant to my purposes: what it means that pleasure and pain are not willing to visit us simultaneously, and that they are inseparably connected. I think that in order to give the right answers to both questions, we need to understand Socrates as not referring to all kinds of pleasure. A clear indication that a general claim for all pleasure is not being made is that Socrates speaks of what people call pleasure. Instead, I take Socrates to be referring to a particular type of pleasure, including the pleasure he feels in his limbs after the release from the fetters: namely, bodily pleasure. So as I see it, the scope is not as broad as to include all pleasures, nor so narrow as to be restricted to nothing but the particular bodily pleasure that Socrates is experiencing in the present moment.

   To i: We have to understand the meaning of the assertion: “they –pleasure and pain- are not willing to be present in us, both at the same time”. Plato can not

9 Philosophoi and philomatheis are two terms that Socrates uses interchangeably in his defense. Socrates speaks of the pleasures of manthanein, not the ones of skopein and didaskein (Phil. 16e). This preference makes sense because what it means to be a genuine philosopher is to love to learn (philomatheis). That said, we should not underestimate skospein and its pleasures in the game of giving and asking for reasons. Furthermore: from the Platonic, and the Socratic perspective, as Plato depicts Socrates, the philosopher who is able to meet the challenges of the predecessors is able to teach others. In all three examples of the pleasures of learning, the aspects of skopein and didaskein are implicit, if not explicit.

10 Crucial topics are frequently introduced at the beginning of Platonic dialogues. That said, we should not overstrain our interpretation by expecting initial, not yet explicated, statements to be the philosopher’s last word or to pave the way to things that come up later in the dialogue but show no trace of the initial motif. Instead, we should be treading carefully.

11 Ὡς ἄτοπον, ἔφη, ὥν ἄνδρες, ἐοικε τι εἶναι τοῦτο ὅτι καλούσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἡδύ· ὡς θαυμασιώς πέρυκε πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἐναντίον εἶναι, τὸ λυπηρόν, τὸ ἀμα μὲν αὐτῷ μὴ ἐθέλει παραγίγνεσθαι τῷ ἄνθρώπῳ, ἐὰν δέ τις διώκῃ τὸ ἔτερον καὶ λαμβάνῃ, σχεδόν τι ἀναγκάζεσθαι ἵνα λαμβάνειν καὶ τὸ ἔτερον, ὅσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς Ἰμμένῳ δύναν μὴ ὄντε. καὶ μοι δοκεῖ, ἔφη, εἰ ἐνενόησεν αὐτὰ Άισωπος, μοῦν ἀν συνθεῖαν ὅς ὁ θεὸς βουλομένος αὐτὰ διαλλάξαι πολεμοῦντα, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἐδύνατο, συνήφειν εἰς ταῦταν αὐτοῦ τὰς κορυφὰς, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ὅ ὅτι τὸ ἔτερον παραγίγνεται ἐπακολουθεῖ ὄστερον καὶ τὸ ἔτερον, ὃσπερ οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἐνείκεν· ἐπειδὴ ὑπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ ἢ ἐν τῷ σκέλει τὸ ἄλγειν, ἢκεῖν δὴ φαίνεται ἐπακολουθεῖν τὸ ἡδύ.
have his Socrates meaning that any kind of pleasure and any other kind of pain
cannot co-exist in a single subject, which would contradict our most common
experiences: for, it is possible that the same subject experiences pleasure and pain
at the same time, as long as the pain is not the pain opposite to that pleasure: we
can have an unfamiliar mixture, as Phaedo reports: on the one hand, pleasure due
to doing philosophy; on the other hand, the emotional anticipatory pain due to
the subsequent loss of a friend and teacher. But, regarding opposite pleasures and
pains, take for instance the pleasure of eating and pain of hunger: we can either be
in the process of disintegration of the natural state and equilibrium and, therefore,
feel pain, or be in the opposite process of restoration and feel pleasure: we cannot
feel both pleasure and pain since we are in one process, feeling pain, or the other,
feeling the opposite pleasure. Things can be further complicated because it is the
soul that feels pleasure related to bodily processes, and so we can have pain due to
bodily disintegration, and, at the same time, pleasure of anticipation of the opposite
process. This combination - a subtlety that is not worked out in the Phaedo – is
possible because we have a pleasure of the soul and a pain originating in the body,
which can be simultaneous.

Based on what we concluded so far, let's turn to ii. and try to understand the
inseparability of pleasure and pain here at stake. I would suggest a bit of caution
in this undertaking: Socrates maintains that when one -not he himself- pursues a
certain kind of pleasure—for, admittedly, no one will aim at pain—one will inevitably
get the rest of the “package”, namely, pain: schedon ti anagkazesthai aei lambanein
kai to heteron. I read “nothing more” and “nothing less” than this view in these lines.
What does this mean?

From the “nothing more” Socrates draws thereby no general conclusion that
bodily pleasures and pains are experienced in continuous alternation: pleasure
necessarily following pain and pleasure bound to be followed by pain, which would
contradict our experience of accumulation of episodes of pleasure or pain. Moreover,
I would need some strong evidence in the Phaedo to support the view that pleasure
follows pain to be followed by pleasure, and this is all, which would contradict the
Republic and the Philebus, in both of which Socrates corrects the logical flaw of
those who believe that pleasure is cessation of pain. They, namely, overlook the
reality of the intermediate state that is neither pleasant nor painful, but, depending
on the comparison to the painful or the pleasant state, it sometimes appears to be
pleasant and some other times painful. I find no evidence in the Phaedo that there
is no intermediate state between pleasure and pain. In addition, Socrates does not
admit that pleasure has followed pain in the particular example he brings up. On the
contrary, he says that the release from the fetters appears to be pleasant, which hints
at the question: is it really pleasant?

As for the “nothing less”, the question becomes more pressing: what is the
view then, for the exemplification of which Socrates gives his example? I think
the following: there is some pleasure that is inseparably and in its own nature, i.e.
necessarily, connected with pain. Thus the necessity does not refer to the particular

12 διὰ δὴ ταῦτα οὐδὲν πάνυ μοι ἐλεινὸν εἰσῄει, ὡς εἰκὸς ἂν δόξειεν εἶναι παρὸντι πένθει,
οὔτε αὐτή ἡδονή ὡς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἡμῶν ὄντων ὥσπερ εἰώθεμεν – καὶ γὰρ οἱ λόγοι τοιούτοι
τινες ἔσαι – ἀλλὰ ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπον τι μοι πάθος παρῆν καὶ τις ἀμασίς κράσις ἀπὸ τε τῆς
ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης, ἐνθυμουμένῳ ὅτι αὐτή ἔκεινος ἔμελλε
tελευτᾶν.

13 Socrates does not mention the opposition of pleasure and pain in the first argument
for the soul's immortality, which could plead for the sequel of pain after pleasure
and pleasure after pain, but not necessarily so: Socrates could have spoken of a transition from the more
pleasant to the more painful and vice versa, instead of speaking of the process from the
pleasant to the painful and the other way round.
Sequel, but to pleasure's inseparability from pain due to its own nature. Satisfying the need and experiencing the pleasure brings about the opposite, depletion, whose satisfaction reinstates the original depletion and reactives, if not intensifies, the initial desire for satisfaction: despite the intermezzi of some fleeting moments of peace, war prevails, and under certain circumstances, we can be caught in a vicious Sisyphian or incurable Calliclean circle. Therefore, we are chained not only to pain, as said above, but also to this predictable repetition of never-completing and never-ceasing cycles of depletion and restoration. Only death completes, or rather puts a full stop to, this inevitably monotonous process. The situation can become even worse. False perspectives of pleasure can leave us unaware of where we are in the on-going process, whether we are in pleasure or pain. We can now, I think, rightly situate the Socratic formulation that the release from the fetters appears to him to be pleasant.

IIb. A Lover of Learning at Work: Socrates' Pleasures of Learning

In the following, I will turn to Socrates, who, though not the single philosopher Plato portrays, paradigmatically exemplifies Plato's philosophers. That Socrates does not deprive his intellectual activity of affectivity, and in particular pleasure, is made clear throughout the entire dialogue. I will focus on a particular moment in his autobiographical narrative. I have a twofold motivation for this choice: first, instead of interpreting the passages in which the hedonistic calculus is conducted, in order to argue whether or not some openness is left for the philosopher's undertaking.

14 See Gallop for a different view: "the pleasure that Socrates now feels is not a necessary sequel to the pain, but contingent upon the removal of the fetter." Gallop considers the option to interpret Socrates similarly as in R. 583c10-d11, but "on a strict reading he seems committed to the quite different, and less defensible, proposition". Such a so characterised strict reading does no justice to how Plato is writing his introductory passages: introducing significant elements and paving the way for the development of views in the sequence, but not fleshing out these views. See my interpretation in the main text.

15 Having put the Socratic claims in the right perspective, I do not read any gaps between the lines and I am left with no mystery in Socrates' words. I do not agree with Gallop, when he concludes that "the alleged inseparability of pleasure from pain seems a curious moral for Socrates to draw from the state of his leg. Neither possible application of it fits the example." (p. 77).

16 He is pleased when he and his companions exchange their accounts: pleased to have listened to Cebes' argument against the philosophers' readiness to die (62e). When the Theban philosopher motivates him to return to the point where they had left the proof of the soul's immortality, asking whether this would please him, Socrates affirms the pleasure and asks Cebes what else – other than his being pleased – he would expect (ὅθεν δὲ ἀπελίπομεν ἐπανέλθωμεν, εἴ σοι ἡδομένῳ ἐστίν. Ἀλλὰ μὴν ἡδομένῳ γε· πῶς γὰρ ἄρα ὁ μέλλει;). Though Simmias' and Cebes' objections have a depressive effect on all companions, who had been all too quickly persuaded by the antecedent accounts (88c: aedos dietethemen. Notice the sphodra pepesmenous. Instead of being persuaded all too hastily and without resistance and investigation, one should patiently and thoroughly examine any given account. Socrates devotes some time to explaining how philosophers should possess the right art to deal with accounts), Socrates receives the arguments with pleasure, devotes an intermezzo to warn them against misology (88c-91c), and then, like an experienced therapist, successfully turns their attention from their depressed sentiment to the common investigation of the accounts, only the latter of which can yield pleasure. Socrates succeeds in transferring his joyful attitude regarding the examination of the arguments to everyone. After the completion of the proofs of soul's immortality, Simmias says twice that he would pleasantly listen to his account of the afterlife, (108d3, 110b4). There are more kinds of pleasure that Socrates has, besides the pleasures of learning and exchanging argumentative accounts with his companions. Here I do not consider the anticipatory pleasure he experiences, based on his hope regarding the afterlife (68a-b) because I restrict myself to the pleasures of learning.
as being in a way hedonistic, a thesis which is off the mark, as I see it, I think we
would do well to encounter directly the affective states and attitudes in Socrates'
account; second, no matter how we may interpret Plato's Socrates and his possession
of knowledge or lack of it, Socrates portrays himself as he was when very young, at
any rate learning and investigating the truth of physical accounts, and at this stage
he did not possess the knowledge he was after.

Socrates was delighted to hear about Anaxagoras' Book (97c1). For he thought
that in Anaxagoras he had found a teacher from whom he could learn about
intelligence as the cause of all things (97d), in accordance with his expectations: he
thought someone should answer the question of what is the cause of what is, what
comes into being and what perishes, by explaining why it is the best to be, to act
upon or be acted upon this particular way. Socrates narrates in detail the aporias
that he pleasantly expected Anaxagoras to solve, and adds:

…but, after getting hold of the books in all haste, I read them as quickly as I
could in order to attain the knowledge as quickly as possible of what was best and
what is worst. And then, my friend, my marvelous hope was dashed (98b4-7)17.

For, Anaxagoras introduces, but makes no use of intelligence as a cause, and,
to make matters worse, misunderstands material, necessary conditions to be the true
and only causes. Socrates' hopes have been left unfulfilled and he has not attained
the knowledge he was craving. Before embarking on the second voyage, he says that
he would be delighted to become the student of this kind of cause, a cause that he
did not discover himself nor learn from another.18

As I have reconstructed the pure pleasures of learning, the previous presence
of pain does not annihilate the pure pleasure of learning. So even if we think that
Socrates is here registering intellectual pain, this does not mean that the pleasure
of learning, which he will experience, at least as dramatis persona, when listening
to the Timaean physics, will be impure. He does not say that he will experience
the future pleasure as the cessation of the pain caused by then, as his hopes were
dashed. Nonetheless, my claim is stronger than that: Socrates is not registering any
intellectual pain.

We should not read the pain into the lines because we are in pain when not
reaching the knowledge we have been craving for, urgently and with eagerness.
Instead of being distressed due to the puzzlement and confusion, and because of the
not yet attained knowledge, Socrates anticipates with great joy the future opportunity
to become the student of anyone who can meet the challenge that the Presocratics
could not; specifically, to successfully expose teleology in natural philosophy (99c).
He does not couple this pleasant anticipation with a present pain, the pain of being
at a loss about the topic the knowledge of which he lacks (ἐστερήθην). Moreover, we
should not read the pain into the lines, remembering the pleasures of anticipation
of the Philebus, because these pleasures are pleasures confined to bodily processes
of disintegration and restoration, and do not provide the model for anticipatory
pleasures of attaining knowledge.

Moreover, this is exactly the place where we would expect the philosopher to
delve into his calculating business and compare pains and pleasures (the pain of the
disappointment and the anticipatory pleasure of future progress), but there is not a
single trace of such a comparison either. Learning is pleasant to the philosopher, but

17 … ἀλλὰ πάνυ σπουδὴ λαβὼν τὰς βίβλους ὡς τάχιστα οἷός τε ἢ ἄνεγίγνωσκον, ἢ γάρ τὰς
τάχιστα εἰδείην τὸ βέλτιστον καὶ τὸ χείρον. Ἀπὸ δὴ θαυμαστῆς ἔλπιδος, ὦ ἐταῖρε, φυμην
φερόμενον…

18 ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν τῆς τοιαύτης αἰτίας ὅπερ ποτὲ ἔχει μαθητής ὄπου ᾠδῇ ἢ ἄκοι ἄν ἐγενόμην,
ἐπειδὴ δὲ ταύτης ἐστερηθήναι καὶ οὔτε αὐτὸς εὐρεῖν οὔτε παραλλοῦ μαθεῖν οἷός τε ἐγενόμην,
τὸν δὲ τούτον πλουτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς τοιαύτης ζήτησιν ἢ πεπραγμάτευμα βούλει σοι, ἔφη, ἐπίθειεν
ποιήσαμαι, ὦ Κέβης;
not because he aims at pleasure or he subordinates learning and attaining knowledge to other goals like honor or money, but because learning is pleasant in its own nature.

Given the above, what shall we conclude about the pleasure of learning in the *Phaedo*? The Socratic narration makes clear that the path of genuine philosophical learning is never straightforward. What the *Phaedo* also specifies is that this path is necessarily free from pain, unlike bodily pleasure, which necessarily involves pain, as Socrates described it in 60b-c. The philosopher's joy is much more strange than the phenomenon of bodily pleasure. This joy does not consist merely in the philosophers’ freedom from the disturbances of the bodily pleasures and pains (galene touton, 84a7). The Platonic intellectual pleasures accompany both the process of learning and the end of this process: the joy of learning in Socrates’ narration is constantly present. It does not cease when the learning process comes to a certain end and the philosopher succeeds in securing some knowledge. Neither is it a kind of blessing that emerges after the philosopher has attained knowledge and not in the process. Socrates’ pleasure of learning unceasingly accompanies the philosopher throughout his philosophical journey, even when there is an impediment or a disappointment on his path, and is deeply-rooted in the real possibility of progress as it is realized in the history of philosophy, a progress that might not be fulfilled by this particular philosopher, Socrates in our case, but by those who follow him.

Bibliography:

German Summary:
Die Diskussion über intellektuelle Lüste nach Platon hat sich nicht auf den *Phaidon* fokussiert, obwohl Platon-Forscher eine deutlichere Anerkennung von ihnen im *Phaidon* festgestellt haben, die auf ihre herausragende Rolle im guten Leben deutet, und dabei auf den *Gorgias* hinweist, und die *Politeia* vorbereitet.


Gemäß Platons philosophischem Projekt über die Lust, und in Bezug auf die reine Lust stelle ich das Folgende fest:

Reine Lust (sei sie des Wahrnehmens oder des Lernens) ist nicht die Beendigung

19 I was asked by George Rudebusch how I understand the difference from the Socrates of the *Apology*. This Socrates namely speaks of an „ἀμήχανος εὐδαιμονία“ of an after-life in which he will be doing what he has been doing in his whole life, situated between the ignorance of ignorance and the divine wisdom. I find no discrepancy with regard to the pleasure and happiness in question, even if the Socrateses differ in knowledge. There is a very deep pleasure to take in progressing toward knowledge.
des Schmerzes: ihres entgegengesetzten Schmerzes; sowohl in der Politeia als auch im Philebos sind reine Lüste als ein Beweis gegen die These eingeführt, dass alle Lust die Beendigung vom Schmerz ist.

Reine Lust des Lernens – mit Hilfe des eher authoritativen Philebos– sind nicht gemischt mit Schmerzen in dem folgenden Sinne: Es ist nicht unmöglich, dass Schmerzen vor oder nach ihnen auftauchen, aber nur wenn diese Schmerzen nicht konstitutiv für die Natur dieser Lüste sind. Da in ihrer Natur sind diese Lüste nicht gemischt mit Schmerz. Wegen aporia kann sich Schmerz vor der Lust des Lernens ergeben, und Schmerz kann auch nach der Lust des Lernens ereignen, wenn wir z.B. merken, dass wir etwas vergessen haben, das wir lernten, und wir es jetzt anwenden möchten. Lüste des Lernens werden rein nur wenn sie nicht die Beendigung des entgegengesetzten Schmerzes sind; nur wenn sich der erfahrene Schmerz nicht demjenigen des Hungers ähneln, was Sokrates explizit macht. Wenn jemand wegen aporia im Schmerz ist, nachdem er sein Unwissen gemerkt hat, und wenn er eifrig ist, Wissen zu erwerben, genau um den Schmerz der aporia loszuwerden, und wenn er daher die folgende Lust des Lernens als Erleichterung des vorherigen Schmerzes versteht und erfährt, hat er dabei keine reine, sondern unreine Lust.


The “young” historical Socrates in *Phaedo* 96a-99d: a re-examination of the controversial “autobiography”

Naddaf, Gerard

Gautama Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad — certainly among the most influential figures in human history — wrote nothing of their own. All that we may know of their lives comes from works written by others. This raises a question: to what degree do the written accounts accurately represent the historical person? The question applies as well to Socrates. We have nothing written by him. What we have instead is a new literary genre, the *Sôkratikoi logoi*, made up of works written after his death and inspired by his memory.¹ These are imitations of conversations that Socrates had with a number of interlocutors. The conversations often reflect wildly different interpretations of Socrates’ philosophy, and they present what some call the “masks” of Socrates (Hadot 1995, 147ff). Among the authors are Antisthenes, Euclide, and Aristippus — the founders of the Cynic, Cyrenaic and Megaric schools respectively — who were present with Socrates in his last hours and/or mentioned as his friends (*Phaedo* 59c). They offer strikingly divergent portrayals of Socrates’ teachings and way of life.² Contemporary scholars also present vastly different interpretations of Socrates Indeed, some argue (as does Kahn 1996) that it is useless to look for a historical Socrates: in Plato’s dialogues in particular, “Socrates” is no more than a literary fiction.³

With regard to the life of Socrates, I believe that the writings of Plato and others do contain details that are probable, if not wholly certain, and that from them we can construct a portrait of the historical Socrates. In a previous paper, “The young ‘historical’ Socrates in the *Apology* and the *Symposium*” (Naddaf, 2015, 448–53), I endeavoured to reconstruct the life of the ‘historical’ Socrates to show that, while still a “young man,” he developed a following among the “children” of the elite as one who introduced a radical new form of education into Athenian culture. In doing so, I discussed what we know about the birth and early education of Socrates. There is every indication that Socrates wasn’t born into the so-called working class, which has become a modern convention, but into a well-connected family, that he lost his father when he was still young, and, thanks to his inheritance, that he had the liberty and the resources to pursue his passion at a young age.

In this paper, I want to examine the historical details in the famous “autobiographical” passage in the *Phaedo* (96a-99d), which depicts Socrates’ youthful enthusiasm for natural philosophy. I accept the accuracy of Plato’s account here, but not in every detail.

Scholars have spilled much ink over the passage, but not enough attention has been given to the time frame that may be covered by the term *neos* or “young”

¹ The term *Sôkratikoi logoi* was invented by Aristotle (*Poetics* 1447b1-3).
² We have, of course, the complete *Sôkratikoi logoi* of Plato and Xenophon. They also offer striking differences.
³ For two recent succinct overviews of the Socratic problem, see Waterfield 2013, 1-19, and Dorion 2011, 1-23. I don’t share their respective pessimism and, in any event, my approach here is quite different.
in the expression “when I was young” (neos ὁν, 96a6). In my opinion, the period the word covers, when combined with Socrates’ personal reflections, offers us some extraordinary insights into the life of the young historical Socrates. Moreover, there may be consequences here for the dating of the works and locations of some of the philosophers that Socrates alludes to. There is thus much more that we can glean from this passage than is generally assumed. But I’m interested first and foremost in what the autobiographical passage can tell about the young historical Socrates.

Let me begin with the origin of the autobiographical digression. The primary theme of the Phaedo is the immortality of the “human” soul. Several arguments had been offered, including the cyclical argument, the recollection argument, and the affinity argument. Simmias and Cebe express some doubts in the form of two rather ingenious analogies (the attunement and weaver), which suggest that the soul is material, although on Cebe’s interpretation the soul is nonetheless stronger and longer-lasting than the body. Socrates counters with three arguments against Simmias’ position, including the doctrine of recollection, but agrees that Cebes’ arguments are more difficult to refute. According to him, the human psychê is longer-lasting than the body, and is thus able to outlive a succession of several human bodies, but it is not immortal. Indeed, the present human body may be the last one in the series before the soul burns out. There is no way of knowing whether this will happen, and so the “primal” fear of death is still with us! (95d). Despite these strong arguments against the immortality of the soul, Socrates reminds Simmias and Cebes that they must not give up on argumentation altogether; they should not conclude that a proof for the immortality of the soul is impossible.

Socrates claims that Cebes’ position requires a thorough investigation of the cause/reason/explanation (aitia) of coming to be and perishing (peri geneseôs kai phthorôs tên aitian diapragmateusathai, 95e8-96a1). Considering the aitia of generation and corruption, which is connected with the origin of life and thus of soul, Socrates notes that he wants to give his personal experience (pathê)5 in this matter (96a2-3). Cebes can take from it what he sees fit for his own thinking.6 Socrates’ account goes back to when he was young (neos ὁν, 96a6) — a time when he was marvellously keen on the wisdom (sophia) known as natural science (peri phuseôs historia, 96a7).

Let me take a moment for some reflections on the word neos. The word neos, as I’ve argued elsewhere, can cover the years from 13 all the way to 30, at which time the citizen becomes an anêr, with a host of new political privileges and obligations. Some scholars have insisted that neos refers primarily to the years from 13 to 17, that is, up to 18, the age at which Athenians began their compulsory military service, while others think the period extends to cover the years from 20 to 30. In Plato, we find numerous examples of neos covering both periods. But a relevant passage for the case at hand is Plato’s own “autobiographical” discussion in Letter 7. Here he claims that when he was a neos (324b9), he intended to enter politics as soon as he became a kyrios (324b10). Since one becomes at kyrios or freeman at the age of 18,

4 Plato only uses the word neos once in the Phaedo.
5 Many scholars discuss the term pathê (experiences) as combining the views of Socrates and Plato (see, for example, Rowe 1993, 229; Hackforth 1955, 127).
6 Ultimately, the inquiry is to explain why soul (psychê) is synonymous with life (zôê, 105d2), but life that is both deathless and indestructible, or better still, the Form of life itself (to tês zôês eidos 106d6). This culmination is clearly Platonic, and is not relevant strictly speaking to the autobiographical passage under consideration here.
this means he had a wide range of political ambitions when he was in his teens.\footnote{7} There are, in fact, numerous other examples in Plato that suggest that the prime age for educating a neos is 20 and under.\footnote{8} One is the young (neos) Dion (±405-354), who so impressed Plato when they first met (Letter 7, 326eff). There are also numerous passages in the Republic and the Laws that suggest that gifted youth (neoi) fall into this age group. Indeed, it is from this group that the future philosopher kings will be chosen (e.g., 414d4, 537b). These neoi must exhibit a good memory, and be quick to learn, high-minded, graceful, moderate, and courageous (Republic 487a; repeated at 490c, 494b, 503c; Laws 709eff, 710c).

There is good reason to believe that Socrates was also in his teens when, as a neos, he became fascinated with “natural science.” I have argued elsewhere that Socrates had the means and leisure to pursue his intellectual passions. The evidence suggests that he was the heir of a well-connected and successful father who died when he was still young (Naddaf 2016). Socrates was thus able to pursue his intellectual passions both before and after he became a kyrios or “free man.” This is confirmed, I believe, by the earliest known “historical” reference to Socrates — that by the playwright and prose writer Ion of Chios (c. 480–421). In his Epidemiai or Visits, which describe his encounters with famous citizens, Ion claims that, when he was a neos, Socrates went to Samos together with Archelaus (neon onta eis Samon sun Archelaadai apodeméseai, FGrHist 260 F11). This visit has nothing to do with a military campaign against Samos in 440, when Socrates would have been in his late 20s, but was an earlier visit to Samos when the island was still a part of the Delian League — an alliance formed against the Persians in 487–77 BC. I concur with Daniel Graham’s suggestion (2008, 308–13) that Archelaus and Socrates may have gone to Samos to visit the philosopher Melissus, who had a reputation as a natural philosopher as early as the mid 460s.\footnote{9} This, moreover, would bode well with the claim by Aristotle’s pupil, Aristoxenus of Tarentum, that Socrates became Archelaus’ paidika or darling when he was about seventeen (Porphyry 260F11 FGHist). As Andrew Lear (2014, 120) notes, “the only two sources of evidence that explicitly mention the ages [of the erômenoi] place them between the threshold of puberty and advanced adolescence,” that is, from 12 to 17.\footnote{10}

\footnote{7} Shortly thereafter (324dff), Plato (428-348) notes that Socrates was already an associate of his (hetairon 325b6) when the Thirty Tyrants wanted to implicate him in their murderous acts in 404/3. In other words, Plato was in his early 20s at most when he became an associate of Socrates.

\footnote{8} Plato puts the accent on 20 because the potential guardians are being also tested during their military service.

\footnote{9} Graham also notes that the encounter may have convinced Socrates of the futility of cosmological speculation, but the autobiographical passage suggests that Socrates had a kind of teleological way of seeing the world even before he became enthused with “natural science.” Moreover, it isn’t clear that Socrates became completely disinterested in cosmological speculation. I’ll return to this point.

\footnote{10} While the relationship between pederasty and pedagogy in classical Athens is complex, it seems that only pedagogical pederasty is valorized, even if its exact nature is open to question (Lear, 2015, 115–36). Moreover, it seems that it was first and foremost an elite practice (Hubbard, 2014, 128–49), which would reinforce my contention that Socrates came from a more upper class family. If Archelaus was born around 490 BC, which most commentators suggest, the age difference between Archelaus and Socrates would have been similar to the one between Socrates and Alcibiades (born circa 450 BC), that is, around 20 years. Given the convention that Socrates was physically unattractive, Archelaus may have been attracted first and
Let's return to Socrates youthful encounter with “natural science.” He claims that his enthusiasm for the historia peri phuseôs tradition (96a7) was connected with his desire to know the causes of everything (eidenai tas aitias ekastou): why (dia ti) things come into being, exist, and perish (96a8–9) — precisely what the natural philosophers in this tradition purported to explain.11 That they produced competing accounts, but none with decisive arguments, led Socrates to often change his mind as to which account might be the true one (96a10). Socrates provides several examples of competing accounts of the causes of everything, but he doesn't lose sight of the fact that soul or psuchê, and thus the origin of life and of thinking, is the primary topic under consideration.

Socrates thus begins (quite naturally, but somewhat unfairly) with the origin of living creatures (ta zôia, 96b2).12 He claims that the point zero is when heat and cold produce a kind of putrefaction (sêpedona, b2), and from this substance living creatures originate and grow/are nourished (suntrephetai, b3).13 This is the origin of life and thus of soul (psuchê).14 Many commentators (e.g., Burnet, Hackforth, Robin), claim that the reference here is to Archelaus, who not only thought the first animals were born from earth when it was warm, and thus through putrefaction, but that the same warm earth also sent up a slime or ooze resembling milk (ilus paraplêsian galakti) by which the first animals were nourished.15 This would give suntrephetai its natural sense. If it were certain that the Phaedo text implies that the earth provides a milky fluid or slime to feed its offspring, then Archelaus would be the prime candidate, since there is no trace of this idea before him. As we saw, Socrates was a pupil of Archelaus during his youth, and unless they had a falling out, we can assume he maintained a close relationship with him.16 But the theory in its more general form, which implies “spontaneous generation,” seems to have originated with Anaximander (see Naddaf 2005, 88-92) and became the norm among the phusiologoi. In any event, in both cases the upshot is that animal life and thus psuchê have a material origin, which bears a relationship to the theory of Simmias and Cebes.

11 Aristotle (Parts of Animals 640b4-22), insists that the first natural philosophers were interested in the how (pôs) rather than the why (dia ti). The autobiographical passage suggests that Socrates was always preoccupied with the why, rather than the how. The relation between them is, as I’ll note below, complex. Meanwhile, the passage suggests that Socrates was intellectually curious even before he encountered natural science.

12 I say somewhat unfairly because Socrates should have begun with the origin of the universe.

13 The verb suntrephetai has this dual meaning.

14 It seems clearly related to the Simmias' attunement theory where there is no life independent of the material composition of a human body. Rowe 1993, 230 claims that the accent here is “about how animals do in general come to be, not how they originally did.” And so, the reference here for Rowe cannot be to Archelaus.

15 The reference to milky slime or ooze is found in Diogenes Laertius (DK60A1) and Hippolytus (DK60A6).

16 Gábor Betegh, “Socrate et Archélaos dans les Nuées. Philosophie naturelle et éthique,” has recently argued that it is the natural philosophy of Archelaus and not Diogenes of Apollonia that Aristophanes is describing in the Clouds.
Meanwhile, since *psuchê* is also the source of thinking for Socrates — the notion the soul is superior to the body is contingent on its ability to think — Socrates then turns to the competing positions in his youth “on what we think with” (*hôi phronoumen*, b3), which include particular references to blood (*to aima*, 96b3), air (*ho aêr*, 96b4), and fire (*to pur*, 96b4). These are the theories of Empedocles (c.492–432), Anaximenes (c.590–520), and Heraclitus (c. 540–480) respectively. All these early Greek philosophers had a materialist theory of soul, so it isn’t surprising that “thinking” was also due to a physical mechanism, at least as it was explained to Socrates or as he understood it. Empedocles is quite explicit that thought (*noêma*) takes place not in the brain (as in the case below with Alcmeon) but in blood around the heart (B105, 148). Blood is the seat of thought because it is composed of all four elements in equal portions (B109), but Empedocles also suggests that different thoughts are also due to different compositions of our blood (B103, 108). Anaximenes, for his part, was the first to draw an explicit correlation between air, thought, and soul: “Just as our soul being air holds us together and governs us, so breath and air enclose the whole world.” Heraclitus identified fire (*pur*) as the *archê*, and he is quite explicit that it constitutes his governing principle (B64-66; 16). But he also calls it *logos* (B1), and claims that all things come to be according to it. Since *logos* is common to all (B2), including, of course, humans, and it is through *logos* qua fire that we think (*to phroneein*, B113), this may be what Socrates has in mind.

Socrates next turns to the theory that the brain (*egkephalos*, b4) and its mechanisms are the source of thought and of knowledge (*epistêmê*, b8). In fact, Socrates provides more detail on this materialist theory. The brain is the location of sensations (*aisthêseis*), memory (*mnêmê*), and opinion (*doxa*), and when these become stable, we have knowledge (*epistêmê*, 96b4-8). This is clearly the theory of Alcmeon of Croton (c. 510-440). But there are other aspects of Alcmeon’s theory that Socrates must have been equally familiar with, aspects that could have led Socrates toward a more teleological view of man and the universe (see addendum).

Socrates next mentions in passing that he found just as confusing the different explanations about “what happens in the heavens and on the earth” (*ta peri ton ouranon te kai tên gên pathê*, b9-c1), that is, competing meteorological models.

Meanwhile, Socrates complains that these competing accounts made him and others doubt what they had taken for certain *before* (*proteron*, 96c4) — that is, what he thought he knew when he was younger still! These include how he thought men grew (96c7-8), and here he puts the accent on eating and drinking, and how these add flesh to flesh and bones to bones etc. (96d). Some see a reference here to

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17 Some scholars—e.g., Rowe (1993, 230) and Burnet (1911, 96)—claim the reference here is to Diogenes of Apollonia, who explicitly contends that air (*aêr*) is the source of both soul (*psuchê*) and intelligence (*noêsis*) (DK 64B4). But this was after Socrates was a *neos*. So the reference must be to Anaximenes, from whom Diogenes drew his inspiration.

18 oion hê psuchê … hê hêmetera aêr ousa sugkratei hêmas, kai holon ton kosmon pneuma kai aêr periechei. (DK13B2)

19 As I note in the addendum, these three theories can also be understood in a teleological sense.

20 At the time, there was a close relationship between what happens in the heavens and what happens on earth. Socrates provides some competing examples further on, such as the competing explanations for the shape of the earth, and its location in the universe (97e-98a).
Anaxagoras (e.g., Curd 2007, 135), but this is really the commonsense view that most would have held.21

Socrates then segues to Anaxagoras, whom he suggests he first learned about when he heard someone reading from his book (97b–c). There is nothing to suggest that Socrates isn’t still referring to when he was a neos, and thus in his late teens. The norm is to claim that it was Archelaus whom he heard reading from the book of Anaxagoras. As we saw above there is strong evidence that Socrates was the lover of Archelaus when he was a neos, so it may seem surprising that he isn’t mentioned by name. If it were Archelaus, this would strongly suggest that he too became familiar with Anaxagoras late and/or that his book only began to circulate in Athens in the late 450s.22

But let’s turn to Socrates’ encounter with the work of Anaxagoras. Socrates first claims that what he heard seemed to be the kind of explanation (aitia) he seemed to be seeking, that is, that nous or Mind orders and causes all things (97c1).23 He now believed he’d found the definitive answer to why things come to be, exist, and perish (97c6–7; c7–8). If Mind ordered everything, then it must have been for the best or in the best possible way (97c5). In this context Socrates offers examples of physical controversies that must have preoccupied him when he was still a neos. They are all relative to the competing cosmological models: Was the earth round or flat (97d8)? Was the earth situated at the centre of the universe or not (97e4)? What are the relations of the sun, moon, and other celestial bodies to one another (97e5–98a4). More to the point, how is it best that they are located where they are and perform the functions attributed to them?

Since Socrates had not yet read Anaxagoras for himself, he must be referring to the competing positions of the other “natural philosophers” noted above. But since Parmenides (c. 515–450) was the only one to have claimed until then that the earth was round, he too now enters into the group.24 Meanwhile, Anaximander,

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21 I should note that Socrates also mentions the commonsense view of measuring, and how this too was called into question by, I assume, the new scientific explanation. Here he is introduced to a kind of “new math” where addition and division appear to be the same thing, as if adding one piece of chalk to another to make two would be the same thing as breaking a piece in half to make two (Sedley 1998, 12ff). In sum, how can he know how two comes about, if he has two opposite accounts of the matter? (Rowe 1993, 234).

22 If it wasn’t Archelaus, then this too would raise serious problems, for why wouldn’t Archelaus have discussed the theories of Anaxagoras with Socrates since Socrates is clearly familiar with those of several of his contemporaries? In my view, this causes all sorts of problems for scholars who want to date Anaxagoras’ book earlier or later. Socrates may be referring to Anaxagoras’ famous opening line: “Initially, all things were together, then nous made an organized world” (59B1). Or again, Anaxagoras’ contention that “Nous is self-ruled (autokrates), unmixed with other things (memeiktai oudeni chrêmati), knows all things (gnômên peri pantos), rules all things (pantôn nous kratei), and sets all things in order (panta diekosmêse)” (DKB12). But what is equally important here, and something commentators seem to ignore, is that Socrates clearly implies that he always took for granted that mind or reason is always connected with the present order of things.

23 This could also suggest that the young (neos) Socrates may have met Parmenides and Zeno in Athens, as Plato claims in the Parmenides (127c) after meeting Melissus. In any event, Socrates on this account would have been familiar with the work
Empedocles, and Alcmeon, as well as Parmenides, all situated the earth at the centre on the cosmos, and each offering different arguments for why this was the case.

What was Socrates really looking for? He suggests that, because Anaxagoras postulated Mind as the first principle that orders and causes all things (97c1), it follows that Anaxagoras could explain why it was best (beliston, 98a6, b2) for each thing in the kosmos, and the kosmos as a whole, to be structured as they are, and then also identify the good common to all (to koinon pasin agathon, 98b2-3).

For the moment, suffice it to say that when Socrates did acquire a copy of Anaxagoras’ book and read it for himself, he was sorely disappointed. For in his “youthful” interpretation, Socrates now found out that Anaxagoras did not follow through on the promising beginning of his book. He made no use of Mind as an explanatory principle. Instead he looked to the same physical entities (like air, aether, and water) the other phusiologoi (98bc-99c) identified as the causes leading to the present order of things. Socrates contends that this is akin to claiming that physical mechanisms can also account for decisions. It is as if to claim it was Socrates’ muscles and bones that decided to remain in prison rather than escape (98c). In the final analysis, the phusiologoi mistook, in his opinion, physical or secondary causes for purposive or primary causes (99b2-4), and this is the case, he insists, not only on the human level but also on the cosmological level (99b).

If the Apology (26d) is accurate, Socrates seems to have retained this interpretation of Anaxagoras throughout his life. However, not everyone has the same reading of Anaxagoras as Socrates. In fact, there is much in Anaxagoras that could be amenable to a “creationist” interpretation (Sedley 2007, 8-30; Naddaf 2005, 150-52). The same holds true of the other natural philosophers Socrates mentions in this autobiography. We should keep in mind the close linkage, for the early Greek philosophers, of the words phusis, theos, psuchê, and nous. This linkage suggests a correlation between human beings and the universe. While it may be true that the natural philosophers Socrates passes in review in the autobiographical passage provide a materialist explanation for thinking and/or the soul, there are also implicit and/or explicit references to teleology in their respective competing accounts. Indeed, there is also a correlation between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and thus between humans and the divine. I provide some explicit examples in an addendum at the end of this paper.

While in the Phaedo Socrates is represented as first and foremost focused on demonstrating that the “human” soul is immortal and nonphysical, the autobiographical section seems to have been introduced to explain his earliest encounters with this conviction. In contrast, the later Socrates of the Apology clearly has an agnostic position on the human soul’s immortality. He insists that we cannot know for certain what happens after death. Since few would contest that the arguments for the immortality of the soul in the Phaedo are Platonic rather than Socratic, we can assume that he also had an agnostic position when he was of Parmenides before his first encounter with the work of Anaxagoras.

25 In the Apology, the accent is on Anaxagoras’ theory that the celestial bodies were composed of earth and stone (26d), and thus could not be gods, that is, providential gods.
26 On the other hand, nor is there any trace of the supernatural in their respective accounts as Gregory cogently argued recently (2013).
27 The consensus that the “second” best method that Socrates introduces at Phaedo
a neos, even though he expressed the conviction that there was a telos behind the present order of things. While there is every reason to believe that Socrates always held deeply religious convictions,28 he also claims to have always used reason as the ultimate arbiter (Crito 46b). I’d argue that this is also Socrates’ approach to natural science. As he claims in the Apology (19d), he never taught it, but there is every indication that he never lost interest in it.29 As Hackforth (1955, 128) notes, Socrates remained committed to trying to find a new method for “natural science”; he did not, as the famous contention would have it, abandon “natural science” altogether and instead devote himself exclusively to self-knowledge. Socrates valued a good argument, and the pursuit of self-knowledge does not exclude trying to discover how the gods exhibit their aims in the natural order of the universe. In this, Socrates found his mentor in Heraclitus.

ADDENDUM on teleological tendencies in early Greek philosophy when Socrates was a neos

It’s a commonplace that Thales said that water (hudor) was the first principle, the archê, of all things (Aristotle Meta. 983b18-27 = DK11A12). However, he also claimed that water was mixed with soul (psuchê) and literally alive — and, indeed, that water is full of gods and is thus divine (DK11A23).30 We see here the interplay of the concepts phusis, psuchê, and theos. The question this raises concerns the degree to which the cosmology is infused with “intentionality.”31 Did Thales argue that the primitive living divine substance (phusis as archê) is endowed with consciousness? Did it make a conscious decision to create a kosmos that would then function according to natural laws?

Anaximenes identified aêr as the archê of all things, but he also drew an explicit connection between the cosmic air (aêr) and the breath-soul (psuchê). In fragment 2 (DK13B2), Anaximenes says: “[just as our soul being air holds us together and governs us, so breath and air enclose the whole world.” What’s important here is that Anaximenes not only contends that the originative stuff is self-moving and that humans are miniature replicas of the cosmos, but that both are endowed with a controlling element and thus nous or intelligence.

Heraclitus is the first to unambiguously physicalize the notion of god. He identified fire as the archê, and he is quite explicit that it constitutes his governing principle (B64-66; 16). In fact, he goes a step further and calls it logos, and even Zeus (B32).32 There is, thus, some sense in which god, logos, and fire are identical.

99d, which also implies the existence of the eternal Forms, is also Platonic.
28 He claims to have heard “divine” signs/voices when he was still a child (Apology 31d; see also 40b, 40c and 41d on similar divine manifestations).
29 I think this is also clear from Aristophanes’ caricature of Socrates in the Clouds (c. 423 BC) when Socrates would have been in his mid 40s. I intentionally avoided discussing this portrait here. See Burnet 1924/1977, 163-4).
30 The primary reference to Thales’ first principle as being “alive” is in Aristotle’s On the Soul, where he suggests that for Thales psuchê or soul is a self-moving force (ti kinêtikon, 405a19) that pervades (memeichthai, 411a7) the universe (en tôi holôi, 411a7).
31 Here I’m using cosmology to include both the origin of the present order of the universe and how it continues to be maintained.
32 Logos thus plays a role analogous to the primordial substance of the Milesians philosophers as it is not only a material principle or archê, but that it controls all
However, there is no doubt that Heraclitus also thought that the world is regulated by a rational principle that humans can come to understand. This is the case because humans too are rational, and our rationality is connected to the universal principle.

Moreover, with Heraclitus we have the first literary reference to the Delphic maxim “know thyself” (DK22B.101, 116), and there are also a number of references in Heraclitus to self-knowledge (DK 22B101, 112, 113, 116), the unexamined life (B123), care of the self (B123), and the psuchê as the “true self” (B118, 77). Indeed, there is a considerable affinity with what we find in Socrates. Or better still, the “historical” Socrates comes across as less of a maverick when we give Heraclitus his due.

Parmenides, to whom Socrates also refers, was the first to explicitly claim that his philosophical investigation came to him from a goddess (daimonos 28B1.3; thea B1.22). But I’d like to comment on what he calls “the opinion of mortals” in the second part of his poem (28B1.29-30). First, Parmenides postulated a divinity (daimôn) which governs (kubernain) all things from the centre (en mesôi, 28B12.3). The divinity is thus a separate cause of motion (28B12), and it is situated in the centre of a spherical universe (28B8.44). Second, Parmenides was first person in history as far as we know to understand that the moon derives its light from the sun (B14, 15). This speaks to his engagement in “empirical” research. Putting these two ideas together suggests that, for Parmenides, a divinity could be a source of inspiration only for a person willing to observe the world and use reason to understand it. Was Socrates looking for anything different at this point in his career?

Alcmeon of Croton provides the first arguments for the connection between soul and movement (DK24A12; B2). His argument is that whatever is eternal is divine; soul (psuchê) is eternally in motion (as are the sun, the moon, the stars, and the entire heavens, DK24A12; 30); therefore, soul is divine (DK24A12 = Aristotle, On the Soul 405a29). Meanwhile, Alcmeon claims (B2; A5) that what distinguishes humans from other animals is that we are endowed with consciousness or understanding, which is the result of having the capacity to combine all the sensations (xunienai from xunienêi literally “to put together”). But Alcmeon makes another claim as well. He contends that what distinguishes humans from the gods (theoi) is that the latter have an immediate knowledge of all things mortal and immortal, whereas the former are restricted to conjecture (hôs anthrôpois teknairesthai B1.4 = Diogenes Laertius VIII.85). And Alcmeon makes it abundantly clear that god and/or gods think (logôi tôi ta hola dioikounti, DK22B72, 30, 66).

33 He also makes a respectful reference to the famous oracle: “The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign” (22B93 trans Kahn; see also B92).
34 For Heraclitus psuchê or “soul” is both a cognitive principle and the carrier of the “true self” (B115, see also B118, 119, 45, 77, 101).
35 It is worth noting that Parmenides gives a physical interpretation of how the human mind works in B16, but this does not exclude a telos.
36 Aristotle claims he has much the same view on soul as Thales, Heraclitus, and Diogenes of Apollonia (On the Soul 405a29).
37 The contention is that Alcmeon is arguing that the soul is self-moving (auto-kinêton, Aetius IV.2.2 = DK24A12). This, of course, makes us also think of Plato’s arguments for the immortality of the soul in the Phaedrus (245c) and Laws 10 (891e).
38 The other animals have sensation without consciousness. Aristotle concurs with Alcmeon that thinking and sensation are not the same (On the soul 427a19ff).
have consciousness, and thus an active nous. That they have immediate knowledge of all things (and are thus omniscient) implies that, like Plato’s providential divinity in *Laws* 10, they never cease to care for their creation. Finally, we have Alcmeon’s famous contention that humans die because, unlike the celestial bodies, they cannot join the beginning and the end (DK24B2 = Aristotle *Problamata* 916a33).

Empedocles describes in some detail Love’s creative powers and superior intelligence (Sedley 2007, 57). In conjunction, he recognizes, as we see with the famous lantern analogy (DKB84), how and why love invented particular constructions to perform particular functions. Moreover, in Empedocles’ cosmological system there is a clear correlation between man and the universe. It is not by chance that Empedocles insists “all things have wisdom (*phronēsin*) and a portion of thought” (*nômato*) (B110). In conjunction, it is worth noting that praying and sacrificing for Empedocles require not only a pure conscience, but also that we use our divine intelligence (*theiôn prapidôn* B132).

Dans cette communication, j’examine les références historiques dans le passage “autobiographique” du *Phédon* (96a-99d) qui décrit l’enthousiasme du jeune Socrate pour « la science de la nature » (*peri phuseōs historia*, 96a7). Bien que beaucoup d’encre ait coulé sur ce passage, on n’a pas porté assez d’attention sur la période qui pourrait être couverte par l’expression « dans ma jeunesse » (*neos ôn*, 96a6). Selon moi, la période à laquelle renvoie ce mot, mise en rapport avec les réflexions de Socrate dans le *Phédon*, nous donne des indices surprenants sur la vie du jeune Socrate.

Je commence avec les doutes manifestés par certains interlocuteurs de Socrate sur la possibilité de démontrer l’immortalité de l’âme. Plutôt que de renoncer à l’argumentation, Socrate indique que leur réaction doit les mener à s’interroger sur la cause (*aitia*) qui préside à la génération et à la corruption (95e-96a1). Concernant l’*aitia* de la génération et de la corruption, qui est reliée à la question sur l’origine de la vie, et donc sur l’âme, Socrate indique qu’il souhaite évoquer son expérience personnelle (*pathê*) sur le sujet (96a2-3). Le récit de Socrate remonte à l’époque de sa jeunesse (*neos ôn*, 96a6) – à une époque où il était passionné pour ce savoir (*sophia*) qu’on appelle « science de la nature » (*peri phuseōs historia*, 96a7).

J’essaie d’abord de montrer que le mot *neos* fait ici référence à l’époque où Socrate était un adolescent, et donc à une période antérieure à 450 av. J.C. J’indique que cette hypothèse est confirmée par la référence « historique »la plus ancienne à Socrate – celle fournie par Ion de Chios (c. 480–421 av. J.C.), un prosateur et dramaturge. Dans ses Épidémies ou *Visites* qui décrivent ses rencontres avec des citoyens «extraordinaires», Ion indique que, alors que Socrate était un *neos*, il se rendit avec Archélaus à Samos (*neon onta eis Samon sun Archelaôî apodêmêsaî, FGrHist 260 F11). Après avoir mis cette information en perspective, je donne un résumé des positions rivales sur l’origine de la vie / de l’âme et de la pensée chez les «philosophes de la nature» explicitement mentionnés dans le passage autobiographique. Je me pose également la question de savoir pourquoi Socrate a estimé que ces positions rivales l’ont laissé perplexe.

Enfin, j’examine l’enthousiasme initial que Socrate a eu pour le naturalisme d’Anaxagore et sa désillusion. Je fais valoir que la critique que Socrate élève contre Anaxagore n’est pas entièrement justifiée car il y en a beaucoup d’éléments dans la cosmologie d’Anaxagore qui relèvent d’une position « téléologique ». Plus
généralement, je fais valoir que tel est le cas pour tous les philosophes de la nature que Socrate passe en revue dans le passage autobiographique. Même si tous offrent une explication matérialiste pour la pensée et / ou l’âme et la vie, on trouve des références implicites ou explicites à la téléologie dans leurs récits. Je donne plusieurs exemples dans un addendum. En fin de compte, le passage autobiographique nous donne plusieurs indices étonnants sur l’origine et le développement de l’expérience intellectuelle de Socrate.

Bibliography


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In *Phaedo* 100b-107a, it offers a prominent and difficult argument on immortality of soul that endorses method of hypothesis. In this part, the intersection of theory of Form\(^1\) and immortality of soul is significant. It is essentially distinctive from the argument of immortal soul in the *Meno*. In particular, although there is no explicit statement on Form of Soul in the arguments of immortal soul, I argue that it still induces the question of whether there is a Form of Soul participated by individual souls. Considering the method of hypothesis, the question would be whether it is necessary to hypothesize Form of Soul with the purpose to make a successful argument on immortal souls. In prior to that question, why is it necessary to posit an extra entity of soul, in addition to human body? After all, even Plato himself probably has no definite answer to the question whether there is Form for everything. Do the arguments in the *Phaedo* leave room for the idea that souls are not forms, but are intelligible, indestructible and partless? I vision that there are diverse possibilities for describing the relationship between the argument of immortal soul in the end and postulation of Form of Soul. First, Plato has adopted the hypothesis of Form of Soul implicitly and this hypothesis results in the failure of the argument. Second, Plato has used the hypothesis implicitly and it has no major responsibility for the failure of the argument. Third, Plato does not make the hypothesis because he intentionally decides so, in order to make a better argument. Lastly, whether the hypothesis is implied in the argument or not has nothing to do with the actual argument made at the end of the *Phaedo*. It would be difficult to answer these questions from a teleological perspective. The comments and textual analysis of the relationship between immortality of souls and Form of Soul only emerge occasionally. More than a century ago, Archer-Hind and Burnet took contrary stances on this topic. Archer-Hind commented that idea of soul is a metaphysical monstrosity but it is not a sufficient reason to avoid it in the argument of *Phaedo*.\(^2\) Burnet apparently disagreed with Archer-Hind: there is no word of Form of Soul in the text; no such assumption is required.\(^3\) About half a century ago, R. Hackforth discovered that there is a change of the status of soul from “Soul as Form” to “soul as possessor of Form” in the course of the argument for immortal soul.\(^4\) Based on his suggestion, Keyt argued that Plato is likely to treat the soul to be immanent form or at least to be one. He further pointed out that a fallacy of the argument for immortal soul is a consequence of treating soul as if it were a form by Plato.\(^5\) Against the views from Hackforth and Keyt, S. Jerome attempted to refute the proposal that the soul is construed as Form in the disputative argument for immortal soul.\(^6\) In the recent years, Brian Prince has contributed a comprehensive paper to argue for the implicit function of Form of Soul in the immortality argument of *Phaedo*. He argued firstly that a Form of Soul must be one of the Forms Socrates would be prepared

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1 In the paper, “Form” refers to transcendent Form; “form” refers to immanent form. The usages are also applied to specific names of Forms and forms.


3 Burnet (1911), p.123.


to recognize. What is more, he insists that the final argument for immortality of soul turns out considerably weaker on reading if it denies a Form of Soul. It would be much weaker to the extent that strong justification, on the contrary, would be required for taking the argument this way. Prince's paper is a response to D. Dixsaut's different view that is against the existence of Form of Soul. Monique Dixsaut notes that there is no argument in so many words that souls can never be participating in the Form of Soul. The fact that there are not so many discussions on Form of Soul of *Phaedo* may largely stem from a lack of textual evidence in the dialogue. Thus, it can be too problematic to guess the philosophical significance of a word that Plato has failed to use. Nevertheless, I maintain that the investigation into the relationship between the argument for immortality and Form of Soul possesses its own unique significance of Platonic philosophy. On one hand, it can contribute to our reflection on theory of Form and theory of soul respectively, since it is relevant to a series of questions within the ranges of the two theories such as range of Form or structure of soul. On the other hand, I suppose that the relationship between the argument for immortality and Form of Soul is a potential evidence for supporting rejection to the unsatisfactory view of developmentalism of Platonic dialogues. Temporarily at this stage, I have a main concern with the relationship of Plato's ideas of *Meno, Phaedo and Republic*. At least, I do not think that the developmentalism can be taken for granted in every distinctive part of the three dialogues, especially the parts of structure of human soul and arguments for immortality of soul.

In this short paper I mainly locate my discussion in between the dispute of Dixsaut and Prince. Instead of adopting one argumentative strategy of deciding Plato's range of Form, I propose to develop Prince's argument for Form of Soul following immediately the arguments of the last session of his paper. As mentioned above, Dixsaut suggests that for reconstructing Plato's final argument in the text it is required to argue: a soul can never stop participating in the idea of soul. She points out that Plato never addresses this question in the *Phaedo* or elsewhere. Thus, she further rejects a possibility that a form soul is involved in any part of the argument of immortality. Prince holds a view that is partly against Dixsaut's claim. Prince argues in detail that the scope of the theory of Form in the *Phaedo* includes Form of Soul and the final unsuccessful argument on immortality as a whole involves Form of Soul. The denial of Form of Soul will simply make the failed argument weaker. His analysis divides the argument on immortality into Phase A (102a-105e) and Phase B (105e-107a). Then he argues that Form of Soul is efficiently involved in Phase A that is itself a successful argument. As to Phase B that contains obviously inadequate and unsuccessful arguments, he indicates that his analysis is not entirely conflicted with Dixsaut's previous claim that soul is responsible for the failure of the second part of the argument. However, I find his interpretation of Phase B less convincing and his response to the argument given by Dixsaut unsatisfactory. Even though I would agree with Dixsaut that there is no trace of the argument that souls can never stop participating in the form of soul, I think both her core claim and Prince's response, if mutually supportive, may be sufficiently refuted by newly analyzing the concept of Form of Soul and its function in Phrase B (B suggested by Prince). Prince adopts a strategic response to Dixsaut's claim by partly neglecting Form of Soul in Phrase B too soon. He concludes as follows: if souls should stop participating in the form of soul, they would no longer necessarily participate in the Form of Life; if they stopped the participation in the Form of Life, they might then turn to the participation in the Form of Destruction. I will argue that we can come up with a better or more complete response to Dixsaut and some more objections in this part.
To begin with, I want to examine Prince's claim that the unsuccessful argument for immortality turns out considerably weaker on reading denying a Form of Soul. The examination will be conducted in a comparative way with the argument for immortality in the *Meno*. Admittedly, a general thought would be that the argument for immortality of soul is merely a supplementary role in the *Meno*. That is, without theory of recollection expressing that soul has been born many times, the argument for immortality alone is insufficient to support *Meno*’s central point on knowledge. It is also generally thought that the theory of recollection in the *Meno* is a pre-figuration of theory of Form in the *Phaedo*. My comparison is apparently a choice of a new angle. In order to analyze whether the absence of the hypothesis of Form of Soul would seriously weaken the final argument of *Phaedo*, my strategy is to see the difference between immortality argument without any Form and the one having Form of life and death in the first place. The second step is a return to examining *Phaedo*’s immortality arguments with or without Form of Soul. The argument for immortality in the *Meno* appears in the context of theory of recollection. To be more specific, it appears after Socrates’ demonstration of theory of recollection with a slave boy by practicing inquiry of mathematical knowledge. The argument may be generalized as follows:

1. The slave boy without instruction can recover knowledge from within himself by recollection.
2. Either the boy acquired the knowledge he recollects earlier or he has always been in possession of the knowledge.
3. If he acquired it, he did not acquire it while he was a human.
4. Therefore, he must have had knowledge while he was not a human.
5. He is always a human or not a human.
6. Therefore, it is always the case that his soul is in a state of having known.
7. Therefore, the soul is immortal.

From the argument it is clear that Socrates is arguing for immortality of individual souls. This temporary argument of immortality of soul subsequent to the slave boy demonstration is very weak, as is becoming evident in comparison of *Phaedo*’s immortality argument. The argument in *Meno*, despite on individual soul’s immortality, is led by the idea of knowledge. The second point in the argument is showing a bifurcation of conditions for completing the arguments. The condition of having recollected knowledge earlier and that of always having knowledge will determine the following directions of the arguments in different ways. Since it is an argument led by the relation of knowledge to a human, introducing a primary idea of Soul as One would not be helpful to strengthen it, let alone the theory of Form such as Form of Soul. On the contrary, what might be able to supplement the argument in *Meno* is an idea of indestructibility. The argument has drawn a too hasty conclusion that the soul is immortal after the statement that soul is always in a state of having known. What determines this hasty inference is actually the implicit element of constant reincarnation from the theory of recollection. However, an objection to *Meno*’s argument for immortality may state that the immortal soul does not yet avoid being destroyed at certain time. The condition of possession of knowledge is too weak to diminish this objection. What is more, the word “always” in the argument can be interpreted in different ways. As the argument in *Meno* places most emphasis on knowledge, it fails to offer us adequate characterizations of individual souls or Soul as One. Substantially its weakness is not a consequence of lack of theory of knowledge.*

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7 It remains controversial whether the word “knowledge” is an accurate conception to understand Platonic epistemology in *Meno*. Since my paper does not enter the dispute in this regard, I treat the usage of knowledge in neutral stance.

8 At 85d.-86b.
Form, while it shares a common problem of validating indestructibility with the argument for immortality in *Phaedo*.

Returning to the argument for immortality in *Phaedo*, Prince mentions at the very beginning that souls are immanent forms will imply the existence of transcendent Form of Soul. Accordingly, the question whether individual souls are transcendent Forms should not arise, even if souls are in some ways exceptionally alike to transcendent Forms. He further adds that individual souls cannot be transcendent Forms because the basic assumptions in the theory of Form would justify the immortality of the souls. Thus Plato would not need to take efforts to make these arguments of immortality. It occurs to me that the analysis of relationship between individual souls and transcendent Form is not fully satisfactory. In *Parmenides*, there is an interrogation about whether there are Form of Man, Fire or Water. And *Timaeus* provides a clear answer to the existence of Form of Man, Water and so on so forth. It is not easy for something to be immortal when it is composed of many elements and not composed in the most harmonious way. The soul in the *Phaedo* is simple. Free from the influence of developmentalism, the view that the soul is simple could be arguably in accordance with the theory of so-called tripartite soul of later dialogues, if we take the supposition that the soul in *Phaedo* is truly as soul within the composite structure of tripartite soul. Moreover, this soul of *Phaedo* as intelligible being is truly akin to a unified Form or say share certain similarities with the defined characters of Form in theory. However, it does not mean that for the soul to be Form there would be no necessity of completing warranted arguments from the perspectives of human beings.

The method to improve the arguments as a reply to Dixsaut is a reconsideration of the relation of Form of Soul to Form of Life and Form of Destruction with the help from the parallel structures of Socrates’ safe answer and sophisticated answer. The key conception for explaining the relation of the three posited Forms would be an activity of occupying or bringing in Prince’s translation. Prince may fail to notice the twist that the idea of occupying or bringing has changed at 105d3. This change is relevant to the relation of souls and Form of life due to application of sophisticated answer. The sophisticated answer acquired through the discussion of Form such as Form of Fever is used to argue for the necessary and permanent relation between the souls and Form of Life. Souls participate in the Form of life so long as they are souls. Thus souls are necessarily alive. If I were to argue for the safety of souls alive permanently, just as Plato also intends, one resolution would be the existence of Form of Soul. What if suddenly a soul turned away from the Forms towards the world of becoming? Dixsaut’s cast a doubt that there is no argument in so many words that souls can never stop participating in the Forms of Soul. As a matter of fact, Plato makes use of another argument from 105c11-107a1 and his Socrates’ arguments here seems to have caused very similar problems compared to the argument for immortality of *Meno*. In *Meno* we see the immortality of soul has not yet escaped from the problem of destruction. In this part of *Phaedo*, it is not valid to argue that souls being deathless are therefore indestructible. Could positing Form of Soul be helpful with the problem of destruction? I argue that positing Form of Soul in this situation would not be a meaningless attempt for Plato. It would not result in making an equivocation or unnecessary repetition of applying the features of Form in turn to a soul to prevent it from destruction. Considering the sophisticated answer, Form of Soul would not only work as occupying souls and making them as souls. The parallel statement at 104d1-7 and 105d3-5, with a demonstration of Form of Three in this part, reveals how Form of Soul might work in the same way. The structure of the exemplified argument for Dixsaut requires the participation of Form of Destruction. It is not a conflict with the relation between souls and Form.
Résumé

Le Phédon 100b-107a offre un argument difficile sur l’immortalité de l’âme qui implique une application de la méthode par hypothèse. A la page 106e4-5, Platon écrit, “En conséquence, lorsque la mort approche de l’homme, ce qu’il y a de mortel en lui meurt, à ce qu’il paraît, mais ce qu’il y a d’immortel se retire sain et sauf et incorruptible et cède la place à la mort.” Dans ce passage, la mort de la partie mortelle d’un homme ne veut pas dire ‘la mort de la mortalité.’ Dans cet article, je veux examiner comment la partie mortelle et la partie immortelle de l’âme subissent des changements au cours de la vie, avant l’après-vie. Je propose de discuter l’argument de l’immortalité en examinant le consensus général sur l’échec de l’argument de l’immortalité de l’âme dans le Phédon. Je soutiens que la solution dépend d’une compréhension du rôle exact de la forme intelligible de l’âme dans l’argumentation pour l’immortalité de l’âme.

Ces questions nécessitent une analyse complète de l’argument pour l’immortalité de l’âme aux lignes 100b-107a. Quelle est la relation entre l’immortalité des âmes individuelles et la forme intelligible de l’âme? Qu’est-ce que l’immortalité des âmes individuelles signifie face aux deux processus consistant en la mort de la partie mortelle et la survie de la partie immortelle qui échappe à la destruction? Quelle est la relation entre une forme intelligible de l’âme et “the failed phase” selon Brian Prince, après la ligne 105e de l’argument sur l’immoralité?

En ce qui concerne la forme intelligible de l’âme, Monique Dixsaut soutient que pour la reconstruction de l’argument final de Platon, il est nécessaire de faire valoir qu’une âme ne peut jamais cesser de participer à l’idée/forme intelligible de l’âme. Elle souligne que Platon ne traite nulle part de cette question dans le Phédon ou ailleurs. Ainsi, elle rejette qu’une forme intelligible de l’âme soit impliqué dans une quelconque partie de l’argument de l’immortalité. Brian Prince conteste une partie de la thèse de Dixsaut. Il fait valoir en détail que le champ d’application de la théorie des formes intelligibles dans le Phédon comprend une forme intelligible de l’âme. Si l’argument sur l’immortalité dans son ensemble échoue, l’argument néanmoins présuppose une forme intelligible de l’âme. Mais le refus de reconnaître une forme intelligible de l’âme ne fera que rendre l’argument encore plus faible. Son analyse divise l’argument dans une phase A (102a-105e) et un phase B (105e-107a). Même si je suis d’accord avec Dixsaut qu’il n’y a aucune trace de l’argument selon lequel les âmes ne peuvent jamais cesser de participer à la forme de l’âme, je pense que cette exigence, y compris la réponse de Brian, peuvent être réfutées en analysant le concept d’une forme intelligible de âme et sa fonction dans la phase B. Le réplique de Prince à Dixsaut n’est que stratégique et lui permet de négliger en partie une forme intelligible de l’âme dans la phase B. Je souhaite offrir une meilleure réponse.


References:
First Hypothesis in Plato's *Phaedo*

Nomura, Mitsuyoshi

1. Introduction

In this paper, I analyze the first hypothesis of the Forms compared with the second hypothesis (100b-c). I make very small comments on the other passages, in which Plato states Forms, and then read 100b-c passage. I use the Greek expression *aitia* because I cannot decide which is the proper translation for this, reason, cause, or explanation.

2. *Phaedo* 65d

T1:

Socrates: Do we say that there is something just, or nothing?

(*phamen ti einai dikaion auto èouden.*)

Simmias: Yes, we most certainly do.

Socrates: And again, something beautiful, and good?

Simmias: Of course.

Gallop translates “there is something …”. “Something just” is not among just things but the Form (*dikaion auto*). In this passage already, the interlocutor agrees the existence of Forms Just, Beautiful, and Good. Whether the verb “*einaí*” means existential or copula, the existence of Form Beautiful is an agreement or hypothesis for Simmias and Socrates.

3. *Phaedo* 74a

T2:

Socrates: We say, don’t we, that there is something equal—I don’t mean a log to a log, or a stone to a stone, or anything else of that sort, but some further thing beyond all those, the equal itself: are we to say that there is something or nothing?

(*phamen pou ti einai ison ... auto to ison.*)

Simmias: We most certainly are to say that there is, unquestionably.

Gallop translates “there is something …”. But he comments “the continuation ‘I don’t mean a log to a log, or a stone to a stone’ follows more naturally if ‘equal’ is taken predicatively” (p. 119). Inappropriate examples a log or a stone are equal to a log or a stone. I think that “*einaí*” can be taken existentially for the inappropriate examples a log or a stone, namely “I don’t mean that there is a log (which is) equal to a log but that there is something Equal, the Equal itself”. The context says that the Form Equal is Form as *paradeigma*, rather than as *aitia*. After the passage cited (T2) Socrates compares the Form Equal and equal things, they are not the same, the Form Equal never seems unequal, equal things fall short of it (*endei ti ekeinou*). As *paradeigma* every Form *F* is perfectly *F* whereas *F*-things are not perfectly *F*. So T2 states the existence of the Form or self-predication of the Form.

4. *Phaedo* 100b-c

Now we see the *Phaedo* 100b-c. The broad context of this passage is a final proof for immortality of soul. Socrates uses Forms for this purpose: just as every Form will never admit an opposite character, so soul, which brings life to body, will never admit the opposite character, namely death. The narrower context is Forms as reasons/causes/explanations (*aitiai*). Socrates in his youth seeks the *aitia* for coming-to-be and destruction and being (*peri geneseós kai phthoras tēn aitian*,
95e10; *tas aitias hekastou, dia ti gignetai hekaston kai dia ti apollutai kai dia ti esti,* 96a8-9; *di’ hoti gignetai è apollutai è esti,* 97b4-5). But he rejects the explanation by natural science and is disappointed at Anaxagoras’ intelligence (*nous*), which seemed to Socrates to be the “first and last” voyage. In fact, Anaxagoras’ *nous* is not true *nous* nor true *aitia*!

So Socrates goes on to start his second voyage stating two hypotheses, which reasonably state *aitia*.¹ The first one is about Form *F* as *aitia* and the second one is about *F*-things in relation to Form *F*.² Those are as follow (translation is by Gallop [1975]):

H1. a beautiful, itself by itself, is something, and so are a good and a large and all the rest (100b6-7).

H2. if anything else is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no reason at all other than that it participates in that beautiful; and the same goes for all of them (100c4-6). It is by the beautiful that (all) beautiful things are beautiful (100d7-8; e2-3).

The verb *einai* (*hupothemenos einai ti kalon*, 100b6) in H1 is interpreted syntactically either as (A) existential or as (B) copula (identity/predicate), further as (B1) the subject is something (*ti*) and the complement beautiful (*kalon*) or as (B2) the subject is a beautiful (*kalon*) and the complement something (*ti*). H1 above is by interpretation B2 (Gallop [1975], p. 182). Perhaps some passages like T1 and T2 have the alternative “or nothing” (*ēouden* (mēden), 65d5, 74a12), so *ti* and *ouden* seem to be complements³ (B2). “Just is something or nothing?” But I prefer B1 (“something is Just or nothing is Just?”). Anyway, if we read the second hypothesis H2 and compare the two hypotheses, we will get to a proper interpretation.

4.1. Existential Proposition in Formal Logic
In formal logic we read existential proposition (1) *Ex A(x)* as⁴:
(2) there exists *x* such that *A(x)*, or
(3) for some *x* *A(x)*.

The latter is very similar to particular proposition in traditional logic:
(4) *some* *S* is *P*.

We can translate this into formal logic as:
(5) *Ex (S(x) and P(x))*.

“*S*” is no longer a subject but a predicate in formal logic (predicate logic!).⁵ In this way, existential “to be” (= to exist) and “some” (*ti*) are equivalent. In ordinary language we use many expressions for one purpose and one expression has many interpretations. We say “something is ……”, “some … is ……”, “…… is something”, and also “there is ……” for one purpose. Only the last “is” is existential use. So what is important is not whether the verb “to be” is existential or not, but what more connotation Plato makes in the first hypothesis, e.g. the existence of Forms plus their separation from the sensible world, or plus their independence of the sensible world, or plus their self-*aitianess* unlike *F*-things in the sensible world. The key is not use of “to be”, but the expression “by itself” (*kath’ hauto*, 100b6).

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¹ The Forms are *aitiae*, but second voyage (second best) ones compared with *nous*.
² *F*’s are “Beautiful” (*kalon*), “Good” (*agathon*), and “Large” (*mega*) and all the rest (*talla ta panta*). Plato uses “Large” or “Larger” in the following argument. But we concentrate the property “Beautiful”.
³ Many take *phanten ti einai* … or *kaleis ti einai* … literally as “something is ……” (B1) or “… is something (or nothing)” (B2) but translate “there exists ……” (A).
⁴ “*E*” in *Ex A(x)* is an existential quantifier (turned E is usually used) and “*A(x)*” is any formula.
⁵ Subject is variable *x*, which has no content.
4.2. An Interpretation of the First Hypothesis in Comparison with the Second Hypothesis

We see the second hypotheses (H2). First it does not state that there exists a beautiful thing (besides the Beautiful itself) but that it is beautiful. Even if the protasis of H2 (ei ti estin allo kalon, 100c4) is existential statement, the apodosis of H2 is certainly not so because the restatements in 100d7-8 and e2-3 have both a subject and a complement (“all the beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful”, tōi kalōi panta ta kala kala and tōi kalōi ta kala gignetai kala). Therefore, H1 is also not existential statement in comparison with H2. Of course, the existence of the Beautiful itself is necessary hypothesis for any predication of the Beautiful itself. I call it the zeroth hypothesis (H0).6 But what is more important is that H1 has more content in this context.

Second in H2 “the words ‘besides the beautiful itself’ clearly implies that the Form Beautiful is beautiful” (Gallop [1975], p. 182). H2 implicitly states that the beautiful itself is beautiful if we read “besides the beautiful itself” (plēn auto to kalon) carefully. It is self-predication for the Form Beautiful. But we take that H1 explicitly states the Form Beautiful (the beautiful itself, auto to kalon, 100c4-5; ekeino to kalon, 100c5-6, d5; to kalon, 100d7, e2) is beautiful. Even if we take “to be” (einaî, 100b6) in H1 existential like “there is ti kalon auto kath’ hauto”, it also states self-predication. For if someone asks us about ti (namely the Form), we answer it is beautiful by itself. “Beautiful” (kalon) in the Form (of) Beautiful is not only a name, it works as a predicate for the Form. In other words if we translate H1 into formal logic as an existential proposition: Ex (x is kalon auto kath’ hauto), we see self-predication. Of course, self-predication of Forms is problematic, especially for some properties, such as Large, Two, and Many. But for Plato (Socrates) it is not problematic in this passage.

Third H2 states the aitia (reason/cause/explanation) for being beautiful. The expressions are dia + accusative (dihoti-clause) (oude di’ hen allo è dihoti ... , 100c5) or dative (tōi kalōi, 100d7, e2) or the subject of poiein (ouk allo ti poiei auto kalon è hē ekeinou tou kalou ... parousia ... , 100d5). And there are two types of aitia interchangeable: noun-structure like tōi kalōi and proposition-structure like dihoti metechei ekeinou tou kalou (100c5-6; or quasi-proposition-structure like parousia (koinōnia, methexis) ekeinou tou kalou). The purpose of H2 is to say that the true aitia for its being beautiful is the beautiful itself or its participation in the beautiful itself, not a blooming colour or a shape, or having a blooming colour or a shape (ē chrōma euanthes echon ē schēma, 100d1). The latter contains a contradiction, e.g., that one man is larger than another by (because of) a small head. The beautiful itself does not contain a contradiction, nor admit an opposite property. So this explanation is very useful for the immortality of soul. Soul brings life and never admits the opposite of life, namely, death. Analogy is as follows:

the beautiful itself (immanent character) : soul
= things : bodies (=beautiful things : bodies alive)
= beautiful/ugly : alive/dead.7

But while shape is intelligible for explanation of being beautiful (pseudo-one

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6 Of course, H0 is not a hypothesis other than H1, but H1 includes H0, namely the existence of the Forms.

7 Strictly speaking, soul is like fire or snow (not hot or cold, Forms) and like one or two (not odd or even). It is a different kind of safeness. The former safeness has the same name (synonymy), e.g., beautiful: the beautiful itself is always beautiful and never admits the opposite character. But the latter safeness does not have the same name: fire-hot, two-even, and soul-living (zon, 105c8; zōen, 105d4) do not have the same name, but fire, two, and soul never admit cold, odd, and death respectively.
for Plato), how can we understand the beautiful itself? Of course, we cannot get an adequate definition (logon didonai) of the beautiful itself, but we nevertheless need some descriptions of it, at least, as aitia for their being beautiful. H1 is exactly for this purpose, explicitly with kath’ hauto. Not only does there exist the beautiful itself (H0, which is of course necessary hypothesis), but the beautiful itself is also beautiful (self-predication). Moreover the aitia by which the beautiful itself is beautiful is the beautiful itself (self-aitia). The words auto kath’ hauto (100b6) correspond not with einai but with kalon, the predicate kalon. It is true that kath’ (kata) is not the same expression as dia, which means aitia, but I think that in this passage kath’ (kata) and dia are the same meaning, both mean aitia, and that it is pointless here to take auto kath’ hauto with einai, e.g., as separate or independent existence.

This passage does not assume so-called “Non-Identity Assumption” in the Third Man Argument, but rather H1 includes Identity Assumption (which I call it): it is not that the aitia for x’s being F must be the same as x (for all x), but that the aitia for x’s being F can be the same as x; more strictly only in the cases of Forms and with the corresponding properties F, e.g., the beautiful itself (x = the beautiful itself; F = beautiful), the aitia for x’s being F must be the same as x while in all the other cases the aitia for x’s being F must not be the same as x. Therefore, I take (hupothemenos) einai ti kalon auto kath’ hauto as follows: ti is a subject, einai is a copula, kalon is a predicate, and auto kath’ hauto correspond with kalon and indicate self-aitia. H1 must be read as follows: “something” is beautiful just because of itself”. The beautiful itself, with three descriptions, namely its existence, self-predication, and self-aitia, is more intelligible for H1 compared with H2 than only with an existence-description.

4.3. Why does Plato Need Self-aitiai of the Forms?

But then why does Plato need self-aitiai of the Forms? First the context before this passage is a search for the aitia for coming-to-be and destruction and being. Second the context after this passage is a proof for immortality of soul. Soul always brings body to life, and so never admits death. Plato uses Forms for this proof. Beautiful things (persons), on the one hand, are not always beautiful and sometimes admit ugliness. They are beautiful when (iff) they participate in the Form Beautiful, and not beautiful when (iff) they do not participate in the Form Beautiful. But the Form Beautiful, on the other hand, is always beautiful and never admits the opposite character, ugliness. For it is beautiful because of itself. Plato does not say whether the Form participates in itself or not. See the expression “besides the beautiful itself” (plēn auto to kalon) in H2, participation is only for F-things, not for the Forms. If we take auto kath’ hauto as separation or independence of the Form, we cannot have that the Form is always F and never admits the opposite character, G-ness. That is why Plato needs self-aitia of the Forms here.

5. Conclusion

The first hypothesis states three descriptions of the Forms: their existence, self-predication, and self-aitia. We read kalon auto kath’ hauto in this way. The second

8 We distinguish Forms and individuals (variables) with capital and small letters.

Individuals x: x is F not because of the same x (but because of the Form X).

9 Grammatically auto (in auto kath’ hauto) is intensive use and refers to ti, and ti, kalon, and auto are accusatives in hupothemenos einai structure.

10 ti indicates the beautiful itself (etc.) after all.

11 See also the previous note on soul and fire/snow.

12 If we take auto kath’ hauto as separation or independence, we cannot conclude that the Form is always F and never admits the opposite character, G-ness.
hypothesis states a different mode of aitia, namely the participation in the Forms. Plato uses two hypotheses for a proof for immortality of soul. The self-aititianess contributes the refusal of the opposite character.

Bibliography

In *Phaidon* 100b-c Sokrates sagt zu Kebes zwei Hypothesen (Übersetzung von Schleiermacher, Reclam 1970):

H1. es ein Schönes an sich gibt und ein Gutes und Großes usw.
H2. wenn nämlich irgens etwas anderes schön ist außer jenem An-sich-Schönen, so ist es meiner Ansicht nach aus keinem anderen Grunde schön, als weil es an jenem Schönen teilhat.
(100b5-7, 100c4-6)

In diesem Artikel analysiere ich die erste Hypothese (H1) in 100b-c. H1 heißt nicht nur die Existenz (”es gibt” in H1 oben) der Idee sondern auch die Selbst-Prädikation und die Selbst-aitia.

[1] H2 sagt daß etwas schön in diesen Welt ist schön weil es an jenem Schönens teilhat (*metechei*). Ich bemerke in H2 “außer jenem An-sich-Schönen” (*plēn auto to kalon*). Diese heißt daß An-sich-Schönen (*auto to kalon*) ist auch schön (Selbst-Prädikation) aber nicht durch Partizipation (*methexis*).


1. A tension in the *Phaedo*

Death is a central concern in philosophy. While we suppose that we know what death is (except about *when* it comes) and fear it, we must be aware of our own ignorance about it (Ap. 29a-b). Therefore, when Simmias bursts into laughter at Socrates’ claim that genuine philosophers are practising death, he replies that ordinary people are totally unaware of what it really means (*Phd.* 64a-c). Philosophy, by contrast, makes us face death in the aspiration for living well. In this respect, Socrates becomes a model of how to *die*.

The *Phaedo* depicts the death of Socrates in the spring of 399 BC. This event was so important for Plato that the dialogue with this special dramatic setting is expected to show how he understands the philosophy of his master. He explains it as ‘practice of death’. The dialogue is a double project. Plato, on the one hand, tries to reveal the essence of Socrates’ philosophy, and on the other hand, forwards his own philosophy in order to demonstrate how he takes over his master’s mission. Hence, to understand the *Phaedo* is to approach the heart of Plato’s philosophy in relation to Socrates.

In this paper, I suggest that a key to interpretation is the close connection between the soul and the Forms. Yet, we must be aware of a certain tension between the two. On the one hand, it is usually assumed that Socrates is one of the first thinkers who emphasized the ethical importance of the ‘soul’ (ψυχή) as the true self. The word had been used for a vague entity before, like a ghost in Homer; therefore, Aristophanes mocked Socrates in his comedies for the introduction of the new meaning.1 This historical aspect accords with the main project of the *Phaedo*. As the traditional subtitle of this dialogue indicates, its main theme is ‘On soul’ (Περὶ ψυχῆς).2 Socrates converses with his friends on death, and the immortality of the soul.

On the other hand, the *Phaedo* is assumed to be one of the main dialogues (possibly the first) that present Plato’s own theory of transcendent Forms. Aristotle reports in the *Metaphysics* (A6, M4, 9) that Socrates did not separate the transcendental entities as Plato did. If we trust this report (though I take issue), the theory of Forms is exactly where Plato’s philosophy departs from Socrates’.

If one assumes that the two themes, i.e. soul and Forms, are independent and asks us which the main theme is, we will be at a loss. Seeing this tension, we must seek for a unity in order to understand philosophy as ‘practice of death’. In this paper, I will clarify the relation between the Socratic ‘soul’ and the Platonic ‘Forms’.

2. Reconsidering the theory of Forms

To start with, I’ll make a preliminary consideration on the theory of Forms. Although people acknowledge the theory, proposed mainly in Plato’s middle dialogues, as a major contribution to the history of philosophy, few philosophers ascribe to it any actual role in contemporary philosophy. It seems to be treated as a bizarre doctrine that ignores our reality. Against this attitude, I think it necessary to first understand the theory of Forms, not within our modern framework, but from Plato’s own thinking.3

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1 *Aves* 1553-64, ψυχαγωγεῖ Σωκράτης (1553); *Nubes* 94, 151, 319, 415, 420, 712, 719, 1049, 1051.
2 Since this title appears in the (spurious) *13th Letter* (363a), it may have been used already in the time of Plato, or perhaps given by Plato himself.
The theory has long been a target of severe criticisms by many philosophers, from Aristotle on. A major criticism is that the Forms are redundant metaphysical entities, added unnecessarily to this world; therefore, the theory is mistaken. This type of criticism appears frequently in the history. In the First Book of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle argues that Plato adds extra entities to the things in our world by positing ‘one Form over many things’. This point seems to aim, for example, at the hypothesis of Forms in the *Phaedo*. Socrates first hypothesises that the ‘beautiful itself by itself’, that is, the Form of the beautiful, exists, and, next, that ‘if anything else is beautiful besides the beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no reason at all other than that it participates in that beautiful’ (100b-c). Here Socrates appears to add an extra entity to things already existent in our world. According to the principle of the economy of thought, the treatment of Forms as separate entities is unphilosophic and a mistake. This criticism was repeated in the history of philosophy. Before judging its validity, we should note on what assumptions this criticism is based.

First, we find Aristotle and his followers standing firm on the empiricist basis in considering the reality. This particular man or horse is a primary being (οὐσία), while kinds like ‘man’, ‘horse’ and ‘animal’ are secondary. Accordingly, he regards mathematical objects as mere abstracts from concrete things, in contrast with Plato, who places them in a higher level than sensible things. Generally speaking, the empiricist position is reluctant to admit anything other than what we experience in this world with our body.

Next, modern philosophers are more inclined to accept this criticism because of another assumption of epistemology. In modern philosophy, the cognitive subject ‘I’ is fixed as the sole viewpoint from which I perceive objects and experience the world (e.g. Descartes’ ‘ego’ or ‘res cogitans’, Kant’s ‘Apperzeption’ or ‘Ich selbst’, or Husserl’s ‘transzendentale Subjektivität’).

These assumptions together raise a severe criticism of the Forms. If the cognitive subject is fixed as self-identical, and if the reality is what we experience in this world, then the Forms are nothing but abstract objects postulated in vain. They are deemed redundant, and the theory turns out erroneous. Seen from this empiricist and modern epistemological point of view, Plato’s dualism is simply doubling the realities.

But is this correct? What is missing in modern epistemology is a possibility of change or transformation of ‘I’. In accordance with different experiences, we ourselves may change. And in accordance with different cognitive states, the world may also change. I argue that this is exactly what the *Phaedo* tries to show.

Before repudiating the transcendent entities, we should consider the possibility of transformation of ourselves. If the subject ‘I’ changes or is transformed through experiences, the dualism or ‘two-world theory’ of Plato’s metaphysics may make good sense. The two worlds -- the sensible and the intelligible -- should correspond to the two cognitive stages of our experience; the former is cognised by the embodied soul and the latter by the purified soul. Then, we can understand the theory of Forms as the basis for our experience of transcendence.

3. The double sense of ‘separation’

To understand the Forms in the *Phaedo*, we must examine ‘separation’ (χωρισμός) of intelligible things from sensible things. Aristotle in *Metaphysics* M4 and 9 sees the starting point of Plato’s original philosophy in ‘separating the universals’. But in Plato’s dialogues, the word ‘separation’ is not used in the context of discussing the Forms, except that the adverb ‘apart’ (χωρίς) appears in the criticism of the theory in the first part of the *Parmenides* (130b-d). Nevertheless, the phrase ‘itself by itself’ (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτό, cf. *Phd*. 65d-66a, 100b, etc.), expressing the ontological status of Forms, signifies ‘separation’. So I think Aristotle’s report that the concept of ‘separation’ has established the theory of Forms is basically correct.

‘Separation’ is an essential factor of the theory. The Forms are separated from many changing and conflicting states of affairs. We encounter in this world such conflicting 4 Some modern philosophers, for example, Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, consider this possibility.

appearance, that something is both just and unjust, or beautiful and ugly. But if we stand away from these confusing states, we will realise the absolute being of ‘just’ (Justice itself) or ‘beautiful’ (the Beauty itself) as separated from them. The Form of the beautiful, for example, is beautiful itself by itself (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό). Here ‘separation’ is twofold: it is separated from many beautiful things, on the one hand, and from the other Forms, such as Ugliness and Justice, on the other. Each Form exists by itself and is different from the others.6

We remember that this ‘separation’ is a focus of Aristotle’s criticism exactly because he believes that it produces the extra number of entities.7 Also, modern philosophers take issue with Plato by asking, for example, ‘Are there universals independently of sensible objects?’8 a question that arises from empiricist and modern epistemological thought. But this question entirely misses Plato’s point.

Here, one crucial side of ‘separation’ is neglected. When Plato introduces the theory of Forms in the Phaedo, the words ‘apart’ (χωρίς) and ‘separation’ (χωρισμός) are used in another way. Socrates explains philosophy as a practice of death, i.e. to separate the soul from the body as much as possible. Death is defined in terms of ‘separation’:

Is it anything else than the separation (τὴν ἀπαλλαγήν) of the soul from the body? Do we believe that being dead is this, namely, that the body comes to be, separated from (χωρίς ἀπὸ … ἀπαλλαγέν) the soul, alone by itself (αὐτὸ καθ’ ἄλλα) (67d). Moreover, Socrates says that the philosopher ‘does not concern himself with the body, but so far as he can, separates (ἀφεστάναι) himself from it, and concentrates upon the soul’ (64e).10

This separation enables the soul to reach the higher cognitive state called ‘wisdom’ (φρόνησις), concerning the Forms.

Well now, it really has been shown to us that if we’re ever going to know anything purely, we must be rid of it [sc. body], and must view the objects themselves with the soul by itself; it’s then, apparently, that the thing we desire and whose lovers we claim to be, wisdom, will be ours – when we have died, as the argument indicates, though not while we live. (66d-e)11

In this way, ‘separation’ characterises the soul in the Phaedo, while the same word also characterises the transcendent Forms. The double use of ‘separation’ connects two sets of items in the following way:

The separated object : what is separated from = Forms : sensibles = Soul : body

6 Yuji Matsunaga, ‘On the separation and participation of the Forms’ (in Japanese), in his Knowing and Not-Knowing, Tokyo University Press, 1993, most clearly demonstrates this structure.
7 On the other hand, Aristotle himself uses ‘separated’ (χωριστόν) as a criterion of substance (e.g. Metaph. Z3, 1029a27-28).
8 E.g. Gail Fine, ‘Separation’, in her Plato on Knowledge and Forms, Oxford University Press, 2003; originally in OSAP 2 (1984), pp.31-87; ‘If, as Aristotle and I believe, forms are universals, then to say that they are separate is to say they can exist uninstantiated by sensible particulars’ (p.32).
9 Cf. χωρισμός, 67d9, A: Plato uses this word only in these two places. See also χωρίς, 64c5, 6, 67a1, 76c12; χωρίζειν, 67c6, cf. 69b5 (relation between virtues and wisdom).
10 See also ἀπολύων, 65a1, φεύγει, 65d1.
11 Translations are from D. Gallop, Plato, Phaedo, Oxford University Press, 1975 (with minor changes).
The double use of the word ‘separation’ for the soul and the Form reveals the core of Plato’s philosophy. In trying to prove the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, Socrates repeatedly demonstrates a pair of theses, namely, that the soul exists itself in itself separated from the body, and that Forms exist themselves in themselves separated from the sensible. In the concluding remarks of the Recollection argument, for instance, he clarifies this joint proof:

‘Is it equally necessary (ἴση ἀνάγκη) that those objects [sc. Forms] exist, and that our souls existed before birth, and if the former don’t exist, then neither did the latter?’

‘It’s abundantly clear to me, Socrates,’ said Simmias, ‘that there’s the same necessity in either case.’ (76e)

Here they agree that the prenatal existence of the soul12 and the independent existence of the Forms have an equal necessity, for they are in similar states (ὁμοίως εἶναι, 76e-77a). In other words, the soul’s being alone by itself and the Forms’ being themselves by themselves stand or fall together. They are correlative.

4. Purification of the soul

This correlativity becomes a focus in the subsequent, Affinity argument (78b-84b). First, the soul (which is invisible) is proved to resemble the unchanging Forms, while the body (visible) is more like changing things (78c-79c). Since simple and unchanging things are free from decomposition, we do not have to worry about any destruction of the soul. Then, Socrates argues that the soul is dragged and confused by the body, while the soul, when it is separated from the body to be alone by itself, can observe the Forms (79c-d). The process of separation is called ‘purification’ (κάθαρσις, 67c5, 69c1; καθαρμός, 69c3, 82d6). On the other hand, the Forms themselves are known when they are separated from conflicting appearances of sensible objects in this world. The correlative state between the intellect and Forms is called ‘wisdom’ (φρόνησις).

However, the Affinity argument is often deemed too weak as a proof of the immortality of the soul. For commentators suggest that a mere resemblance of the soul to the unchanging beings does not guarantee its incorruptibility13. We should better expect another purpose of this argument.

Concluding that the soul does not vanish after death (80d), Socrates describes two types of the soul after death. On the one hand, the soul that engages in philosophy and practises separation during life will leave this world to spend a happy time in the invisible divine region, since it is released from human evils, such as folly and wild desires (80e-81a). On the other, the soul that departs from the body in a polluted and impure condition sticks to bodily things even after death (81a-c). Unpurified dead souls are portrayed as phantoms, which roam around graves (81c-d). This story shows us another aspect of ‘death’. Death is once defined as separation of soul and body, but it is now suggested that even after physical death (i.e. simple separation from the body) a soul can accompany bodily elements with him. One must separate the soul from the body and bodily things as much as possible.

Therefore, ‘practice of death’ may not end in physical death. Rather, philosophers always care to reach the ultimate state of purification (80e). The soul should be directed from visible things to the divine, which is akin to itself. This purification process must be the main message of the Affinity argument for the immortality of the soul. Philosophy as

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12 At this stage, the argument limits itself in the existence of the soul before birth, but as naturally expected, the existence of the soul after death is also proved in combination with the Cyclical argument (77a-d).

13 Especially C. J. Rowe criticizes this argument in ‘L’argument par “affinité” dans le Phédon’, *Revue philosophique* 181 (1991), and Plato, *Phaedo*, 215, 219. It is true that the later criticisms by Simmias and Celes target at the Affinity argument, but this shows its importance.
‘care for the soul’ means release and purification (82d), and the soul without philosophy remained chained with the body through desire and pleasures (84a). Socrates gives the following concluding observation on the philosopher’s soul:

‘Rather, securing rest from these feelings [sc. pleasures and pains], by following reasoning and being ever within it, and by beholding what is true and divine and not of the object of opinion, and being nurtured by it, it believes that it must live thus for as long as it lives, and that when it has died, it will enter that which is akin (τὸ συγγενές) and of like nature to them [sc. the true, the divine and the ἀδόξαστον], and be rid of human ills.’ (84a-b)

Thus, the Affinity argument provides an ethical explanation of ‘practice of death’ as philosophic purification.

5. Process of transcendence
The purification that consists of two ‘separations’, of the soul from the body and of the Forms from sensibles, makes a special experience:

**Structure of transcendence**
- Soul itself = intellect ... <wisdom> ... Forms: always being the same
- separation or purification ... conversion ... separation
- I: soul & body ... <sensation> ... Sensible things: “are and are not”

**Transformation of subject**
- Revelation of reality

In this diagram, our initial state is at the bottom: the embodied soul perceives sensible objects, which both are and are not so and so. Then, as the soul becomes aware of something beyond these, it is separated and eventually becomes the true soul, that is, the intellect. Then it observes and knows purely the Forms, which always are. This shift from the bottom to the upper stage is the double change of the subject and the reality. We may call this experience ‘transcendence’ in the traditional philosophical vocabulary.

The theory of Forms indicates not only the transcendence of the objects but also a transcending experience of the subject, namely ourselves. Therefore, although the Forms may appear to be unnecessary and a mistake to the embodied soul in the corporeal world, once it gets separated, the intelligible world of Forms is revealed as its proper objects. In other words, at the lower stage, we live everyday life with the bodily senses and opinions (δόξαι), but we can proceed to the higher stage where we contemplate the Forms with knowledge and wisdom.

As for separation, the verb ‘to separate’ (χωρίζειν) is transitive and requires the active subject. While Aristotle criticises Plato or Platonists for having separated (ἐχώρισαν, Metaph. M 4, 1078b31, cf. ἐχώρισε, M 9, 1086b4), Plato argues that we, philosophers, should separate the soul as much from the body as possible (χωρίζειν, Phd. 67c). Separation is correspondingly the philosophical pursuit of our soul’s revelation of the reality. The dynamic combination between the transformation of the soul and the revelation or transfiguration of the reality constitutes our transcending experience.

Transcendence occurs in two correlative sides. As our soul is purified and getting separated from the body as much as possible during life, the true reality, namely Forms, reveals itself in correspondence to our cognition. The separation can only be achieved by full engagement in philosophy during life.

Transcendence as transformation of the subject is a response to what Socrates proposes as ‘care for the soul’ in the Apology (29d-30b), since it means to convert from the bodily concerns to our true self. This corresponds to ‘practice of death’ in the Phaedo, which signifies the same conversion of the soul from various earthly things, such as property, honour, appearance, desire and body, to the true ‘self’. Moreover, the ‘conversion’ of the soul is fully discussed in the educational programme of Republic VII. In the transcendence, the soul becomes purified and getting separated from the body as much as possible during life, the true reality, namely Forms, reveals itself in correspondence to our cognition. The separation can only be achieved by full engagement in philosophy during life.
transformation of our soul into its original form, i.e. intellect, makes a complete change of views on reality. When the soul is awakened, the world looks totally different, and only then, the sensible experience seems like a dream. Accordingly, the dualism of Plato’s metaphysics turns out to be a dynamic process of going up to see the Forms and then coming back to the ordinary world.

However, in the *Phaedo*, the final argument of the immortality of the soul, based on the hypothesis of Forms (95e-107b), no longer resorts to the parallelism of the soul and Forms, nor to the cognitive relation between the former (subject) and the latter (object). Instead, the ontological status of the soul is discussed in the field of the transcendent Forms. The soul turns out to have an essential relation to ‘life’, so that it does not accept ‘death’ in any way. It is often pointed out that individual souls are not at issue in the final proof, unlike the earlier proofs. This shift of focus might indicate a further stage after purification. Now the soul looks like a Form, or rather it overlaps with the realm of the Forms. Six centuries later, Plotinus reformulated this idea to believe that the Intellect (νοῦς) is identical with the Forms.

6. The *Phaedo* as practicing philosophy

If this interpretation is correct, the theory of transcendent Forms is not just a doctrine about metaphysical entities, but a practice of our soul’s becoming the true self, as in death. The contemplation or ‘wisdom’ of the transcendent reality of Forms, in particular, those of important values (Good, Beauty, Justice, etc.), is at once the ground for our living well and the aim of philosophy.

To do philosophy is to realize our true self by going beyond ordinary experiences. Thus, Plato’s central massage of the *Phaedo* is that Socrates is the philosopher who practiced this purification in life and death. The conversation of death on his last day clearly demonstrates this truth.

Finally, the discourse (λόγος) of the *Phaedo* invites us, the readers, to this philosophy and changes our views. Therefore, reading this dialogue is a practice of ‘care for the soul’ and ‘practice of death’ for us, as well as for Socrates and Plato.15

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15 A part of this paper (sections 2 & 3) is revised from the unpublished paper ‘Metaphysics of the Transformation of the Soul’, read at the IPS Atlanta Meeting ‘Platonic Moral Realism’, on 15 March 2015.

Immortality and eternity: Cebes’ remark at Plato’s *Phaedo*  
106d2-4

Ogihara, Satoshi

In *Phaedo* 95e9-107a3 Socrates presents an argument by which to convince Cebes that the soul is ‘imperishable (anōlethron)’ or will never perish (the final argument in the dialogue). By 105e10 Socrates has had Cebes accept that the soul is ‘immortal (athanaton)’ in the sense that is peculiar to this argument. According to the standard interpretation, that is to say that the soul will not both remain a soul and become dead. So, as Socrates explains at 105e11-106d1, if Cebes further accepts that what is immortal is imperishable, the argument will be complete. Then it will run as follows.

[Major Premise]: What is immortal is imperishable.  
[Minor Premise]: The soul is immortal.  
[Conclusion]: The soul is imperishable.

And Cebes does accept the major premise. He also gives a reason for acceptance (106d2-4). Socrates concurs and gives a reason for concurring (d5-7), with which remark Cebes agrees (d8-9). Then Socrates draws the conclusion and secures Cebes’ assent (106e1-107a3). So ends the argument. As this overview of the final argument shows, Cebes’ acceptance of the major premise plays a crucial role. This in turn suggests that for the philosophical assessment of the final argument it is important to understand Cebes’ reason for accepting it as well as Socrates’.

However, there seems something puzzling both about the contention itself of the major premise and about Cebes’ reason for acceptance. In this paper I wish to tackle these two puzzles.

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The contention of the major premise of the argument, which is to say that what is immortal is imperishable, looks puzzling, because it looks false. It seems that, on the contrary, some immortal things can perish. Take an ice cube (which is Nicholas Denyer’s example). According to the above-implied account of the meaning of ‘immortal’, an ice cube will count as immortal. For it “will not both remain an ice cube and become dead”. But as a matter of fact, an ice cube can perish. Here we appear to have a counter-example to the contention that everything immortal is imperishable. Let us call this objection to the contention the ‘ice-cube objection’.

We can meet this objection by thinking that the word ‘immortal’ is used in the following manner. That is, not anything counts as immortal if only it “will not both remain

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1 This word occurs at 106a1 (twice), a3, a8, b2, c3, c10, d1, e2, 107a1. ‘adiaphthoron (indestructible)’ at 106e1, e6 is synonymous.
2 ‘ou ... an apōleto’, 106a5; ‘oupot’ an ... oud’ apolluto’, a9-10; ‘ouk apolluitai’, c2-3; ‘mēde-pote apollusthai’, d6-7. Cf. ‘adunaton ... apollusthai’, 106b2-3. Cf. also ‘an ... phthoran mē dechoito’, 106d2-3.
3 This word is used in the relevant sense at 105e3, e6, e7, 106b1, b2, c9, c10-11, d3, d6, e1, e2, e5, e8.
4 See 105e2-7 while considering that to say, of something, that it becomes dead is to say that it accepts death (106b3-4).
what it is and become dead”, but rather only what is currently alive can be immortal⁶. Then an ice cube fails to constitute a counter-example to the contention that what is immortal is imperishable. For an ice cube, which is not currently alive, is hence not immortal.

If I am right in thinking that what is immortal is “what is currently alive, which will not both remain what it is and become dead”, then what is ‘mortal (thnēton, 106e5)’ is, I think, “what is currently alive, which can both remain what it is and become dead”. The body of a living thing, i.e. the (currently living) body, is mortal⁷. For it is currently alive, and can both remain a body and become dead⁸.

In what follows I shall be assuming these senses of ‘mortal’ and ‘immortal’, on the ground that thereby we can defend the major premise of the argument from the ice-cube objection.

Thus we have a division of what is currently alive into the mortal and the immortal types. But, it seems to me, this system of dichotomy is not meant to accommodate everything that is currently alive. The exception that I have in mind is the soul-body compound. (When speaking of ‘the soul-body compound’, I have in mind creatures that are not gods. I have no idea as to whether, for Socrates and Cebes, there are gods that are compounded of soul and body. If there are, I should have said, ‘The exception that I have in mind is the non-divine soul-body compound’, instead. For the system of dichotomy does accommodate the divine soul-body compound. This is classified as immortal, since all gods are immortal for Socrates and Cebes. But for the sake of simplicity I shall be speaking as if it was granted that no god had a body for the speakers.) Suppose that the dichotomy is meant to accommodate the soul-body compound. Then the compound would be treated as immortal. For it “is something alive which will not both remain a soul-body compound and become dead”. This is because, for Socrates and his interlocutors, for a soul-body compound to die is for the body and the soul to get separate from each other (cf. 64c). So the survival of the compound qua compound, on the one hand, and its being dead, on the other, are incompatible. However, Socrates and Cebes should not treat the soul-body compound as immortal. For if they did, then, since they hold that what is immortal is imperishable, they would treat the soul-body compound as imperishable. But they should not.

So the dichotomy of mortal and immortal, if applied in the consideration of the soul-body compound, should not be applied to the compound itself but rather to its components, i.e. to the soul and to the body, separately.

In addition to the soul, Socrates and Cebes regard two more things as immortal. They are the god and ‘the form itself of life (auto to tēs zōēs eidos)’ (106d5-6). I take ‘the form itself of life’ as the form ‘in us’ as opposed to the Form ‘in nature’ (cf. 103b5). For, on my assumption that only what is currently alive can be immortal, ‘the form itself of life’ is considered to be currently alive in the same sense in which the soul and the god are. This suggests that ‘the form itself of life’ enjoys an (albeit everlasting) temporal existence, which Forms ‘in nature’ do not. In my interpretation, then, the emphatic ‘itself (auto)’ does not concern the contrast between the Form itself and the form in us (as at 102d6-8) but that between the immanent form of life itself and something else that always brings it about, i.e. the soul (105c8-d5).

6 Likewise, although what is ‘un-even (anartios, 104e5, 105d15, e11, 106c3)’ can be initially defined as “what will not both remain what it is and become even”, not anything that satisfies the definiens counts as ‘un-even’, but only numbers such as three (or numbered things such as a triple, depending on the interpretation) can. Also, not anything counts as ‘un-coolable (apsukton, 106a8)’ if only it will not both remain it and become cool, but only what has a temperature, such as fire, can.
7 This may be indeed the only thing that is ‘mortal’ in the relevant sense.
8 A trick is needed here. This example of a mortal thing is specified as a ‘(currently living) body’. To make it pass the test of current aliveness, we have to appeal to the parenthesized modification: ‘currently alive’. To make that thing fit the description “can both remain what it is and become dead”, we have to identify it as a (mere) body and not as a currently living body.
The contention that what is immortal is imperishable (the major premise of the argument) becomes plausible under the assumption that nothing currently alive can perish except by dying. I take it that this is essentially Dorothea Frede’s idea. And this may well be (at least one way of putting) Socrates’ reason for the contention.

But what Cebes says in terms of his reason at 106d2-4 is puzzling.

For there would hardly be anything else that would not accept destruction, if what is immortal, being eternal, is to accept destruction

\[ \text{scholē[i] gar an ti allo phthoran mē dechoito, ei to ge athanaton aidion on phthoran dextai} \]

(The italicization of ‘immortal’ in the translation reflects the force of the particle ‘ge’).

The participle phrase ‘aidion on (being eternal)’ is explanatory. It means: ‘because [what is immortal] is eternal’. So Cebes should be drawing the following inference.

(1) There would hardly be anything else that would not accept destruction, if what is eternal is to accept destruction.

But (2) what is immortal is eternal.

Therefore, (3) there would hardly be anything else that would not accept destruction, if what is immortal is to accept destruction.

Cebes’ remark here at 106d2-4 is puzzling, because it is difficult to make sense of his thinking that (2) what is immortal is eternal. One may find a dilemma here. On the one hand, the rule of argumentation requires him to be using the word ‘immortal’ in the same sense as before, namely, in the sense of ‘will not both remain what it is and become dead’. But if he is, he seems unjustified in thinking that what is ‘immortal’ in this sense is eternal. For instance, something immortal may perish without going through the process of dying (possibility that we have seen excluded in the context of a certain interpretation). Or something immortal may become mortal and die. Suppose, on the other hand, that he is justified in thinking that what is ‘immortal’ is eternal. But then, the dilemma goes, he should be using the word in the sense of ‘will not die (period)’. Then he would commit equivocation. I wish to save Cebes from such a charge. That is, I wish to show that he, while using the word ‘immortal’ in the same sense, can be seen to have a case for thinking that what is immortal is eternal.

To do so, I shall suggest that he might have a sort of theory in which it makes sense to think so. I shall have to be very speculative. This is reason against my attempt, to be sure. But imagine what would happen if no such attempt was made. Then Cebes would be speaking nonsense. He would be either insincere or confused. In either case, it would be shockingly uncharacteristic of the discussant who has proved so candid, clearheaded, and devoted to philosophy. So I am still

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11 Denyer writes: ‘Cebes does not appreciate this. For he says, [here Denyer quotes 106d2-4], as if the immortality which implies eternity were the same as the immortality which is implied by the inability to come to be dead. Can we do any better than Cebes?’ (*ibid.*).
motivated to save him.

But before considering how Cebes might think that (2) what is immortal is eternal, let us consider something that seems to me much easier, namely, how he may think that (1) there would hardly be anything else that would not accept destruction, if what is eternal is to accept destruction. His idea seems that for anything existent, it ceases to exist if and only if it accepts destruction.

Then the concepts of eternity, on the one hand, and of the non-acceptance of destruction, on the other, are close, to say the least. But the two concepts may be meant as distinct. That is, it may be that something's non-acceptance of destruction concerns that thing's resistance to a destructive effect that comes from outside, while the concept of eternity contains no special reference to relation to something outside. This opens up the possibility that the contention that (2) what is immortal is eternal is concerned with the immortal thing's intrinsic power forever to exist.

How might Cebes think (2)? Note, first, that his reason must be independent of any reason for directly, as it were, thinking that what is immortal is imperishable. (An example of a reason for directly thinking so is the above-mentioned reason that nothing currently alive can perish except by dying.) For (2) is a step in Cebes' inference to (3) (that there would hardly be anything else that would not accept destruction, if what is immortal is to accept destruction). So, for example, he is not inferring from the contention that what is immortal is imperishable to the contention that (2) what is immortal is eternal, but the other way round. Rather, I would like to suggest, once more, that his reason for thinking (2) may concern the immortal thing's intrinsic power forever to exist. More specifically, he may rely on something like a theory of what is currently alive, according to which the immortal type has the power to renew its existence forever, while the mortal type lacks it.

What might such a theory be like? Here is my (inevitably very speculative) attempt to construct one.

[1]: Anything is alive if and only if it is supplied with life. (We have seen the idea of the soul supplying the body with life in the present, final argument: 'ep' ekeino pherousa zōēn' [105d3-4].) [1'] : Anything that is currently alive stays alive if and only if it continues to be supplied with life. (The idea of a continued act of enlivening was seen in Cebes' objection to Socrates. At 87d9-e1 Cebes says, 'hē psuchē aei to katatribomenon anuphainoi'.)

[II]: Anything currently alive is being supplied with life either by itself or by something else. So, provided that everything currently alive has each just one supplier of life, [II'] : there are two types of what is alive: (A) what is supplying itself with life and (B) what is receiving life from something else. (A similar contrast between what moves itself and what else this moves will be seen at Phaedrus 245c-246a. Actually, this is the key idea that I am using in constructing the present theory.)

12 The phrase ‘to accept destruction’ is used only at 106d3 and d4, both times by Cebes, and he does not explicitly speak of ‘destruction’ as coming from outside. But Socrates has spoken of the approach of death (106d3, cf. e4) and of the soul's not accepting it (b3-4). Cebes is likely to use his phrase ‘to accept destruction’ on the model of Socrates' use of 'to accept death'. This suggests that ‘destruction’ is conceived of as coming outside.
Let us illustrate types (A) and (B). In a creature, the soul supplies life both to itself and to the body. So the soul belongs to type (A), and the body to (B). We had better not ask, of the soul-body compound, to which type it belongs. For it would be away from the original viewpoint of this dichotomy and complicate the matter fruitlessly. What about the immanent form of life (cf. my discussion of ‘the form itself of life’ at 106d5-6 at the end of section one)? It can be thought to belong to type (A), insofar as it can be thought to be supplying itself with life. (This may be a novel idea, but is not absurd.) We had better not say, though, that the immanent form of life supplies the soul with life. For then the soul would belong to type (B) instead of (A). Rather, the immanent form of life should be understood as contained in the soul, in such a way that the former’s supplying itself with life and the latter’s supplying itself with life are two descriptions of essentially the same phenomenon. The god, too, can be thought to belong to type (A), insofar as he can be thought to be supplying himself with life. This illustration shows that we can understand the division of what is currently alive into types (A) and (B) as overlapping with the division of it into the immortal and the mortal.

[III]: (From [I']) anything that is currently alive dies if and only if it ceases to be supplied with life. (Compare this conception of dying with the final argument’s conception of it as accepting death that comes from outside [106b3, e4]. These two conceptions are compatible. Death that comes from outside can be understood, within the framework of the present theory, as what stops, in whatever it occupies, any on-going life-supplying.)

[III-1]: What belongs to type (B), on the one hand, can die. For what has been supplying it with life can cease to do so. It ceases to do so when, and only when, it abandons what it has been enlivening. And there is no reason why it should never do so. [III-2]: What belongs to type (A), on the other hand, will not die. For it will not cease to supply itself with life. This is because it will not abandon itself (cf. what Socrates says on self-mover at Phaedrus 245c7-8: ‘hate ouk apoleipon heauto’). (It is assumed, possibly problematically, that the only way in which an on-going life-supplying can stop is by virtue of the supplier’s abandoning the recipient. This means that it is assumed that nothing of type (A) ever suffers from malfunctioning in life-supplying. This implies that no soul will ever malfunction in enlivening the body. This shows how much this assumption amounts to.)

It is clear by now that [IV]: the dichotomy of types (A) and (B) overlaps with that of the immortal and the mortal.

The above-mentioned fact that nothing of type (A) will cease to supply itself with life also means that [V]: nothing of type (A) will cease to exist. In other words, what belongs to type (A) is eternal.

So, what is immortal, which just is what belongs to type (A) (from [IV]), is eternal (from [V]). This is how Cebes might think that (2) what is immortal is eternal.

I do not mean to say that this theory is sound. Nor do I claim that it is plausible for Cebes to come up with such a theory as he follows Socrates’ final argument. It does not seem utterly implausible, though, to suppose that the character Cebes might have heard of a view that could be seen as a stimulus for conceiving such a theory. What I have in mind is the view of Alcmeon of Croto. As Aëtius reports (DK 24A12),

Alcmeon supposes [the psuchē] to be a substance self-moved in eternal motion (phusin autokinēton kat’ aidion kinesin), and for that reason immortal and similar to the divine things (tr. by Jonathan Barnes)\(^1\). (Do not be confused: the term ‘immortal’ in this quote does not correspond, in the final argument in the Phaedo, to ‘immortal’ but to ‘imperishable.’) The notion of ‘a substance self-moving in eternal motion’ could be taken to point to the notion of a living thing of type (A) in the theory that I have presented above. Barnes suggests

that Plato ‘transcribes and adapts’ Alcmeon’s argument when writing *Phaedrus* 245c-246a. And it is from the *Phaedrus* passage that I have barrowed a key idea in reconstructing a theory that might be ascribed to Cebes. A possibility is, then, that Alcmeon’s type of view is behind both Cebes’ remark at *Phaedo* 106d2-4 and Socrates’ argument for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedrus*.

Anyway, my main claim has been just that Cebes’ apparently desperate remark at a crucial point in the final argument can be seen as grounded at all if we ascribe to him the kind of theory that I have sketched above.

Résumé Français

C’est par le biais de la dernière démonstration dans le *Phédon* (95e9-107a3) que Socrate réussit à convaincre Cébès finalement que l’âme est impérissable. Il y a deux prémises de cette démonstration. L’une, la prémisse majeure, veut que ce qui est immortel (dans le sens propre à cette démonstration) est impérissable. L’autre, la prémisse mineure, veut que l’âme est immortelle. Selon l’interprétation ordinaire, de dire, de quelque chose (comme l’âme), qu’il est immortel signifie qu’il ne veut pas simultanément et demeurer ce qu’il est (une âme) et devenir mort. Ayant accepté la prémisse mineure (105e10), Cébès admet la prémisse majeure, en donnant une raison pour son admission (106d-2 4). Socrate est d’accord, en donnant une raison pour son accord (d5-7). Et il conclut la démonstration, en se procurant l’acceptation de Cébès (107-a3). Comme l’on voit par cet abrégé de la démonstration, l’admission de la prémisse majeure par Cébès et Socrate consitue une étape cruciale d’elle.

Cependant il y a deux choses troublantes sur cette étape. En premier, la prémisse majeure semble fausse. Un contre-exemple, donné par Nicholas Denyer, est une cube de glace. Elle semble qualifier d’immortelle, car elle ne peut pas simultanément et demeurer une cube de glace et devenir morte. Mais elle est en fait périssable. Pour éviter cette objection à la prémisse majeure, je propose de comprendre que rien ne qualifie d’immortel sauf s’il vit actuellement. Alors une cube de glace ne serait pas immortel.

Voici un système dichotomique de ce qui vit actuellement en le type impérissable (comme l’âme, le dieu, et la form immanente de la vie [106d5-6]) et le type mortel (comme le corps [qui vit actuellement]). Mais ce système ne vise pas la combinaison d’âme-corps.

Comme on a vu, Socrate admet la prétention de la prémisse majeure de sa démonstration. Probablement c’est parce qu’il suppose que ce qui vit actuellement ne peut pas périr sauf par mourir. (Cf. l’interprétation de Dorothea Frede.)

La deuxième chose qui est troublante sur l’étape cruciale de la démonstration concerne ce que Cébès dit en termes de sa raison pour admettre que ce qui est immortel est impérissable. Il dit (106d4-2): « Car on se demande bien quelle réalité pourrait échapper à la corruption si ce qui est immortel, donc éternel, devait se corrompre! (tr. par Monique Dixsaut)>> Ici Cébès déduit ainsi:

(1): On se demande quelle réalité pourrait échapper à la corruption si ce qui est éternel devait se corrompre.
(2): Ce qui est immortel est éternel.

Donc, (3): on se demande quelle réalité pourrait échapper à la corruption si ce qui est immortel devait se corrompre.

Comment pense-t-il (2)? Équivoque-t-il sur le mot ‘immortel’? Je voudrais le défendre d’une telle accusation. Sinon il commeterait une grossière confusion ou bien serait insincère en sa réplique à Socrate. Dans tout cas, ça ne semblerait pas être d’accord avec ce qu’il s’est montré dans la discussion (i.e. intelligent, franc, et dévoué à la philosophie). Alors je suggère qu’il est possible que Cébès ait une sorte de théorie de ce qui vit actuellement, selon laquelle il serait raisonnable de penser que ce qui est immortel est éternel. Toute tentative de proposer une telle théorie sera inévitablement spéculative. Voici ma tentative.
D’après la théorie que je propose en termes d’une telle tentative, de vivre est d’être approvisonné de la vie (cf. 87d9-e1, 105d3-4). Alors il y a deux types de choses qui vivent actuellement: type (A): ce qui porte la vie à soi-même; et type (B): ce qui reçoit la vie de quelque chose d’autre (cf. Phèdre 245c-246a). Le premier type ne cessera jamais de porter la vie à soi-même, parce qu’il ne s’abandonne jamais soi-même (cf. Phèdre 245c7-8). Donc il ne cessera jamais d’exister, mais est éternel. Par contraste, le deuxième type peut cesser d’être approvisonné de la vie, parce que rien n’empêche son approvisionneur de la vie de l’abandonner. (La ‘mort’ censé de venir de dehors [106b3, e4] est comprise, dans cette théorie, comme ce qui arrête un approvisionnement quelconque de la vie dans ce qu’elle occupe.) Ce qui est immortel, dans cette théorie, n’est d’autre que type (A). Donc ce qui est immortel est éternel.

Peut-être n’est il pas plausible que Cébès invente une telle théorie pendant qu’il écoute la dernière démonstration de Socrate. Mais il n’est pas totalement impossible qu’à l’avance Cébès ait écouté quelque idée qui pourrait inciter à l’inventer. Comme Aetius rapporte, Alcméon avait pris l’âme pour ‘la nature qui est auto-mouvante dans un movement eternal (phasis autokinêton kai‘ aidion kinesin)’ et donc pour immortelle (DK 24A12). Selon Jonathan Barnes, Platon considérait cette argument d’Alcméon quand il écrivait sa version en Phèdre. Alors peut-être que l’idée d’Alcméon ou quelque chose de pareil soit derrière la phrase de Cébès en Phédon 106d2-4 et aussi derrière la démonstration de l’immortalité de l’âme en Phèdre.
Alcuni, tra i dialoghi di Platone, sono narrati, ed altri direttamente drammatisati. Tra quelli narrati, alcuni sono narrati da Socrate, altri da altri personaggi. Alcuni sono direttamente narrati ed altri hanno un'introduzione drammatica. Ma, in tutti i casi, la narrazione è di quelle che consentono all'ascoltatore di vedere la scena narrata come se essa fosse direttamente rappresentata e l'aspetto più interessante di questa circostanza è che in questi casi noi lettori sperimentiamo, allo stesso modo degli ascoltatori della narrazione, la visualizzazione della scena.

Questa capacità di usare le parole per far vedere era un'arte molto studiata dagli antichi teorici della scienza del linguaggio e Platone, non a caso citato in questo senso dalle antiche fonti, si rivela maestro di quest'arte, e di quest'arte applicata alla filosofia. Essa può essere identificata come capacità mimetica, come capacità di creare immagini usando soltanto parole, parole creatrici di scene. Se ogni poeta è capace di farlo, Platone poeta è capace di un effetto in più: crea scene mimetiche in cui ciò che viene rappresentato è una pratica filosofica, una discussione che tematizza la mimesis stessa, i suoi limiti e le sue possibilità.

L'arte mimetica della narrazione visiva poggia su una caratteristica specifica del testo platonico, che spesso viene chiamata “unità di forma e contenuto”. Nella mia comunicazione proverò a fare riferimento ad alcuni tratti di questa caratteristica della scrittura platonica, narrativa e drammatica, in riferimento al testo del Fedone.

Prima di fare riferimento ai passi del Fedone, però, intendo aggiungere una specificazione. La specificazione riguarda il fine che sembra avere Platone, autore e narratore, con la realizzazione di una scrittura dotata di tale visività verbale. Io credo che il fine sia quello di far sì che il lettore abiti il testo e, nel caso del Fedone, partecipi alla discussione filosofica che si tiene nella cella di Socrate nel giorno della sua morte.

La ragione per la quale Platone intende far sì che il lettore abiti il testo del dialogo e parteci pi alla discussione è l'idea stessa di filosofia che egli ebbe e praticò al suo tempo. Secondo Platone, infatti, la filosofia non è una pratica di lettura o di scrittura, ma è strutturalmente legata all'oralità dialogica: solo partecipando ad una discussione si fa filosofia, e la filosofia la si può soltanto fare, cioè praticare ed esperire in prima persona, non la si può leggere o scrivere, né la si può ascoltare passivamente in un racconto.

Ed ecco che la scrittura visiva dei dialoghi - che mettono in scena una pratica filosofica dialogica o il racconto di essa, un racconto dotato di visività scenica - ci consente la partecipazione alla discussione.

Il tipo di partecipazione alla discussione che può esperire un lettore dei dialoghi è dello stesso tipo di quella che sperimentano, nei dialoghi, gli ascoltatori dei racconti. Essi sono rapiti dal racconto, provano, nell'ascoltare, la stessa emozione che stanno provando i protagonisti della storia di cui si parla e si pongono le domande e si danno le risposte allo stesso modo dei protagonisti della storia di cui si parla. Possiamo allora annotare anche questo come un effetto prodotto.

1 Nei dialoghi non è mai messo in scena un filosofo che si dedichi a scrivere la sua filosofia; al contrario, troviamo tematizzata una critica della scrittura filosofica. E’ interessante annotare che la critica della scrittura filosofica - l’idea che il filosofo si dedichi a scrivere la sua filosofia - non è accompagnata nei dialoghi ad una critica della lettura. Troviamo anzi in più occasioni messo in scena qualcuno che legge ed altri che sperimentano l'esperienza dell'ascolto, quell'ascolto che la lettura interpretata dalla viva voce del lettore - la lettura drammatizzata - consente.
dalla scrittura visiva dei dialoghi: un’assimilazione degli ascoltatori dei racconti ai protagonisti della storia narrata e, in analogia ad essa, un’assimilazione di noi lettori agli ascoltatori dei racconti in scena nei dialoghi.

A mio avviso è precisamente questa assimilazione dell’ascoltatore e del lettore all’interlocutore del dialogo il vero fine della scrittura visiva del testo, ciò che fa di esso un dialogo mimetico, un mezzo per realizzare quel coinvolgimento nella discussione, quella partecipazione, quella presenza, del lettore alla discussione narrata, senza delle quali non c’è pratica filosofica.

I dialoghi platonici si configurano dunque come testi protrettici, il loro fine è un fine pratico e consiste nel portare i filosofi potenziali alla filosofia. E’ come se Platone, con i dialoghi, facesse come Socrate nei dialoghi: invitare - con levità, mediatamente, ma decisamente - alla filosofia.

Platone maestro, Platone autore e scrittore, pone in essere una operazione di composizione del testo in cui è possibile isolare elementi di scrittura drammatica che sono operatori di visività; essi allestiscono la scena in cui siamo invitati ad entrare, ad entrare per ascoltare e partecipare.

Ciò che i dialoghi raccontano è un altro tempo, l’unico degno di essere raccontato, quello in cui - come è stato scritto - ancora non si è consumata l’ingiusta morte del giusto. In questa prospettiva, allora, la scena della morte di Socrate – la scena del Fedone – è l’ultima scena di un tempo felice, avvolto dal racconto nella nostalgia, il tempo in cui - filosocraticamente strutturata - le discussioni avevano luogo; ma è anche la prima scena di un tempo altro, quello in cui comincia di quelle discussioni il racconto, e si allestisce la loro rappresentazione nei dialoghi.

Nella prima scena del testo del Fedone, Fedone ed Echecrate sono a Flunte. Uno chiede all’altro il racconto. L’altro promette di farlo ed aggiunge l’immenso piacere che prova nel farlo. E poi, prima di cominciare il racconto, riferisce dello stato d’animo che abitava i personaggi del racconto stesso. Il fatto che la descrizione dei sentimenti del narratore e dei personaggi preceda l’inizio del racconto stesso ci fa comprendere come tale descrizione sia un po’ come una nota di regia, qualcosa che deve aiutarci a comprendere il racconto, o, forse, deve aiutarci ad assumere lo stato d’animo richiesto affinché l’operazione di assimilazione mimetica si realizzi.

Nella scena seconda dell’Atto primo comincia il racconto. Gli amici di Socrate si erano radunati fuori del carcere, come erano soliti fare anche nei giorni precedenti, andavano infatti dal maestro in carcere ogni giorno, al mattino, e passavano l’intera giornata con lui. Quel giorno3 appresero subito che sarebbe stato il giorno della morte. Appena entrati nel carcere incontrarono Santippe, la moglie di Socrate, che probabilmente aveva passato con lui la notte, che disse loro: “è l’ultima volta che i tuoi amici possono parlare con te e tu con loro!”.* Questa frase di Santippe ha nel testo la funzione di una soglia, perché separa l’introduzione al racconto filosofico dal racconto filosofico stesso.

Per l’unità tra forma e contenuto che caratterizza i dialoghi di Platone, questa introduzione al racconto è spazializzata, diventa un percorso, una sorta di strada - disegnata dal racconto dei tempi e dei luoghi - che consente al lettore di entrare, accompagnando i personaggi. Prima essi aspettano fuori, e noi con loro, e poi, tutti

2 E’ interessante annotare che le relazioni che il lettore intesse con l’ascoltatore del racconto messo in scena nel testo e quelle che, a sua volta, l’ascoltatore intesse con l’interlocutore della discussione narrata sono dello stesso tipo di quelle che legano il sensibile all’intellegibile nella metafisica platonica: si tratta delle relazioni di mimesis, di methexis, di parousia.

3 Perché è di un giorno che si tratta: verrà narrata una giornata intera dall’alba al tramonto ed anche questa circostanza ha da essere annotata tra gli operatori di scrittura drammatica. La delimitazione spazio-temporale di una storia è una maniera per disegnare di essa lo sfondo, il contorno, il contesto, senza dei quali non v’è e non vi può essere accoglienza dell’ascoltatore. “C’era una volta” è l’operatore narrativo classico della favola, esso accoglie l’ascoltatore nel tempo senza tempo della narrazione mitica.
insieme, discepoli e lettori, lì dove il testo dice: “il custode ci chiamò e ci disse di entrare”, tutto, entriamo nel carcere.

Nella prima scena in cui compare, Socrate è seduto, gli hanno appena tolto la catena e lui massaggiandosi la gamba dice: “…”.

E’ necessario annotare che il racconto che Fedone sta facendo dell’ultimo giorno della vita di Socrate, racconto degno di essere ricordato, si appoggia sul dettaglio di quei particolari che consentono di visualizzare la scena e quindi di ricordarla. Sapremo poi che cosa dice Socrate massaggiandosi la gamba. Ora è importante avere notato che l’indicazione della postura, allo stesso modo delle indicazioni di tempo e di luogo relative all’appuntamento che gli allievi di Socrate si erano dati4, ci consente di vedere la scena e partecipare all’evento raccontato.

Più tardi, insieme ad Eveno, ogni lettore sarà invitato a seguire Socrate, a partecipare alla filosofia, che è una pratica, e che si può condividere solo partecipando (toutou tou pragmato meletin, 61c). E’ qui che fa la prima comparsa l’idea della filosofia come melete thanatou, esercizio di morte, che tanta parte avrà nella fortuna del Fedone nella storia della filosofia. A segnare l’importanza di questa prima affermazione si trova la nota drammatica che riferisce della postura di Socrate: “E dicendo queste cose abbassò le gambe fino a toccare a terra con i piedi, e in questa posizione continuò la discussione” (61c-d). Non c’è nessun’altra ragione per la quale un’annotazione del genere debba essere inserita nel racconto, se non quella di consentire a chi ascolta, e dunque a chi legge, di vedere la scena5.

In 62b Socrate dice che noi uomini stiamo come in un posto di guardia e che non è lecito abbandonarlo ed andarcene di nostra iniziativa. Phroura, in 62b, è la condizione di chi fa la sentinella e vigila. La vita è qui assimilata ad un turno di sorveglianza, il che sembra sottolineare della vita due aspetti: la transitorietà (il turno dura un certo tempo e poi finisce) e il legame con l’attività del vedere (vivere è vedere, e vedere è pensare). Ma la riflessione più interessante che possiamo fare in relazione all’affermazione di 62b riguarda il potere visivo dell’ὥσπερ. Quando Socrate dice che noi siamo «come in un posto di guardia», ciò che accade, grazie all’ὥσπερ, operatore di visività, è l’allestimento di una scena: l’ascoltatore e il lettore vedono6, ciascuno nella propria anima, con gli oculi mentis, un’immagine mimetica che assimila la condizione dell’esistere a quella dell’aspettare e del guardare, scrutando il cielo e le costellazioni, come nella prima scena dell’Agammennone di Eschilo, dove chi parla chiede agli dèi di esser liberato dall’obbligo di una phroura che dura da tempo7.

Socrate dovrà spiegare il motivo per il quale dobbiamo augurarci che il nostro turno finisca; dovrà prodursi in una difesa convincente, da pronunciarsi davanti

4 “Sempre, anche nei giorni precedenti, avevamo l’abitudine, io e gli altri, di andare da Socrate, radunandoci all’alba presso il tribunale nel quale si era svolto il processo, che era infatti vicino al carcere. E dunque, ogni mattina discutevamo tra noi, aspettando che il carcere fosse aperto: non si apriva presto infatti. Quel giorno, in particolare, ci incontrammo più presto del solito, perché la sera prima, uscendo dalla prigione, avevamo saputo che era giunta la nave da Delo. Avevamo convenuto di trovarci al solito posto il più presto possibile. Appena arrivati…” (Phaed. 59c-e).

5 Quando Socrate si dispone a spiegare perché per gli uomini è meglio esser morti che vivere, Cebete sorride dolcemente e dice nel suo dialetto: “che Zeus ti capisca!” . Anche questa è una annotazione di scrittura visiva (62a).

6 Quando, in 65d, compaiono le idee, la prima cosa che si dice a proposito di esse è che non le si può vedere con gli occhi. Le idee sono gli enti veri e in 66a troviamo la metafora dell’“andare a caccia degli enti”, thereuein ton ontos. Gemma della scrittura visiva, una tale definizione della filosofia, che fa di essa una caccia, una caccia che può essere praticata da cacciatori che abitano in tempi e in luoghi diversi, stabilisce di essa solo lo loggetto. Esso determinerà le rinunce e le distinzioni che questa caccia richiede. C’è forse come un sentiero (κινδυνεῖ τοι ὥσπερ ἄτραπός τοις, 66b) che ci conduce a comprendere che la rinuncia da compiere è la rinuncia al corpo, alla materialità visibile, in nome dell’elezione di una scena che è visibile solo per l’anima.

7 Aesch. Ag. 2.
agli amici. E questa difesa, questa *apologia*, 63d2, sarà un bene comune, sarà la condivisione della speranza che dopo la morte vi sia qualcosa di meglio sia per i buoni che per i cattivi.

Che la discussione di questa speranza sia un bene da condividere (*metadidomi*: far partecipare, rendere partecipe, comunicare) è la chiave di lettura del *Fedone*: Socrate ha parlato, Fedone ha raccontato e Platone ha scritto affinché anche noi potessimo partecipare di questa speranza, e *condividere* questo bene comune.

Nell’insieme degli operatori di scrittura visiva che rendono il testo del *Fedone* luogo scenico atto ad esperire tale condivisione ho scelto di evidenziare in questa sede soltanto il ruolo di ὥσπερ.

La prima occorrenza è in 60b, lì dove, del dolore e del piacere, Socrate dice - ed è la prima cosa che dice nel dialogo - che quando si afferra uno dei due si è costretti ad afferrare anche l’altro, *come se fossero attaccati ad una sola testa* ὥσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς ἡμμένω. A riprova del valore visivo, creatore d’immagine, di questo ὥσπερ, Socrate cita Esopo che, se ci avesse pensato, ne avrebbe fatto una favola. Subito dopo, in 60c, il termine ὥσπερ serve a collegare quanto si è detto in generale sul dolore e sul piacere con quanto sta accadendo a Socrate: ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἐοίκεν: “come pare stia capitando anche a me”: dopo il dolore della catena, il piacere della liberazione.

In 61a, nel contesto della spiegazione di un sogno ricorrente, Socrate dice di avere sempre creduto che, esortandolo a *eseguire e comporre musica*, il sogno lo esortasse a fare ciò che egli già di fatto stava facendo, e cioè la filosofia, ώς φιλοσοφίας μὲν οὔσης μεγίστης μουσικῆς, essendo la filosofia la forma più alta di musica. Ora, per rendere visivamente questa opzione ermeneutica applicata al sogno, per la quale qualcuno può esortare qualcun altro a compiere qualcosa che però costui già sta facendo, Socrate sceglie di far visualizzare ai suoi lettori il caso di “coloro che incitano i corridori” (ὥσπερ οἱ τοῖς θέουσι διακελευόμενοι); esso, infatti, in una società agonale, nella quale l’agone ginnico della corsa era forse il più diffuso, risulta essere il caso letteralmente più *evidente*, cioè più *rappresentativo* della situazione che richiede di essere visualizzata.

Anche quando, in 63b, a Simmia e Cebete che lo accusano di volerli abbandonare, e di farlo senza dolore, Socrate dice: “credo che stiate dicendo che mi dovo difendere da queste accuse come in un tribunale”, ὥσπερ ἐν δικαστηρίῳ, al nostro ὥσπερ è affidato il compito dell’allestimento della scena: questa nuova difesa, che il *Fedone* mette in scena dopo quella dell’*Apologia*, nella quale Socrate renderà conto della sua vita, avverrà *come* in un tribunale.

Quando qualcosa viene paragonato a qualcos’altro, questo qualcos’altro entra a far parte della scena e si aggiunge al primo termine del paragone con tutti gli orpelli visivi della propria semanticità: in 79c si dice che l’anima che si serve del corpo per esaminare qualcosa è come trascinata verso ciò che muta, e va errando, come se fosse ubriaca, ὥσπερ μεθύουσα. E’ impossibile non notare la potenza visiva di questa paragone.  

8 Ho buona speranza - dice Socrate nella sua difesa in 63c- che ci sia qualcosa per i morti e “come dicono gli antichi discorsi” (ὥσπερ γε καὶ πάλαι λέγεται), di molto meglio per i buoni che per i cattivi (πολὺ ἄμεινον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἢ τοῖς κακοῖς).

9 Lo stesso uso lo ritroviamo in “gli dei talvolta stabiliscono la necessità di morire” ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν νῦν ἡμῖν παροῦσα, “come quella che ora è presente a me”.

10 In 82c coloro che amano la filosofia considerano le indagini condotte con il corpo indagini condotte ὥσπερ διὰ εἴρημον come da una prigione.
dell’anima ebbre e barcollante.

In 70a si paragona l’anima che lascia il corpo ad un vento o un fumo ὥσπερ πνεῦμα ἢ καπνὸς. Il paragone è omerico ed empedocleo e prepara il lettore ad un cambiamento di registro. Dopo il Fedone, infatti, l’anima non sarà più pensata come un vento o un fumo, ma come la sede del pensiero che si stacca dal corpo.

In 67c si parla del preparare il pensiero alla separazione dal corpo come di una purificazione ὥσπερ κεκαθαρμένην. In 68d si parla dell’anima che si concentra in se stessa come di una purificazione ὥσπερ κεκαθαρμένην. Se qui la scena è di valenza rituale ed iniziatica, non mancano nel testo valenze di ordine economico-finanziario.

In 69a, introdotta da ὥσπερ, troviamo per esempio la famosa immagine dello scambio dei piaceri con i piaceri e dei dolori con i dolori, “come se fossero monete”, ὥσπερ νομίσματα, laddove invece l’unica moneta giusta μόνον τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθόν, in cambio della quale va barattato tutto, ἀντὶ οὗ δεῖ πάντα ταῦτα καταλλάττεσθαι, è la φρόνησις.

La visualizzazione posta in essere da ὥσπερ non è sempre di tipo iconico, talvolta essa si configura come operazione euristica destinata a far emergere i legami analogici che esistono tra le coppie di contrari. E’ il caso di 71c: C’è un contrario del vivere come il dormire è il contrario dell’essere sveglio? (τῷ ζῆν ἐστί τι ἐναντίον, ὥσπερ τῷ ἐγρηγορεῖν τὸ καθεύδεσθαι;)

Talvolta invece ὥσπερ serve a rappresentare visivamente un rapporto proporzionale: come in 77c, dove Cebete dice che sembra essere stata dimostrata come la metà di quel che bisognava (φαίνεται γὰρ ὥσπερ ἥμισυ ἀποδεδεῖχται οὗ δεῖ, 77c1-2). E cioè solo che l’anima preesiste alla nascita ma non che dura dopo la morte.

Il caso forse più interessante, tra tutti gli usi di ὥσπερ nel testo del Fedone, è quello che, sull’espressione ὥσπερ εἰκός12, costruisce non un paragone verosimile, ma la verosimiglianza stessa di un’ipotesi ardita13, quella secondo la quale, dopo la morte, le anime possano legare se stesse a quei corpi e a quei caratteri che durante la vita furono oggetto delle loro cure: εἰς τοιαῦτα ἤθη ὁποῖ› ἄτ› ἂν καμελειτούρωσιν ἐν τῷ βίῳ. In questo modo il testo platonico sortisce il suo scopo in due tempi: in un primo momento, infatti, esso rafforza potentemente l’elemento della homoiotes facendo slittare sapientemente la semantica della somiglianza verso quella dell’assimilazione, la quale - si dice - accomuna l’anima al corpo, l’amante all’amato, l’uomo al suo destino. In un secondo momento, poi, proprio basandosi sul potere appena mostrato della somiglianza, della somiglianza operativa che diviene assimilazione e che crea proseliti, il testo platonico sortisce il suo secondo e più importante scopo, che è quello di assimilare a se stesso e ai suoi caratteri i caratteri dell’anima dei suoi lettori. Testo protrettico e parenetico, il testo di Platone è in grado di creare simiglianze e verosimiglianze. Esso seduce il lettore e lo assimila a sé, invitandolo ad entrare in un testo che inaugura uno stile di pensiero ed un modo

11  In 81a, si dice dell’anima come si dice degli iniziati che veramente trascorre il resto del tempo con gli δὲ ὥσπερ δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τῶν μεμυημένων, ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον μετὰ θεῶν διάγουσα.
12 Troviamo questa espressione in Phaed. 81e e Pol. 263a.
13 Un’altra ipotesi ardita, della quale nel testo si costruisce la verosimiglianza è, in 91d, l’ipotesi della reminiscenza, che viene ricordato, si basa sul legame tra l’esistenza prenatale dell’anima e l’esistenza delle idee: Simmia dice che la nostra anima esiste prima di giungere in un corpo, come esiste quella realtà che ha il nome di cio che è: ὥσπερ αὐτής ἐστὶν ὡς ὡσία ἔχουσα τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τὴν τοῦ δὲ ἔστιν. 
di vita. Il ruolo che ὥσπερ esercita sul testo non è quello di mostrare somiglianze già esistenti, già riconosciute, ma, al contrario, è quello di creare ardite assimilazioni inedite alle quali è affidato il compito di rovesciare valori costituiti: ogni piacere e ogni dolore, "come se fosse un chiodo", inchioda l’anima al corpo assoggettandola e rendendola somatoid: ἑκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἥλιον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ προσπερνοῦ καὶ ποιεῖ σωματοειδῆ.

Quando esce dal corpo, l’anima somatoide entra subito in un altro corpo, come se fosse stata seminata (83e: ὥσπερ σπειρομένη ἐμφύεσθαι).

Nonostante la tradizione parli del Fedone come del testo contenente dimostrazioni dell’immortalità dell’anima, esso in realtà non contiene alcuna dimostrazione, ma solo immagini; si tratta però di immagini operative, di figure che possono essere usate per praticare azioni, e azioni filosofiche. Come quella, celeberrima, del discorso, il meno confutabile dei discorsi umani, su cui possiamo imbarcarsi come su una zattera (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σχεδίας) e fare su di esso la traversata della vita. E’ quasi inutile aggiungere che tale discorso è il dialogo stesso che stiamo leggendo e che la figura della zattera è un altro esempio dell’unità di forma e contenuto che i dialoghi platonici possono esibire.

Nel testo vengono dotate di visiva persuasività non soltanto le ipotesi destinate ad essere difese, ma anche quelle destinate ad essere confutate. Una confutazione, infatti, risulta essere tanto più incisiva quanto più convincente era l’ipotesi che essa è capace di demolire14. Si può pensare alla confutazione come ad una figura di confronto verbale tra immagini che prende a prestito valenze di una cultura agonale15 e trae dal mito tutte le sue figure: quando un eroe vince su un nemico, si impossessa della sua forza, del suo potere, delle sue ricchezze; allo stesso modo, un discorso che vince su un altro ne eredita per così dire l’efficacia persuasiva, che viene trasferita dal vinto al vincitore. E’ il caso dell’ipotesi dell’anima-armonia, ipotesi che forse, fino al Fedone, aveva convissuto nella tradizione pitagorica, con l’ipotesi della reminiscenza. Come il nostro corpo è in tensione (en-teino “mettere in versi”, “tendere”, “mantenere teso e coeso”) ad opera del caldo e del freddo (ὥσπερ ἐντεταμένου τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν καὶ συνεχομένου ὑπὸ θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ) anche l’anima è crasi di elementi simili in equilibrio (86b). Condivisa da Simmia e da Echecrate, l’ipotesi dell’anima-armonia è demolita da Socrate a più riprese e dopo tale demolizione il discorso di Socrate sembra dotato di una capacità persuasiva, di una evidenza argomentativa, che sembra aver rubato all’ipotesi confutata.


E’ interessante annotare che non soltanto gli interlocutori usano immagini, ma dicono anche di farlo, svelando per così dire i meccanismi con cui sono costruiti i testi e le discussioni persuasive che essi mettono in scena. Anche l’ipotesi della misologia, in 89c-d, è presentata con un’immagine introdotta da ὥσπερ, che ora sappiamo essere un operatore di somiglianza: si diventa misologi proprio come si

14 Dopo che Simmia ebbe esposto la sua ipotesi, Socrate gli lanciò un’occhiata penetrante come era solito fare molte volte e sorridendo (86d: ὥσπερ τὰ πολλὰ εἰώθει, καὶ μειδιάσας) disse che l’obiezione non era sciocca.

15 A Fedone cui ha appena accarezzato i capelli Socrate fa un giuramento: se fossi al tuo posto e il discorso mi sfuggisse farei come gli Argivi ὥσπερ Ἀργεῖοι (89c2) un giuramento: di non lasciare ricrescere i capelli prima di aver vinto, tornando a combattere, il discorso di Simmia e di Cebete.

16 Si tratta dell’ipotesi del tessitore: ὥσπερ ἄν τις περὶ ἀνθρώπου ψάφτων πρεσβύτου ἀποθανόντος λέγοι τότε τοῦ τόν λόγον, ὅτι οὐκ ἀπόλωλεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, “come se qualcuno facesse lo stesso discorso a proposito di un tessitore morto vecchio, dicendo che l’uomo non è morto...adducendo come prova il mantello”.

765
diventa misantropi: ὥσπερ οἱ μισάνθρωποι γιγνόμενοι.

Ma non basta. In 90c l’immagine cresce e rivela l’assimilazione che il paragone intende generare: la condizione in cui si verrebbero a trovare le cose nel caso in cui fosse vera la visione del mondo della misologia è la condizione dell’Euripo, il braccio di mare che separa l’Eubea dall’Attica, pieno di correnti che cambiano continuamente la loro direzione: come nell’Euripo, ὥσπερ ἐν Εὐρίπῳ, se avessero ragione i misologi, tutte le cose si rivolterebbero in su e in giù e in nessun momento rimarrebbero ferme. E’ lo spettro sofistico ed eracleito che aleggia nel discorso ogni qual volta si rischia di perdere la fiducia nel logos, ogni qualvolta ad animare la discussione non è la filosofia ma la mancanza di educazione che caratterizza - come in 91a - coloro che si preoccupano solo di prevalere: ὥσπερ οἱ πάνα ἀπαίδευτοι φιλονίκως17.

Di contro a costoro, in 91c, dopo aver messo in guardia gli amici dai pericoli della misologia, Socrate dice “se vi sembra che io abbia detto il vero datemi il vostro consenso, altrimenti, combattetemi con ogni discorso, badando che io, con il mio ardore, non inganni me stesso e voi, e me ne vada come un’ape, lasciandovì dentro il pungiglione: ὥσπερ μέλιτα τὸ κέντρον ἐγκαταλιπὼν οἰχήσομαι.

La verosimiglianza dell’ipotesi anassagorea è demolita dall’immagine che Socrate, in 98c, costruisce per demolirla: mi sembra - egli dice - che Anassagora ragionasse peri physeos, in modo simile a chi dicesse (ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις λέγων), per esempio, per spiegare il mio essere qui in carcere seduto, che ci dipende non già dalle decisioni degli Ateniesi e dalla mia volontà di obbedire alla legge, bensì dalla capacità delle mie ossa di articolare diverse posture, tra cui quella di sedere… E’ decisamente un’immagine ben scelta dal punto di vista della persuasività del discorso.

Ma intendo concludere questa breve indagine sul potere visivo di ὥσπερ nel testo del Fedone facendo riferimento ad un paragone che il testo non esplicita, ma pone per così dire sotto gli occhi del lettore, almeno del lettore attento a cogliere le immagini che le parole disegnano nel testo.

Siamo in 102e. Il contesto dell’argomentazione - l’ultima della vita di Socrate - è quello, solenne, della risposta all’obiezione di Cebete. Nel contesto di questa argomentazione, che rappresenta la consegna del metodo filosofico che un maestro affida ad un allievo nel momento della morte18, Socrate sta mostrando l’impossibilità per un contrario di accogliere presso di sé il suo contrario senza smarrire la sua propria natura. L’esempio è quello della grandezza. La grandezza che è in noi non può mai ammettere di essere, allo stesso tempo, grande e piccola, ma, se le capita di incontrare il suo contrario, alla grandezza accade una delle due cose: “o fugge e lascia il suo posto, o, all’avvicinarsi della piccolezza, essa si distrugge”. La grandezza, infatti, non acconsente a ricevere la piccolezza, perché - dice il testo - “non vuole

17 La critica agli antilogici è simile in 101e: essi fanno confusione discutendo contemporaneamente dei principi e di ciò che da essi consegue. Un altro riferimento alle agitazioni dell’Euripo, luogo degli antilogici, lo troviamo nel contesto del mito che descrive la geografia degli inferi (cfr.111d: i fiumi si muovono in su e in giù come se nella terra vi fosse una corrente oscillatoria: ὥσπερ αἰώρα τινὰ ἐνοῦσαν ἐν τῇ γῆ).

18 Per tutta l’ultima parte della discussione Cebete è l’unico interlocutore di Socrate. A lui il maestro sembra affidare il nucleo teorico più importante della propria filosofia. Ad ogni tappa dell’argomentazione egli verifica l’assenso dell’ultimo interlocutore e, ad un certo punto, in 105b, li dice a Socrate chiede a Cebete “se mi segui e sei d’accordo che sia così”, Cebete risponde: πάνα σφόδρα καὶ συνδοκεῖ, ἔφη, καὶ ἕπομαι “sono completamente d’accordo e ti seguo” e ἕπομαι potrebbe essere tradotto anche “ti seguo” nel senso di “succedere a te nella pratica del metodo”, infatti Socrate due righe dopo (105b6) dice a Cebete μιμούμενος ἐμέ che significa proprio “fai come me”, “accogli questa consegna di metodo filosofico e mettila in pratica”. Più avanti, quando Critone porrà a Socrate domande sulle sue ultime volontà, in 115b, Socrate ribadirà che quel conta, quel che a lui sta a cuore, è che i suoi amici “vogliano vivere come sulla traccia di ciò che è stato detto ora e prima” ὥσπερ κατ’ ἴχνη κατὰ τὰ νῦν τε εἰρημένα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ ἐμπροσθεν χρόνῳ ἐξι.
essere altro da ciò che era” (102d).

A questo punto del testo\(^{19}\) il lettore è invitato ad interpretare gli strani termini con cui è descritto il comportamento della grandezza per comprendere una verità che riguarda Socrate: fuggire e lasciare il proprio posto oppure morire sono infatti precisamente le alternative che si trova davanti Socrate in carcere. Egli, dice Platone tra le righe, rappresenta la grandezza che, all'avvicinarsi della piccolezza - il verdetto del processo - può fuggire oppure morire. Egli sceglierà la seconda ipotesi perché, proprio come la grandezza di cui si parla nel nostro passo, “non vuole essere altro da ciò che era”. La grandezza non diventerà mai piccolezza: Socrate non si abbasserà mai al livello dei suoi accusatori. Se infatti un contrario accogliesse qualcosa di contrario alla propria natura, cambierebbe la propria natura: Socrate non potrebbe praticare la fuga e restare filosofo. Questa interpretazione è suggerita dal testo con l’uso dell’espressione ἢ φεῦγειν καὶ ὑπεκχωρεῖν nell’alternativa tra ἢ φεῦγειν καὶ ὑπεκχωρεῖν da un lato e ἢ προσελθόντος ἀπολωλέναι, dall’altro. Delle due l’una (ἀλλὰ δυοῖν τὸ ἔτερον), dice Platone, “o fugge e abbandona il suo posto”, oppure all’avvicinarsi del contrario si distrugge. L’espressione è adatta a descrivere il comportamento di un guerriero, che può sfuggire, sottrarsi alla battaglia, abbandonare il suo posto, testimoniando così di non essere un eroe, ma è decisamente insolita per la predicazione di una caratteristica, qual è la grandezza, in un contesto argomentativo di ordine logico-linguistico. L’uso di termini adatti a un certo campo semantico in un altro contesto di discorso, è un altro dei modi della scrittura platonica che consentono ad essa di dire qualcosa nascostamente, solo a chi sappia intenderla. Lì dove usa termini significativi di un messaggio altro, Platone segnala l’operazione che sta compiendo, segnala il doppio registro del messaggio, usando il verbo συγγράφω che letteralmente indica l’atto del ritrarre insieme, del riportare entrambi i sensi del discorso, quello esplicito e quello implicito, con un solo termine.

In tutti gli altri esempi, che descrivono ciò che accade ad un contrario all’arrivo del suo contrario sono utilizzati termini altri da questi che qui fanno riferimento alla fuga, e dunque è qui e solo qui che Platone, con la sua scrittura visiva, racconta di quella fuga che mai avvenne e che ha consentito a Socrate di diventare immortale.

Summary:

According to Plato, philosophy is not a practice of reading or writing, but it is structurally linked to dialogic orality: only by taking part in a dialogue it is possible to practice philosophy, and philosophy is a first-hand experience; that is the reason why you cannot read it or write it, or listen to it in a passive way. The visual writing of the dialogues is able to show the speakers of the dialogue and, moreover, is able to show what the characters are speaking about. Thanks to the visual writing, we, inasmuch as readers, can join in the dialogue. In my opinion the readers, by reading the Phaedo, live an experience of participation in the conversation that resembles that felt by Echecrates when Phaedo tells him what Socrates told during his the last day of life. The text of Plato is capable of creating similarities and likely images. It fascinates the reader and makes possible the process of assimilation by inviting him to join a text that broadens minds and offers a reflection on a way of life. Echecrates is enchanted by the account. He feels, by listening, the same emotion felt by the characters of the story that he is listening to. The assimilation of the listeners to the protagonists of the story recounted and, in analogy to it, the assimilation of us, i.e. the readers, to the listeners, which are inside the dialogues, is just one of the effect of the visual writing of the dialogues. The boundary line among narrative levels may be broken in order to lead the audience to a narrative level that is inside another one.

\(^{19}\) Che peraltro comincia la proposizione successiva con le parole ὥσπερ ἐγὼ.
(see James Henderson Collins). The dialogues belong to the genre of the *protreptikos logos* and they are the result of a bold and successful Platonic attempt: they engage the readers in the practice of philosophy. As far as I am concerned, I try to show the mimetic operators of the visual writing that can be found in the *Phaedo*. A mimetic operator of the visual writing is ὥσπερ, the conjunction that has more than seventy occurrences in the *Phaedo*. It determines, with its scenic potentiality, a series of images that allows the reader and the listener to look at and see what the characters are speaking about. The conjunction ὥσπερ introduces a comparison and when something is compared to something else, that something else is added to the scene with all the visual semantic frills. The role of ὥσπερ in the *Phaedo* is not to show existing similarities, already recognized, but, on the contrary, is to create innovative assimilations which have to reverse established values.
Socrates' account of the illusions associated with pleasure is made by way of two contrasts between the philosopher, who is immune to them, and the non-philosopher, who is not. The first kind of illusion is found in the contrast between the soul of the philosopher and the soul of the non-philosopher after both are separate from the body in death. The former soul, although joined to a body in life, maintained its distance from it. When this soul goes away, in death, to what is like itself—the invisible, the divine, the deathless, and the wise—it is happy, delivered from wandering, ignorance, fears, and wild passions. By contrast, the soul of the non-philosopher leaves this life defiled and impure because it “was always with the body and cared for it and loved it and was fascinated (gegoêteumenê) by it and its desires and pleasures, so that it thought nothing was true except the corporeal, which one can touch and see and drink and eat and employ in the pleasures of love…” (81a-c). The second kind of illusion is found in another contrast between the soul of the philosopher and the soul of the non-philosopher before death. The philosopher's soul undertakes the discipline of separation from pleasures, desires, pains, and fears; thereby it escapes the greatest evil. The soul of the non-philosopher does not escape this evil. “… the soul of every man, when it is greatly pleased or pained by anything, is compelled to believe that the object which caused the emotion is very distinct and very true; but it is not. These objects are mostly the visible ones, are they not?” (82e-83d)

There are two extended accounts of the illusions associated with pleasure. One is in Republic 9 and the other is in Philebus. In this paper I wish to use both to explore the illusions of pleasure in the Phaedo. I do not mean to maintain a thesis about the development of Plato's thought on this topic. I will rely on the softer assumption that the three accounts are related in such a way that they can be fruitfully compared. In fact, I will explore whether the account of the illusions caused by pleasure mixed with pain in Republic 9 and in Philebus can explain the illusions associated with pleasure in the Phaedo. Although both accounts are complex, I will select only portions of each. First, in the Republic, is the illusion that the absence of pain is pure pleasure. Second, in the Philebus, is the illusion that intense pleasure is pure pleasure.

The account in the Republic begins with Socrates recounting the way those who are sick say that nothing is sweeter than to be healthy; in general, people in severe pain say that there is no greater pleasure than the cessation of suffering (583c-d). There is also the opposite phenomenon: the cessation of pleasure is said to be painful. However, the cessation of pain, as well as the cessation of pleasure, is in reality a neutral state, between pleasure and pain, called calm (hêsuchia). Socrates explains that pleasure and pain are motions; the neutral state is cessation of motion (583e). So, it is wrong to think the cessation of pain is pleasure or the absence of enjoyment pain. However, the juxtaposition of calm with pain appears to be pleasant, and the juxtaposition of pleasure with calm appears painful. But there is
nothing sound in these appearances with respect to the truth of pleasure; they are a kind of sorcery (goêteia) (584a-b).

So stated, the illusion is puzzling. Pain gives way to the neutral state of calm; but what is really calm appears to be pleasure. It is not just that pleasure is actually absent from the episode; rather, there is no explanation of the means by which the appearance of pleasure arises. There seems to be a missing step in the description. There is no answer to the question: why should the cessation of pain seem pleasurable and not just appear to be what it is, calm? In the face of this question, the appearance of pleasure seems gratuitous.

The missing step is, in fact, added. In order to defeat the idea that pleasure by nature is preceded by pain, Socrates cites the pleasure of smell as an example of pleasure not preceded by pain. Thus, one should not think that pure pleasure is the cessation of pain (mé ara pheitheômetha katharan hêdonên einai tén lupês apallagên) (584c1-2). Up to this point, Socrates has been talking only about the appearance of pleasure; now he is talking about pleasure as such. So pleasure is not just the appearance of pleasure. Moreover, there is a belief that pleasure is by nature preceded by pain—which is then shown to be false. If pure pleasure is not preceded by pain then, since it is pleasure, pleasure is not by nature preceded by pain. At this point, however, Socrates concedes that what are called pleasures that stretch through the body to the soul, the most and the greatest, are a kind of release from pain (lupôn tines apallagai) (584c6-7). So, even if pleasure is not just release from pain, there is a sense in which release from pain can be part of the most and the greatest of bodily pleasures. We can explain this relation between these bodily pleasures and release from pain by starting with what we already know, viz., that pleasures are motions; later we learn that the motion is a kind of filling while pain is a kind of emptiness (585a-b; 585d-e). Since pleasure is a process of filling an emptiness and since emptiness is painful, these pleasures occur simultaneously with pain. We find this simultaneous mixture of pleasure and pain in the Gorgias (496c-e). Thus, the bodily pleasure of filling exists side by side with the pain of emptiness. Then, at least in these cases, we can understand the reason that the cessation of pain appears to be pleasure. One comes to think that the cessation of pain would leave pure pleasure, i.e., pleasure unmixed with pain. This result is confirmed by what Socrates has already said, viz., that it is wrong to think that the cessation of pain is pure pleasure. However, why would he say pure pleasure instead of just pleasure? We can understand the reason if the mistaken belief is based on the assumption that, once the pain of emptiness has ceased, pleasure alone remains. In effect, Socrates is denying the pleasure of satiety—the pleasure of being in a state of fulfillment. After all, if pleasure is just filling, once the filling is over so is the pleasure.

What Socrates says next reinforces this interpretation. He goes on to expand this account with a spatial analogy that depends on an absolute up and an absolute down. The person with no experience of the absolute up would mistake the middle for absolute up. Just so, the person with no experience of truth and reality would intensely believe, when moving from pain to the middle state of calm, that they are approaching fulfillment and pleasure. Just as, they might compare gray to black, in ignorance of white, so they are deceived in comparing pain with painlessness, through ignorance of pleasure (584d-585a). We can think of gray as a mixture of black and white or as between black and white. The spatial analogy implies the latter. The analogue of black is absolute down and the analogue of gray is the middle region, between absolute down and absolute up. The error, then, in the color analogy comes from comparing black with gray and consists in thinking that gray—what is between black and white—is white, through ignorance of white. In turn, the error with respect to pleasure comes from comparing pain—the analogue of black and of
absolute down—to what is between pleasure and pain, the neutral state of calm—the analogue of gray and of the middle region. From the comparison comes the false belief that the neutral state is pure pleasure—the analogue of white (which is unmixed with black) and absolute up. However, the difference between the color analogy and the case of pleasure and pain is that the color analogy is not a process whereas the mixture of pleasure and pain is a process—as is the movement from absolute down to the middle region. So the error that results from the comparison of pain with the process of filling what is empty, in which pleasure and pain are mixed, is the belief that, when the process is over, only pleasure would be left—a belief made possible only by ignorance of pleasure, i.e., never experiencing pleasure just by itself.

In the Philebus, Socrates explores anew the theme of pleasure mixed with pain and its relation to illusions about pleasure. While Socrates recounts several different types of illusion, we will focus on only one. It depends on the previously given, general account of pain as disruption and pleasure as restoration (42d); however, Socrates adds a neutral state between disruption and restoration—a state of equilibrium that is neither pleasurable nor painful (43d). To think that it is either is a mistake (43e). At this point, one might expect, as in Republic 9, an argument to show how the mixture of pleasure and pain causes the neutral state to appear pleasurable. However, Socrates takes a different tack. The mixture can make pleasure seem intense and great; but this exaggerated appearance of the underlying pleasure is not pure or true pleasure, although some seem to think it is. Socrates focuses on the strongest and most intense pleasures in order to understand the nature of pleasure (44e-45a). These kinds of pleasure are “proceeded by the greatest desires (45b).” For instance, feverish patients suffer thirst and chill. “Do they not feel greater deprivations, and also greater pleasures at their replenishment? (45b-c).” These pleasures are obviously mixed with pain; but their intensity and greatness is due to the strength of the contrast between the two. In these types of cases, the pleasure and pain can be equal or one can outweigh the other (46d-e). The ones of greatest interest involve a surplus of pleasure over pain; here the “predominant part of pleasure” causes “leaping and kicking, color changes of all sorts, distortion of features, and wild palpitations (47a).” By contrast, true pleasure is unmixed with pain; it is, thus, pure pleasure. Socrates gives several examples of bodily pleasures that are not associated with lack and pain, such as beautiful colors and forms, odors and sounds (51b-c). Finally, he adds the pure pleasure of knowledge (52a-c). So, although the investigation of the nature of pleasure started with the greatest and most intense pleasures, these are not true pleasures; true pleasures are pure, unmixed with pain. Thus, the error this account exposes is thinking that intense pleasure is true pleasure.

Without further analysis of this account of the mixture of pleasure and pain in Republic 9 and in the Philebus, we can see how it illuminates the notion of the illusion associated with pleasure in the Phaedo. First of all, the dialogue begins with the theme of the mixture of pleasure and pain. Phaedo himself reflects on the unusual mixing together of pleasure and of pain that he felt in the company of Socrates on the day of his death (59a). Then Socrates’ appearance starts with his remarks about the way pleasure and pain are mixed, as he rubs his leg where the shackles have just been removed (60b-c). The reader of the dialogues cannot help but think of the account of mixed pleasures in Republic 9 and in the Philebus. In fact, if we return to the illusions associated with pleasure, we find explicit textual links. First of all is the theme of enchantment. When Socrates, in the Phaedo, says the soul is enchanted (gegoêteumenê) by bodily desires and pleasures, he links this experience to the way the mixture of pleasure and pain leads to the illusion that
the neutral state of calm is pleasure—a phenomenon that Socrates, in Republic 9, calls a kind of enchantment (goêteia). Second is the way the mixture of pleasure and pain is intense. In citing the role of intense pleasures and pains (hêsthēnai ê lupêthēnai sphodra) as the source of the second kind of false belief, Socrates reminds his readers of the way the mixture of pleasure and pain, in Republic 9, are phantoms of true pleasure whose juxtaposition makes them appear intense (sphodrous) and of the account of the so-called strongest and most intense pleasures (tas akrotatas kai sphodratatas legoumenas) in Philebus.

However, when Socrates comes to the illusions associated with pleasures in the Phaedo, he does not invoke their mixture with pain to explain the illusions. In fact, he does not explain them at all. Still, the mixture of pleasure and pain has a role to play in their explanation. To see this role, let us now focus on the illusions themselves. The errors associated with pleasure are: (1) being enchanted by its desires and pleasures, the soul thinks nothing true but the bodily, what one touches, sees, drinks, eats, and uses for sexual pleasure and (2) it believes, in the face of great or intense pain or pleasure, that that about which one is pleased or pained is very distinct and very true.

We can begin with the account, in Philebus, of the way the mixture of pleasure and pain can lead to the intensification of pleasure, which is then mistaken for pure or true pleasure. The way pleasure mixed with pain becomes intense— and thus confused with true pleasure—explains the illusions of pleasure in the Phaedo. First, let us look at (1) above. The soul is enchanted by bodily desires and pleasures. If we understand desire to be painful—as it is in Gorgias 496c-e—then the enchantment is due to a mixture of pleasure and pain. The result of this enchantment is the belief that nothing is true but that which serves the satisfaction of bodily desire. We can understand (1) thanks to the account of illusions associated with pleasure. Because it does not know the distinction between pure pleasure and pleasure mixed with pain, this soul believes (1’) nothing is true pleasure but the satisfaction of bodily desire. According to Republic 9 and Philebus, (1’) is false because it is contradicted by the existence of the unmixed pleasure of knowledge. Thus, we can understand why bodily pleasures enchant the soul into believing that nothing is true but that which serves the satisfaction of bodily desire. Pleasures mixed with pain enchant the soul so that it cannot recognize the pleasures associated with knowledge. Lacking knowledge, then, the soul fails to recognize what is real and true. However, assuming that he has the pure pleasure associated with knowledge, the philosopher will not be enchanted by bodily desire and pleasure into thinking nothing is true but the bodily.

The way that the mixture of pleasure and pain leads to illusion also explains (2): the belief, in the face of intense pain and pleasure, that that about which one is pleased or pained is very distinct and very true. That about which one is pleased or pained is pleasing or painful situations. As in the Philebus, one is pleased by the prospect of gaining a lot of gold and the accompanying pleasures (40a-b). The mistake is in thinking that that about which one is pleased, i.e., gaining a lot of gold, is the clearest and the truest. However, the predicates ‘clear’ and ‘true’ can be completed by such terms as ‘good’ and ‘evil’ or ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain.’ One might mistakenly believe, for instance, that gaining a lot of gold is the clearest and the truest good. Equally, one might mistakenly believe that gaining a lot of gold is the clearest and truest pleasure. So (2) implies, with respect to pleasure, (2’): the belief, in the face of intense pleasure, that that about which one is pleased is a very distinctly pleasurable situation and is a very truly pleasurable situation. The error is in thinking that intense pleasure is pure and true pleasure. The account of the illusions of pleasure explains the falsity of this belief by showing that intense pleasure is not distinct from pain but, in fact, is
intense because it is mixed with pain. Then, because it is not pure pleasure it cannot be true pleasure. In turn, the philosopher would not be misled into thinking great and intense pleasure and pain are very distinct and very true; he would be able to distinguish between intense pleasure, which is mixed with pain, and true pleasure.

While the account, in Philebus, of illusion associated with intense pleasure explains the philosopher’s immunity to these false beliefs, the account of a different sort of illusion, in Republic 9, explains his detachment from the body. If the philosopher understands the way the illusions arise, he would be able to appreciate the true nature of desire and pleasure. Since the philosopher knows the pure pleasure that accompanies knowledge, he would recognize that bodily pleasure’s mixture with pain leads to the enchanting illusion that the neutral state of calm is pleasure. Free of this illusion, the philosopher would understand that bodily pleasure ends in calm. This recognition undermines the idea that pleasure is an end in itself; rather, it is a process whose end is the state of calm. As Philebus 53c ff shows, pleasure is becoming; it is for the sake of some being. If he knows that pleasure is for the sake of calm, the philosopher would know not only that intense pleasure is exaggerated by mixture with pain but that its proper end is the state of calm. This sort of knowledge implies that being in the state of calm is more valuable than pleasure.

This subordination of the value of pleasure to the state of calm is a very good way to understand the state of the philosopher’s soul when he arrives in the afterlife. Of course, before that, in association with the body, the philosopher still lives with the mixture of pleasure and pain. He also lives according to the truth that the cessation of pleasure and pain is the calm state—the necessarily fleeting state of equilibrium between emptiness and filling. In death, however, the philosopher will not have the body and its emptying and filling. His soul will be in a permanent state of calm. So that it will not be necessary to have recourse to his philosophical beliefs in order to distance himself from the body’s desires and pleasures. Up until that point, however, his focus on the neutral state of calm is a kind of foretaste of the afterlife.

Moreover, because it is permanently in this state of calm after death, the soul of the philosopher is like that to which it goes, viz., the divine (81a-b). In his extensive discussion of pleasure in the Philebus, Socrates says that it is possible to have a kind of life in which there is neither pleasure nor pain; in fact, he poses the possibility that an entire life of this sort is divine. After all, it is not likely that the gods experience pleasure or its opposite because it is unseemly for them to have either of these (33a-c). Previously this sort of life was said not to be choice-worthy (21d-e); now it is said to be divine. Nevertheless, Socrates breaks off the discussion, postponing it to another time. However, we can now see that, in the afterlife, the philosopher has achieved the same divine status. Of course, while the philosopher will be similar to the gods in this respect, he has a different history. In his bodily existence, he had to adopt beliefs that insulated him from possible illusions arising from the mixed pleasures of the body. So, arriving in the afterlife is a kind of deliverance.

Le Phédon commence par deux observations sur le plaisir mélangé avec la peine. Phédon décrit « un mélange inouï, fait à la fois de plaisir et de peine » qu’inspire la dernière conversation avec Socrate (59a). Puis, Socrate lui-même, quand on a enlevé ses chaînes, note le mélange curieux d’agréable avec pénible (60 b-c). Enfin, dans le dialogue, Socrate avertit ses interlocuteurs des illusions que le corps cause dans l’âme. (1) « …il (le corps) l’avait (l’âme) si bien ensorcelée par ses désirs et ses joies qu’elle ne tenait rien d’autre pour vrai que ce qui a figure de corps, que ce qui peut se toucher et se voir, se boire, se manger et servir à l’amour »
(81b).² (2) « C'est qu'en toute âme humaine, forcément, l'intensité du plaisir ou de la peine à tel ou tel propos s'accompagne de la croyance que l'objet précisément de cette émotion, c'est tout ce qu'il y a de plus clair et de plus vrai, alors qu'il n'en est point ainsi. » (83c).³ Pourtant, Socrate ne donne pas d'explication pour ces fausses opinions. Néanmoins, ces passages rappellent au lecteur les deux explications des illusions provoquées par le plaisir mélangé avec la douleur dans la République (583e-586d) et dans le Philèbe (46b-47b ; 51b-52c). La première explication figure dans le long discours de Socrate sur les sortes de faux plaisirs. Les plaisirs les plus grands et les plus intenses sont mélangés aux douleurs (46b-47b) ; mais seulement les plaisirs purs—non pas mélangés aux douleurs—sont vrais (51b-52c). Pourtant, il y a des gens que l'intensité (causée par le mélange) trompe ; donc ils croient que les plaisirs intenses sont de vrais plaisirs. La deuxième explication se trouve dans la République 9 où Socrate argumente qu'entre plaisir et douleur il y a un troisième état, le repos (hêsuchia)—ni plaisir ni douleur. Pourtant, il y a des gens que le mélange de plaisir et de douleur trompe ; ils croient que l'absence de douleur est un plaisir. Dans ma communication, je soutiendrai, en premier lieu, que le compte-rendu qui se trouve dans le Philèbe explique les deux fausses opinions que nous avons vues dans le Phédon. Les deux se fondent sur la fausse idée que le vrai plaisir s'identifie au plaisir intense. Puis, je soutiendrai, en second lieu, que l'argument de la République 9 explique le détachement du corps que le philosophe entretient dans sa vie. Puis qu'il sait que le plaisir se termine dans le repos, il peut mettre en valeur l'état du repos ; donc, il peut se dissocier du plaisir corporel. De plus, l'argument de la République 9 explique la similarité entre l'âme du philosophe et l'état des dieux. Après sa mort, parce qu'il a échappé au corps et à ses plaisirs, le philosophe reste dans l'état du repos, sans plaisir ni douleur. Dans le Philèbe, Socrate remarque que les dieux sont toujours dans cet état parce qu'ils n'ont ni plaisir ni douleur (33a-c).

(Endnotes)

2 Platon: Phédon, p. 41.

3 Platon: Phédon, p. 45.


5 Fowler, p. 291.

6 Citations of the Greek text are from Burnet's edition of the Republic in Oxford Classical Texts (1978)


8 Frede, p.434-5.

9 Frede, p. 436.

10 In a section of Republic 9 that we did not consider, Socrates also talks about the way that intense pleasure is mistaken for true pleasure (586a-c).
Metaphors of body and soul in the *Phaedo* [a view from the swamp of social history]

Patterson, Cynthia

In his discussion of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, Plato’s Socrates employs three striking metaphors to illuminate the soul’s relation to the body; the soul is imagined as enslaved to (66c), imprisoned in/shackled to (esp. 82e), or polluted by (80e ff. and passim) the body. Other less highly charged metaphors are offered as well in the counter-arguments of Socrates’ interlocutors (the soul as like the harmony created by a musical instrument, introduced by Simmias at 85e; and, from Cebes at 87b, the soul as analogous to the weaver who makes cloaks), but slavery, imprisonment, and pollution provide the dominant metaphorical images of the dialogue and are my focus in this paper. I come to this topic as a social historian interested in Plato’s creative engagement with the cultural traditions and language of his contemporary Greek society. My subtitle in inspired by Plato’s depiction of the corner (or hollow) of the world in which he lived as a world ‘bogged down’ with corruption and disease; “we live, “ explains Socrates, “around the sea like frogs or ants around a swamp” realizing only rarely or not at all the existence of a purer and healthier -- and happier - realm on the earth’s true surface.1

Looking closely at the language with which Socrates (or Plato) expresses the mortal embodiment of the immortal soul as a kind of bondage calls attention to the social realities of slavery and bondage that undergirded Athenian society and created the context of Socrates’ situation and Plato’s narrative. At the same time, Socrates’ extended and imaginative use of the language of pollution and corruption reveals and underlines the influence of contemporary medical and religious discussions of illness and disease on Plato’s thought and supports, I suggest, the traditional interpretation of Socrates’ final words (“we owe a cock to Asclepius”) as an appropriate offering to the patron god of healing for the impending release and purification of Socrates’ soul.

Shackles and Bondage, Prisons and Cages

I begin with the physically and sensually vivid image of imprisonment – in Greek terms being “in bonds” or “in shackles.” Phaedo’s narrative at the start of the dialogue calls immediate and explicit attention to this physical feature of imprisonment with its depiction of Socrates rubbing his leg, which has just been released from its shackle (60b). It is not entirely clear just how imprisonment worked in Athens – and whether there was in fact what the archaeologists would call a “purpose-built” prison in Athens in which Socrates and other prisoners were kept.2 But what is clear is that imprisonment entailed the physical pain and public

1 Plato certainly alludes here to the geography of Aristophanes’ *Frogs* – and much more. On the origins and textual interconnections of the *Phaedo* myth, see especially Elizabeth Pender’s rich and comprehensive discussions (Pender 2012, 2013). Although in this paper I emphasize the contemporary 5th and 4th century context of Plato’s metaphors, earlier literary and pre-Socratic philosophic traditions are likewise key for interpreting and understanding the dialogue’s arguments and images.

2 See Hunter 1997. Hunter is not persuaded that the “poros building” in the Athenian agora identified by Eugene Vanderpool as the “Prison of Athens” in fact
humiliation of being shackled. It was corporal punishment – something from which Athenian citizens were in most cases protected. What we speak of as the Athenian prison (desmoterion) was given its name by the instruments (desmoi) through which prisoners were held for trial, for execution after trial (as in Socrates’ case), for surety of payment of fines, or in some cases as a penalty per se. The importance of Plato’s setting Socrates’ final conversation (or oration) on the nature of the soul in the “place of shackles” is certainly well-recognized, but emphasizing the physical nature and pain of shackling adds significantly to the impact of Socrates’ use of this and related metaphors (e.g. of being in a cage) as he discusses the immortality of the soul. The metaphor of bondage first appears at 67d1 in close connection with the other two metaphors under discussion here – pollution and slavery. All three metaphors appear in this portion of the conversation. At 66b6 Socrates speaks of the psyche as mixed or kneaded with evil’ -- sumpephurmene 66b6 – a metaphorical variant within the metaphor of contamination; and a short while later (66d1) he says that the soul -- or, using the personal voice, we are slaves/douleuontes to the service of the body. At 67c4- d2, Socrates brings this phase of the argument to a conclusion with a return to the imprisonment metaphor:

And does not purification (katharsis) consist ... In separating, so far as possible, the soul from the body and teaching the soul the habit of collecting and bringing itself together from all parts of the body and living, so far as it can, both now and hereafter, alone by itself, freed from the body as from desmoi?

But, if by chance we did not appreciate the physical force of the use of desmoi here, Socrates drives the point home a bit later at 82d9—83e4 with a related but somewhat different metaphor. True “lovers of knowledge” says Socrates perceive that when philosophy first takes possession of their soul, it is entirely fastened and welded to the body and is compelled to regard realities through the body as through a cage (di’ eirgmou), not with its own unhindered vision, and is wallowing in utter ignorance (en pase amathia kulindoumenen).

Here the imprisonment image is that of an animal in a pen or cage, “wallowing” in not mud but ignorance.

Then, philosophy itself (or herself) sees further that the most dreadful thing about the imprisonment (literally being in a cage -- tou eirgmou ten deinoteta) is the fact that it is caused by [its own] desires [epithumias] so that the one imprisoned (ho dedemenos) is the chief assistant in his own imprisonment (tou dedesthai).

Summing up this image, Socrates asks “is the soul then not completely put in bondage by the body (malista katadeitai psyche hup’ somatos – 83d1-2-)? To which he answers with the strong and vivid affirmation:

each pleasure or pain nails it [the soul] as with a nail to the body and rivets it on and makes it corporeal, so that it fancies the things are true which the body says are true....(d2-6)

Plato’s emphasis on the physicality of bondage in his use of the metaphor of the soul’s bondage to the body makes then the opening of the Phaedo particularly striking – and paradoxical. We encounter the prisoner Socrates with his leg just loosed from its shackle for the last time as he faces execution; and we also recognize a philosopher who has committed his life to the pursuit of virtue and to that extent already freed from the most significant sort of bondage and imprisonment -- being served that function. See also Allen 1997. For Plato’s use of prisons in the Laws, see Hunter 2008. On execution in Athens, see Todd 2000.

3 Translations of the Phaedo are based on the Loeb translation by Harold North Folwer.
ruled by bodily pleasures and pains and ‘wallowing’ in ignorance – that the dialogue goes on to detail. Further, Phaedo moves from noting Socrates’ experience of both physical pain and pleasure in his leg (as it is unshackled) to relating that Socrates was inspired by that experience to invent an ‘Aesopic’ fable for the occasion in which “a god” attempts to reconcile the warring figures of pleasure and pain by fastening their heads together, with the result for humans that one never comes without the other. And then we hear of Socrates’ project on turning Aesop’s mythoi to verse (60c-61b). By introducing the figure of the slave Aesop into this prison discussion, Plato also introduces the metaphor of slavery.

The Slave Condition and the Soul

The introduction of Aesop into the Phaedo in this manner has seemed more or less significant to different readers of the dialogue. Recently, Leslie Kurke has argued that the opening interchange is a “programmatic passage in which Plato goes to some trouble to affiliate his prose dialogues with Aesopic fable and Socrates himself with Aesop.” Using the late and anonymous Life (dating at the earliest to the 1st or 2nd centuries CE), Kurke develops the thesis that Aesop and his fables are an essential part of the cultural context in which (or against which) Plato invented the genre of the prose dialogue. We may or may not believe that Plato was aware of all the details of the depiction of Aesop developed in the Life -- such as that he was an extraordinarily ugly Phrygian slave with a sharp tongue, and a quick wit that was the match for his superiors and eventually won him his freedom but also led to his ignominious execution. Nonetheless, as Kurke shows, some basic details of his life and fables were already established in the 5th century. Herodotus provides a bit of indirect testimony on Aesop’s servile background, and a well-known Athenian red-figure cup from the mid-fifth century most likely represents Aesop in conversation with a fox. Here Aesop appears as grotesquely disproportioned, although not “snub-nosed and swarthy” as in the Life. Kurke’s suggestion that Socrates’ supposed

4 Socrates’ Aesopic story of the double-headed figure of pleasure and pain is included in a new Penguin edition of Aesop’s Fables!
5 Rowe (1993), for example, seems uninterested in the choice of Aesop – either as author or historical figure – as a source of material for Socrates’ new poetic career.
7 Referring to Andrea Nightingale’s Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construction of Philosophy (Cambridge 1995), Kurke suggests that “we need to supplement earlier historicizing, intertextual readings of Plato by acknowledging Aesop and the traditions around the figure of Aesop as significant precursors for Platonic dialogue in general and the characterization of Socrates in particular” (247); somewhat later, after noting scholarly attention to Plato’s connections with both comic and tragic drama, she says that “the beginning of the Phaedo offers us an equally provocative programmatic scene for the complex generic affiliations of Socratic dialogue – but a scene that has been studiously ignored by most Plato scholars” (260). See Kurke’s note 47 on p. 260 for further development of her claim in reference to scholarly attention. The final sentence of this note, concluding that “Aesopic texts like the Life and the fables are assumed to be late and therefore not relevant to the writing of Plato and Xenophon” seems a pre-emptive attempt to bury an obvious objection. But the Life and many of the fables are late and certainly later than the 4th century in which Plato and Xenophon were writing.
8 See Book 2.134 for Herodotus’ comments on the Thracian born Egyptian courtesan Rhodopis, who earlier in Samos had been a fellow slave of “Aesop the story teller.” Herodotus adds that Aesop’s death at the hands of the Delphians prompted an oracle and the offer of compensation for his death (which a descendant of his Samian master accepted).
9 On the connections to Socratic portraiture see further Paul Zanker (1996).
“ugliness” (cf. Symposium 215b and Theaetetus 143) evoked the image of the slave Aesop is to me less compelling than Plato’s own comparison of him (via Alcibiades’ speech in the Symposium) to Silenus. But Socrates’ evocation early in the Phaedo of the mythoi of the slave Aesop, which Socrates has now decided to put into verse, is certainly significant. Introducing Aesop effectively introduces the issue of slavery; as much as the metaphor will be ‘stretched’ (see further below) in the discussion to come, slavery is, as we know, not a metaphor but a lived reality. Here, it is important to note that the language of bondage already discussed connects directly with that of slavery. The deprivation of freedom of movement and the humiliation of being treated as cattle (shackled or yoked and penned) were essential to and perhaps even the essential feature of the status of chattel slave in the ancient Greek world. The use of the term “andrapodon,” “man-footed” (and related words) for slave in analogy with “tetrapodon” or “four footed” vividly makes the point, as does the frequent ‘animalization’ of slaves in both literary and visual description. When, in the Apology, Socrates considers counter-proposals to his accusers’ demand for a penalty of death, he considers but rejects the possibility of imprisonment, saying “why should I lie in prison a slave to those who may be in authority” (en desmoterio, douleuonta te aei kathistamene archei - 37c1-2). The physical domination of the slave's body was what made possible the use of that body for service, and from this perspective Socrates’ connection of an imprisoned soul with a servile soul is in keeping with the realities of his society.10

When speaking of the metaphor of slavery it is important to emphasize the power and depth of the image; there was in Plato's day an established “semantic stretch” – to use a phrase of Geoffrey Lloyd -- in the use of doulos and related terms. “Semantic stretch,” as I understand Lloyd's term, suggests that the metaphorical use of a term does not preclude its retaining the immediately and power of the literal sense – we need not say that a word's use is strictly either literal or metaphorical, but can recognize that when words “stretch” in meaning the immediacy of the literal meaning (here the physical reality of person as thing/property) is not lost but rather adds power to the ‘stretched’ or metaphorical usage. So, for example, we find Herodotus and Thucydides clearly employing the political metaphor of douleia as servile subservience and Aristophanes as clearly enjoying the comic possibilities of the image in political contexts.11 In using and making the “stretchable” language of slavery – douleia -- critical to his discussion of the relationship of the soul and body (in the Phaedo and elsewhere), and in directly connecting Socrates with the ostensibly servile figure of Aesop, Plato heightens the reader's awareness of the paradoxical and marvelous character of his philosophical hero who despite his

10 In the Phaedo Plato may be drawing on more than the popular figure of Aesop to give substance to the metaphors of slavery. If Diogenes Laeertius can be trusted (a big if), the dialogue’s narrator, Phaedo of Elis, had himself once been a slave. As related by Diogenes, Phaedo was a well born Elian who after the defeat of his city was taken prisoner and made a slave. He was forced to serve as a prostitute, but was rescued and freed by friends of Socrates (DL 2. 105). He then went on to become a Socratic follower and eventually set up his own school in Elis. Some doubt the story, but Deborah Nails takes it as reliable, citing in particular an article from 1989 of E.I. McQueen and Christopher Rowe (The People of Plato with references). See also Kostas Vlassopoulos, “Greek Slavery: from domination to property and back again, “ JHS 131 (2011) 115-130 . Vlassopoulos argues for a more basic and expandable meaning of douleia as 'domination' and not necessarily chattel slavery.

11 Note however, that Herodotus, like Plato, can envision a positive “enslavement” to the law. See Kamen 2013 with bibliography.
physically painful bondage and imminent execution remains in control of his own
soul -- and of the discussion at hand. 12

Pollution and Purification/ Religion and Medicine

Geoffrey Lloyd introduced the term “semantic stretch” in a discussion of the
meaning of the term katharsis, and it is especially helpful for understanding the
third of Socrates’ main metaphors for the body/soul relationship in the Phaedo, that of pollution or contamination. Plato’s idea is that in this mortal life our souls run the risk of metaphorical contamination through contact or interactions with the bodies in which they/we live is a thread running through the dialogue. The idea appears already in Socrates’ opening comments at 66-67 on the “contaminated” (sumpephurmene) condition of the soul through intrusion of the needs and desires of the body, continues through the more complex arguments about knowing ‘forms’ [by using reasoning not corrupted by sense perception], and culminates in the mythic image of the cosmos with which Socrates concludes his discussion. Can this metaphor then explain Socrates’ enigmatic last words: “We owe a cock to Asclepius, Crito. Pay it and do not forget” (118a7-8). Is Socrates suggesting that as his soul is about to be finally healed of its bodily contamination an offering to the healing god is in order? Certainly many have taken his words in that way, but some have objected strongly that Socrates does not consider life as a disease to be cured by death: “nowhere does he ever adopt the view that life is an illness or that death is its cure” asserted Glenn Most (1993). Indeed, said Most, the idea is not Socrates’ but Cebes’. Although admitting that the soul may last “a long while,” Cebes (as Socrates presents his argument) still insisted that its immortality is not proven, but suggested that at some point the soul’s “entrance into the human body was the beginning of its destruction (olethros) – like a disease (hosper nosos) – and it lives in toil through this life and finally perishes in what we call death” (95d1-5). Certainly we can all agree with Most that Socrates’ presentation of Cebes’ argument does not present Socrates own view! But Most concludes further that Socrates could not have considered his own death as in any way some sort of healing for which Asclepius could be acknowledged. This seems, however, to go too far. Even if life is itself not a disease, living in the body can nonetheless be imagined as a source of (metaphorical) pollution and illness for the immortal soul. Logically speaking, therefore, the way is still clear for Socrates’ to suggest that the souls’ separation from the body brings it a purification (katharsis) or healing.

In making his argument, Most insists on separating the language of medicine and healing from that of religion, arguing that Plato uses the language of pollution and purification purely in a religious context: “the register involved is in fact not medical but religious” (101). But Most’s distinction fails to appreciate the remarkable verbal and conceptual overlap between ways of understanding the body, health, and disease that was fundamental to both Hippocratic medicine and Asclepian cult in Plato’s time. This important point has been made authoritatively by others—Geoffrey Lloyd, Philip van der Eijk and R.J. Hankinson in particular – and need not be detailed here. 13 Hippocratic medicine and Asclepian cult were contemporary not antagonistic phenomena, and they shared a common set of conceptual terms. It is evident I think that in the Phaedo Plato seems especially interested in presenting Socrates as a figure whose analytical discussion was “up to date” and medically informed, but also deeply pious. Socrates’ use of the language of contamination and pollution reveals this duality clearly.

12 Cf. Kamen (2013) for another way of reading Plato’s use of the language of slavery – and the suggestion that Socrates’ soul is (metaphorically) manumitted with the death of his body.

A particularly striking example of this contemporary resonance is in Socrates’ extended vision of the fate and separation of body and soul after death (80c1-81d6). Against the visibly decaying but in some respects (“so to speak”) deathless body (i.e. sinews and bones), Socrates sets the invisible and truly immortal soul. The latter may EITHER depart pure (kathara) and not dragging along anything of the body because it had not willingly associated with the body and its desires in this earthly life, OR be weighed down and dragged back into the visible world because it had spent its time in the company of corporeal pleasures. The latter soul is still immortal, but because of its corporeal habits is forced to “flit about the tombs and monuments” of the dead. One soul is pure, the other is not.

Hippocratic writers do not generally use the dichotomy body/soul but rather imagine the mind as a psychic faculty that might reside in the brain (e.g., “On the Sacred Disease”) or the heart (e.g., “On the Diseases of Young Girls”) – or in bodily substances such as blood (e.g. “On Breaths”). Socrates also knows this perspective, recalling his youthful question - “is it blood that we think with, or air, or fire? Or none of these, but the brain that provides sensation” (96b4-10). The author of “On the Sacred Disease” is especially eloquent in his depiction of the brain as the center of consciousness, perception and judgment:

It ought to be generally known that the source of our pleasure, merriment, laughter and amusement, as of our grief, pain, anxiety and tears is none other than the brain (Greek term?). It is specially the organ which enables us to think, see and hear, and to distinguish the ugly and the beautiful, the bad and the good, pleasant and unpleasant (17).14

Accordingly, a disease which afflicts the brain, brought on, the author thinks, by an excess of cold, watery pleghm, has the most serious consequences: convulsions, choking, foaming at the mouth and madness. The author energetically disputes the view of “magicians and charlatans” who consider the disease (usually understood as epilepsy) an affliction from the gods – as if “human bodies could be polluted by a god, the basest object by the most pure!” (4), and regards attempts to cure it with purifications and magic spells to be the height of impiety rather than piety (ibid. cf. 11). Nonetheless, when explaining how the disease develops – even when a child is in the womb – our author speaks of the failure of healthy “katharsis” of excess phlegm. His explanation of the disease is naturalistic, but within the naturalistic account he recognizes the distinction between the psychic faculty and the substances (here phlegm) that can drag down and prevent that faculty’s proper functioning. Another, less well known treatise “On Breaths” speaks of disease as resulting, if epidemic, from infected or polluted air, and if sporadic, from a bad regime (eating, drinking, and exercise) which again cause disruption and excesses in the body as a whole. And if these afflict or “pollute” (14) the source of intelligence (for this author, blood) they cause once again the symptoms of epilepsy noted by the author of “On the Sacred Disease”. One additional text whose author shows an interest in the physiological basis of psychic phenomena is “On the Diseases of Young Girls.” Here, the heart is the location of the psyche and when menstrual blood of girls does not flow out but rather presses upon and ‘numbs’ the heart, madness and despair follow.15

14 Translations of the Hippocratic writers, with the exception of “Diseases of Young Girls,” are based on Penguin translation by Chadwick and Mann. The text and translation of “Diseases of Young Girls” is that of Fleming and Hanson in Early Science and Medicine 3 (1998) 241-252.

15 Does Plato’s description of Socrates death suggest a “heart centered” psychology – with a similar ‘numbness’ reaching his heart? That would not of course fit with Plato’s later extensive comments on human physiology.
The fact that these Hippocratic authors do not use the term ‘soul’ may be less significant that the fact that they show such interest in understanding the physical causes of psychological disease and imbalance – and that they do not see their ‘art’ (techne) as in any way opposed to a religious understanding of health and disease. Rather, as the author of “On the Sacred Disease” asserts, the physician's understanding and response to disease is highly pious in its recognition that disease comes from not from the gods but from the mortal physical world. It would not be surprising at all to find Plato’s Socrates employing metaphorically the medical idea of pollution and purification in his discussion of the nature of the relationship of body and soul.

The word soul (psyche) is employed, however, in the Hippocratic text “On Dreams” (or Regmen IV) which opens with the interesting assertion that

“while the body is awake, the soul is not under its own control, but is split into various portions each being devoted to some bodily function such as hearing, vision, touch, locomotion, and all the various actions of the body. But when the body is at rest, the soul is stirred and roused and becomes its own master, and itself performs all the functions of the body. When the body is sleeping it receives no sensations, but the soul being awake at that time perceives everything; it sees what is visible, it hears what is audible, it walks, it touches, it feels pain and thinks. In short, during sleep the soul performs all the functions of both body and soul” (86).

Although these ideas may or may not seem to have immediate relevance to the interpretation of dreams, they do provide an interesting way of imagining body/soul interaction. Following a general rationalistic line of argument (known for example in Herodotus’ story of Xerxes’ dream, Book 7), the Hippocratic author begins by noting that when a person is in a healthy state, dreams remain generally “true to daytime cognitions” because the soul is “overcome neither by excess nor by emptiness.” But when the opposite occurs and dreams “take on a character contrary to daytimes activities” then there is a problem. The author “makes no judgement” on whether a dreamer should in this case attempt to avert the dream's contents “with appropriate rites” but he does “advise treatment of the body, for an excretion resulting from some bodily superfluity has disturbed the soul.”

Just as these Hippocratic writers use the traditional language of pollution and purification, so also were they not invariably hostile to the claims of religion – they after all belonged to the extended family of Asclepius, as reflected, for example in the Hippocratic “Oath”. So, too, contemporary healing rituals in the sanctuaries of Asclepius show a marked similarity, in the use of recommendations for diet and regime, to the medical practices of contemporary physicians. Perhaps the interpretation of dreams was a meeting ground between the two. This is not the place to argue at length for the “rational” character of much of Asclepian healing practice, but that construal is neither new nor controversial.

Returning now to the Phaedo, It should be evident that Glenn Most’s rigid separation of the two spheres (religious and medical) is mistaken, and his simple statement that “life is not a disease” misses the mark. Life itself is not a disease, but being alive, having both a soul and a body, continually involves the possibility of disease imagined as the disruptive movement or pathology of the body’s constituent parts and so offered a genuine and effective metaphor for Socrates’ discussion of the nature of the soul. And Socrates’ repeated warnings of the contaminating character of the body’s desires and habits, along with his insistence on the need for purification, show why his offering to Asclepius, as he imagines his own soul about to receive its final purification, is entirely appropriate. As Colin Wells has pointed out, Socrates treats his death as a ritual event which ends with a “cock to Asclepius.”

16 Wells (2008)
Socrates receives the “pharmakon” [note Plato’s use of this medical term rather than the name of the plant, konion/hemlock), he asks if he might pour a libation to “some god”. He is refused but then offers a prayer “to the gods that my departure be a fortunate one.”17 The vow to Asclepius is then the final step of the ritual. Is the vow meant to be a literal or rather a metaphorical invocation of the god of healing? In my view, the best answer is “both”. I suggest that Socrates does thank Asclepius for answering his prayer for a fortunate death ---and in doing so calls upon the many-layered meanings of the metaphors he uses in the text to argue for the soul’s immortality and the necessity of the struggle to give it a free and pure access to a better world. That is, his words activate the audience’s associations between catharsis and healing, disease and impurity, and the dialogue’s connection—found also in Hippocratic writers-- between impurity of the soul brought about by the body and impeded psychological functioning. In Plato’s case, this psychological malfunctioning manifests itself in mistaken opinions about what is real, in wayward desires, and a allure to attain full understanding.

Conclusion

In closing, I hope we can see the way in which Plato’s Socrates speaks to and engages with the cultural issues and values of his world – slavery and bondage, but most especially (and more positively) health and healing. Socrates (or Plato) engaged his world creatively and competitively. In the cosmic myth that closes Socrates’ discussion of the nature of the soul in the Phaedo, we are treated to a wonderfully detailed image of a larger earth on which we live in the hollows, surrounded by water, mist, and air, and unaware of the pure air and bright reality of the upper regions. Our situation is just like that of “someone who lives in the depth of the ocean” who because of his “sluggishness and feebleness” can never see more of the wonders of the higher reality than would a fish see of our world if it might for a moment lift its head out of the sea. Plato’s created the Phaedo’ final myth from with inspiration from Pythagorean and Empedokelan texts,18 but this construction of comparative realms of life characterized by different concentrations of water and air seems to me to recall a similar image in an anonymous Hippocratic author, known as “Anonymous Londinesis (from the papyrus now in London). “Anonymous” begins with an assertion and then expands with images:

Breath is the most necessary and most impotent component in us, since health is the result of its free, and disease the result of its impeded, passage. We are like plants: just as they are rooted in the ground, so we are rooted in the air by our nostrils and by our whole body. We are like the water plants called “soldiers.” Just as they, rooted in moisture, are carried now to this moisture and now to that, even so, we, being like plants, are rooted in the air and in motion, changing position now here, now there (quoted in Nutton, Ancient Medicine).

17 Ibid 148: “He’s improvising but he stays focused, intent literally to his last breath on his trademark goal of living and dying well. My explanation shows Socrates wholly committed to leaving this world impeccably (and impeccably), but within the context of his culture and its religious values.” I agree, but would also like to suggest that “his culture and its religious values” included both the new science of medicine and the new healing cult of Asclepius.

18 See Pender 2012 and 2013; Kingsley (1995) argued that in fact Plato is not the real author of the Phaedo’s myth but rather it was the creation of Zopyrus of Tarentum and borrowed by Plato. Pender (2013, 36ff) rightly rejects this idea, while still appreciating Kingsley’s discussion of the Sicilian connections in Plato’s text.
The Hippocratic author seems not discontent with “soldiering” on in our waterlogged corner of the world; Socrates (or Plato) aspired to something purer, and attainable only through philosophic purification.

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Introduction

Socrates speaks in the *Phaedo* of different sorts of *aitiai* (“factors responsible for something”, “causes”); these include what one may call a “final cause” (where a goal or end or purpose is at least partly responsible for something coming about), a “formal” cause (indicating what a thing really is), and a physical or more generally mechanical cause (the mechanism that brings something about). This much is relatively uncontroversial. However, there is dispute about whether or not Socrates in one key instance conflates physical causality with logical or definitional connections—or, as Gregory Vlastos maintained, “reduces physical to logical necessity”. The first order of business here will be to address that issue. I will argue that Socrates did not conflate the two, and that the charge rests on a mistaken translation. Secondly, I will suggest that one aspect of the *Phaedo*’s conception of “participation” is the root from which the *Timaeus*’ notion of “place”, “space”, or the “receptacle” develops. Thus the *Phaedo* is a more complete precursor of the *aitiology* of the *Timaeus* than is usually recognized.

The Misreading

The *Phaedo*’s final argument for immortality (95e,ff.) cites “participation in” or “having a share of” (*metechein*, *metalambanein*) Forms as the *aitia* for why worldly things are as they are. Socrates extends this to cases in which one Form always “brings up” another Form with it—as Two brings Even, Snow brings Cold, etc. This allows a “more clever” or more sophisticated and informative *aitia*: instead of saying that something is cold because of the coldness in it, or its having a share in Coldness, one can say it is cold because it is snow (odd because it is three, etc.), and snow always “brings up” coldness (as three brings up oddness). This more clever explanation appeals to a different sort of *aitia* than that which Socrates invokes to explain the fact that he is sitting in bondage: in that case the true, final, cause is his decision to stay in prison rather than escape. By contrast, “odd-numbered because three-numbered” and “cold because it is snow” involve “formal” causes: three is by definition an odd number, and snow is essentially one type of cold thing. In neither case do we have the sort of connection nowadays thought of as a cause, which would be something more like a physical (or “efficient”) cause. Socrates does mention physical causes several times, however, including in his “sitting in prison” example, where these causes are the sinews and bones whose tensings, relaxings, and movements are mistakenly thought by some to explain why he sits where he does. But to call these the causes of his sitting in prison, says Socrates, would be absurd (*atopon*): they are merely “that without which the real cause (i.e., his thinking it better to stay rather than escape) could not be the cause” (99b).

It is worth noting that nowhere does Socrates speak of *Forms* as efficient causes. On this important point and several others I entirely agree with Gregory Vlastos (in “Causes and Reasons in the *Phaedo*”: Forms appear in the *Phaedo* only as “final” and “formal” causes. But Vlastos also argued that in some cases of his “clever *aitiai*” Socrates treats physical causes as establishing a necessary, not just

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1 Some of Socrates’ examples do not fit easily into any of these categories (e.g., “taller by a head”, “smaller by half”). This short talk will not attempt a comprehensive classification of Socratic “causes” or their relationship to Aristotle’s definitions of his “four causes.”
contingent, connection between cause and effect. First, Vlastos presses the example of extreme heat/sickness (pyretos/nosos, 105c). ‘Pyretos’, he says, must be taken in its literal sense of “burning heat, fiery heat” [citing LSJ], and it is precisely “excess of heat” that Plato “takes to be a cause of a variety of ailments in all of which the patient is feverish” (citing Tim 86a2-3). Second, Vlastos asserts, “that the occurrence of fever is the cause of the occurrence of sickness would be a textbook example of a cause in Greek medicine” (where by ‘cause’ he means a physical cause). Third, he reasons that one must not take pyretos at Tim 86a to be itself a type of disease, but rather as an excess of heat or fire; for if one takes pyretos to be itself a type of sickness, then the “cleverness” of the aitia in “sick because of pyretos” is lost (106 nn.71, 72). For these reasons Vlastos concludes that Plato has here asserted a necessity between physical cause and effect that “expresses a physical law that has logical necessity” (on a par with ‘three entails odd’), or that constitutes a “reduction of physical to logical necessity” (106).

Nowadays one is used to distinguishing between physical necessity, as reflected in fundamental physical laws, and logical necessity. The latter is a stronger necessity, in that a statement asserting the violation of a physical law (e.g., “quarks can travel faster than the speed of light”) need not violate any law of logic (i.e., need not be logically false). But Socrates does not draw this distinction, and since he treats the pyretos/nosos case as exactly parallel to that of fire/hot and three/odd, it is reasonable (and as we will see, correct) to think with Vlastos that Socrates intends that the same sort of connection hold in all these cases. The three-fold mistake is, rather, to think a) that pyretos is simply excess of heat (as opposed to fever), b) that fever (pyretos) is a physical cause of disease in Greek medicine (as opposed to pyretos being itself a type of disease), and c) that pyretos/nosos is a case of physical cause and effect (as opposed to a necessary and even definitional truth).

Fever, Malaria, and the Correct Reading

It is quite correct to say that Tim 86a2-3 recognizes excess of fire (pyros hyperbole) as a cause of sickness. But the Timaeus passage as a whole in fact supports the translation of ‘pyretos’ not just as “excess of heat” but as “fever”, both there and in our Phaedo passage. Indeed, the Timaeus passage reflects the usual classification of fevers (pyretoi) from c. 400BCE on by Greek medical writers into continuous and intermittent fevers, and intermittent ones into quotidian, tertian, and quartan fevers. (Jones, 1902; 19). Tertian and quartan fevers are what we now call malaria, for example (Osler, 1920; Collins and Jeffery, 2007. See also Nutton, 2013, p.32, on fevers/pyretoi as diseases). Plato relates differences in periodicity among fevers to excess of different ("so-called") elements: excess of fire produces a continuous fever, air quotidian fevers, water tertian, and “sluggish” earth quartan fevers. Thus Timaeus sees excess of heat—pyros hyperbole—as a physical cause of one type of fever (pyretos), where the latter is a type of disease. And so also, ‘pyretos’ should be translated in the Phaedo just as it is usually translated, i.e., ‘fever’, and taken as a type of disease—as we would think of yellow fever, scarlet fever, etc., as diseases, not just as excess of heat.2 This means that pyretos is not the same as pyros hyperbole. Pyretoi are actual diseases (nosoi) that in some cases are caused by pyros hyperbole

2 LSJ in fact cites two meanings for ‘pyretos’. The first is “burning heat, fiery heat” (citing Il. 22.31); the second is “fever” (citing Hippocrates, Aphorisms 2.26, Aristophanes, Wasps 1038, Aristotle, Problemata 866a23, Greek Epigrams 247 (G. Kaibel), and our Timaeus passage, 86a. Jones (1907) argues that the Iliad passage is not unequivocal and that ‘pyretos’ could there refer to fever. Homer speaks of the Dog Star Sirius (“scorcher”) “bringing pyretos to wretched mortals”. One could read this as excess of heat (the “Scorcher”) causing fever, which fits exactly with the Timaeus’ conception of excess of fire—pyros hyperbole—causing one type of pyretos (fever).
(excess of heat). Consequently the link between *pyretos* and *nosos* (fever and sickness) is not that of mechanical or physical cause to effect, but is necessary and even “logical” or definitional—and in Plato’s view, ultimately metaphysical, since a *pyretos* essentially is a disease.

This answers the arguments about the translation of *pyretos*’ and about the causal role of excess of heat in the *Timaeus*. But what of Vlastos’ argument that taking *pyretos* to be a type of sickness would preclude it from serving as Socrates’ clever *aitia* of disease? This argument is puzzling, because on the interpretation defended here, *pyretos* as an *aitia* of sickness is “clever” or “sophisticated” in the same way as Socrates’ other examples: just as it is more informative to say that a group of things is odd-numbered because it partakes of threeness than to say simply that it partakes of oddness, so it is more informative to say that someone is sick because he suffers from fever than to say simply that he is sick because he suffers from sickness.

Larger Implications: *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*

So there is no case for saying that Socrates makes a physical causal connection into a logical one. Still, what of the larger implications, if any, of the *Phaedo* passage for intrinsic nature of “efficient” causes, or for how they actually work? I think there are no such implications. Again, Socrates brings up physical causes in the “sitting in prison” example only to emphasize their subordinate role to the “true” *aitia*, which is teleological. This is the case not only with individual agents and their choices, but holds also on a cosmic scale, where physical factors (“earth, fire,” etc.) fail to give the true, teleological, explanation for why things are as they are—i.e., one in terms of how intelligence (*nous*) would bring them about, or equivalently, “what is best” (97c-99d). This is the sort of cosmic account Socrates had hoped to learn from Anaxagoras, who invoked *nous* but then disappointingly fell back on the usual physical and mechanical *aitiai* (97c-98c).

For an account both of how specific efficient causes operate, and of how Plato does in fact explain the cosmos teleologically, one turns to the *Timaeus*. Still, the account found there remains an expansion and detailed filling out of the basic atiological framework endorsed in the *Phaedo*. The elements of Forms, *nous* and physical causes such as earth, air, fire and water are still there, but now those four “so-called elements” are analyzed into factors more elementary—the beautiful regular solids, or Platonic Solids, and their constituent triangles. On this basis Timaeus explains the physical causal properties of earth, air, fire and water as the result of their underlying geometrical ones. For example, fire cuts things up because of its composition from elementary pyramids, with their “sharp cutting edges and sharp points in every direction” (56a). To make a long story short, the Demiurge did “what was best” even down to the design of the “elements”, just as he will at higher levels of organization, all the way up to that of the cosmos as a whole.

A Precursor to the Receptacle?

However, Timaeus not only adds an analysis of the “elements” mentioned in the *Phaedo*, but adds to the basic framework of *nous*/Forms/participants a striking factor that appears to be entirely absent from the *Phaedo*, namely a “receptacle” for things that come to be—something like place or space in general. I would like to venture the suggestion that Socrates does in the *Phaedo* adopt a way at looking at participation that at least foreshadows Timaeus’ notion of the receptacle. I see this in the implications of Socrates’ use of spatial and military metaphors in the *Phaedo* and their parallel in the *Timaeus*. When, for example, an opposite such as smallness advances on the largeness in something, the latter cannot remain and admit smallness, but must either retreat (evacuate, withdraw) or perish (102d-e); and if some advancing or attacking Form (e.g., threeness or fire) always “brings
into the field” an opposite (as three brings up odd and fire brings up heat) then the item being attacked cannot admit either the attacking party or the opposite being brought up (104b10, 104e). Burnet (1911) notes the liberal use of military imagery throughout this section of the dialogue, and translations regularly reflect this usage. In Socrates’ picture it seems to be spatial-temporal entities such as individual humans, or instances of snow or fire, or n-numbered groups of such entities, that are “occupied” metaphorically by one or another Form—or a bit more literally, by a Form-instance or a “Form-in-us”. Any occupiers that are themselves opposites (hot/cold, odd/even) or that always “bring up” an opposite along with them (three, snow) must either retreat or suffer destruction at the advance of opposed Forms. Accordingly, the occupied entities, the items that have “received” or “admitted” certain Forms, are the territory or field for which opposed Forms do battle. One could pursue this feature of the military metaphors further, in a manner that Socrates does not, by seeing this contested ground more broadly as place or space or territory in general—territory that is divided up among participants in Forms, and which can be taken over and occupied by other Forms. Taking this “territory” yet a bit more abstractly, it would be place or space in general that “receives” Form-instances, where those Form-instances may in turn be displaced by others.

The reader may recognize at this point the “receptacle” of the Timaeus, in which worldly participants must come to be, along (I hope) with a plausible sketch of how it developed from Socrates’ more limited and less well-developed image of certain Form-instances being in something—some area or territory for which they do battle and which they may occupy or evacuate. By contrast speaks expressly and more abstractly of chora or topos (space, place, 52a6, 8, b4), which lacks a distinctive nature of its own and so can receive any sort of Form (50a-c; 50e-51a). Beyond that, he struggles to describe this “receptacle”; but he firmly asserts that it is a necessary postulate of his account and puts it to use in ways that recall the Phaedo’s military and territorial imagery. For example, he construes visible fire as a portion of the receptacle in which fire has come to be, or that is now enflamed (49e, 51b). In terms of the regular solids, this is where microscopic regular pyramids predominate, enclosing tiny pyramidal volumes of the receptacle. When masses of water surround a small portion of fire, the latter may “put up a fight but be defeated” (machomenon kai nikethen, 56e4). The conquered fire can be broken into fragments and may then regroup as particles of air. (See also 57b for further language of conflict, escape, defeat and victory.) Of course Timaeus also analyses these transformations mathematically, in terms of the number and shape of the constituent triangles in particles of fire, water, and air. But the military and territorial imagery is just as striking as it was in the Phaedo, and reflects the same fundamental intuition of something receiving instances of Form, something that Forms metaphorically enter into and that can potentially be occupied by other Form instances.

I am not suggesting that Socrates (or Plato) in the Phaedo had the Timaeus’ conception of space or the receptacle in mind. Rather, the Phaedo picture of worldly Form-images as being in or occupying something, and of a kind of battle among Forms for occupation of those loci of Forms-in-us, is the root image from which the Timaeus’ generalized and more abstract conception of the receptacle (space, place) develops.

Thus in sum, and with respect to aitiology, the Phaedo is, first, just as clear as the Timaeus about the difference between physical causal links and the conceptual (or metaphysical) connections among Forms; second, the Phaedo is a more complete precursor to the Timaeus than is commonly appreciated, in that it either expressly recognizes or provides a conceptual precursor to each of the principal factors invoked in Timaeus’ account of how, to borrow Socrates’ language in the Phaedo,
things “come to be, perish, and are”.

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Natural qualities, if they are combined with correct education and suitable nurturing, render one perfect in respect of virtue, but if one neglects them, they become the cause of great evils. These Plato was accustomed to name homonymously with the virtues, temperance and courage and justice. (Alcinous, Didaskalikos 152, 24-27; transl. Dillon)

At the beginning of his Handbook, the Middle Platonist Alcinous ends with these words his portrayal of the ideal philosopher, who is characterised by true virtue. By implication, he who is not a philosopher has only great evils, that is vices, which Plato describes with the same word he uses for true virtues. Alcinous clearly expands on Phaedo 68b-69b, where Plato opposes non-philosophical virtues, ἐνόηθες ἀμφορεύτη and ἄνδρεια δειλία, to philosophical virtue. Alcinous' view was probably conditioned by many factors, not least the typical Middle Platonist tendency to regard non-philosophers as non-initiates, hence as impure individuals subject to vices. Such a view, however, has often been upheld also in contemporary scholarship insofar as it has been claimed that only the philosopher is virtuous, whereas the pursuit of philosophical virtue is to be condemned as a mere hedonistic calculus. Alcinous' passage helps clarify how strong this view is, and to what consequences it leads: if only philosophers partake of virtue, there is the risk that all other people are prey to vice. But should we assume that according to the Phaedo no-one but the philosopher can be virtuous? Such a restrictive view is puzzling from at least two points of view. First, from a philosophical perspective, Plato's ethics would imply a huge grey area encompassing the vast majority of people, who would necessarily be seen to act badly: in other words, Plato would be depriving his own politics and ethics of any contingency plan for non-philosophers. On the other hand, such an account would substantially weaken Plato's ethics from the point of view of factual evidence, since it is clear that at least some people, whom Plato would not take to be philosophers, act virtuously.

These are some of the reasons why virtue must also exist for non-philosophers. Scholars have already made this argument, above all on the basis of the Republic. In this paper I shall rather suggest that the Phaedo too introduces such a philosophical virtue. If this paper is part of a wider enquiry into Plato's demotic virtue, focusing on passages from the Meno, the Symposium, and the Menexenus: see Opinione corretta, conoscenza, virtù: su “Menone” 96 d1-98 b9, 'Elenchos' 32 (2011), 229-262; La dottrina della virtù di secondo grado nel Simposio, in M. Erler, M. Tulli (eds.), Plato in Symposium. Proceedings of the Xth Symposium Platonicum, Sankt Augustin 2016, 380-384; Plato on Virtue in the Menexenus, forthcoming in 'Classical Quarterly'.

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2 In building my argument I prefer to avoid using the adjective 'demotic' to characterise non-philosophical virtue, since the consistency of Phaedo 68-69 and 82a (where the adjective demotic occurs) is to some extent part of the demonstrandum.


4 It is noteworthy that already Xenocrates perceived this difficulty in Plato's ethics when distinguishing theoretical and practical wisdom (fr. 259 Isnardi).

5 This is explicitly indicated in all those Platonic passages where Socrates' interlocutors should define true virtue, but are only in a position to offer an example of virtuous acting. Other clear examples are provided, e.g. by the kind of virtue Plato refers to in the Menexenus, which is a sort of traditional military virtue.
I shall detect the positive import of non-philosophical virtue, which, far from amounting to mere hedonistic calculus, positively allows non-philosophers to act virtuously, even though only philosophers are virtuous.

At Phaedo 68b-69b Plato outlines what non-philosophical virtue consists in. Plato develops his argument about σωφροσύνη and ἀνδρεία by emphasising the factors distinguishing their poor forms from authentic ones. This distinction is much more nuanced than is usually believed. This emerges first from the way in which Plato introduces the authentic σωφροσύνη belonging only to true philosophers (T1 = 68d10-11): it is τὸ περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας μὴ ἐπτοῆσθαι ἀλ' ὀλιγώρως ἔχειν καὶ κοσμίως (68c9-10; extensive quotation in T2). Although this description identifies philosophical σωφροσύνη, and only philosophers are able to attain this virtue, common people (οἱ πολλοί) too accept it. It must be the case, then, that common people grasp some aspects of true σωφροσύνη, but miss its true core. So, there is something of σωφροσύνη which both philosophers and common people are able to identify, although only philosophers are in a position to really understand what this 'something' amounts to. Indeed, being impassible with respect to passions and having an orderly and moderate conduct refer to a practical way of acting and to specific evaluations, but do not say anything about the internal reasons determining such behaviours and evaluations: the same way of acting, outlined by the 'shared' definition, can have two different motivational bases. This is confirmed by the way in which Plato introduces the idea that only philosophers have what ἀνδρεία is according to common people (68c5-6): what is commonly referred to as courage (ἡ ὀνομαζόμενη ἀνδρεία) really belongs to those who practice the μελέτη θανάτου – i.e., the philosophers – thanks to their internal state (τοῖς οὕτω διακειμένοις). Also in this case there is an aspect of courage which must be recognisable to everyone, and this aspect does not coincide with the internal disposition determining courage, which belongs only to philosophers. In consequence, the common distinguishing mark of courage must be a sort of visible, clear behaviour, which does not immediately reveal its internal motivations. If this is correct, Plato's distinction between true virtues and non-philosophical virtue is much more subtle than is usually held to be the case: Plato wishes to emphasise that the two share common aspects, namely similar ways of acting and visible behaviours, while diverging in a more important respect, that is their internal motivations.

Against this background, we can now approach Plato's account of non-philosophical σωφροσύνη and ἀνδρεία. Non-philosophical ἀνδρεία is the one

6 An attempt to reject the traditional interpretation (especially exploited in the book by D. Frede quoted at footnote 2) is offered in F. Trabattoni, Si può parlare di unità nella psicologia platonica? in M. Migliori et al. (eds.), Interiorità e anima in Platone, Milano 2007, 307-320. However, Trabattoni insists on the fact that Plato aims to demonstrate that the philosopher is also the best politician: this could be one of the reasons why non-philosophical virtue is presented in a negative light (I shall get back to this point at the end of the paper), but still does not exploit the positive value which Plato would be ascribing to non-philosophical virtue. Conversely, in an influential paper G. Vlastos, Justice and Happiness in the Republic, in Id., Plato: a Collection of critical Essays. Vol. 2, Notre Dame 1978, 66-95, has claimed that in the ideal state all citizens are virtuous. This would eliminate the problem of non-philosophical virtue, but Vlastos' view has been effectively disputed by R. Kamtekar, Imperfect Virtue, 'Ancient Philosophy' 18 (1998), 315-339 (who, however, probably goes too far in emphasising the value and stability of the guardians' virtue). Indeed, as we shall see, non-philosophical virtue has particular features (and it could hardly be the case that the reasoning of non-philosophers and philosophers are fundamentally similar and equally egocentric, as D. Bostock, Plato's Phaedo, Oxford 1984, 30-35, claims). The interpretation of the Phaedo's passage which comes closest to mine is probably that of Th. Irwin, Plato's Ethics, Oxford 1995, 194-195 and 234, who however uses the Phaedo in a very limited way and takes the tripartite psychology of the Republic as a starting point. I shall argue, on the contrary, by taking the Phaedo's passage as my sole focus and by emphasising the positive import of non-philosophical virtue.
leading men to face death and is determined by fear of greater evils (68d8-9); non-philosophical σωφροσύνη implies that men govern some pleasures – i.e. keep off from them – because they opt for other, greater pleasures (68e2-69a4). It is widely acknowledged that Plato is referring to the calculation of pleasure and pain; however, it is probable that this is not the most important point here. Both accounts are based on the contrast between two aspects: on the one hand, Plato stresses the wrong motivation grounding a particular behaviour (the so-called ‘hedonistic’ calculus); on the other, each virtue manifests itself in a way of acting which is virtuous. While the negative characterisation of the motivations is all too evident, regarding any course of action which reflects non-philosophical virtues as something negative, or wrong, would produce a clear inconsistency. But if this is the case, how is it possible to mistake actions driven by non-philosophical virtues for those mirroring authentic virtues? One could argue that such confusion is only to be found on the part of common people. But we have observed above that common people are indeed able to grasp some aspect of true virtues, namely their manifestation as forms of behaviour and actions, which Plato shares. Therefore, although non-philosophical virtue is characterised by a wrong motivational system, it does eventually lead to acting virtuously, that is to the same kind of actions which are produced by philosophical virtue.

Indeed, just after outlining non-philosophical virtues, when Plato reveals what intrinsically distinguishes true virtue, no reference is made to actions; rather, Plato insists on the motivations – or cognitive bases – of philosophical virtue (69a6-c1):

My good Simmias, I fear this is not the right exchange to attain virtue, to exchange pleasures for pleasures, pains for pains and fears for fears, the greater for the less like coins, but that the only valid currency for which all these things should be exchanged is wisdom (φρόνησις). With this we have real courage and moderation and justice and, in a word, true virtue, with wisdom, whether pleasures and fears and all such things be present or absent. (transl. Grube)

In Plato φρόνησις often coincides with knowledge, and this is well observable in the first part of the Phaedo, where φρόνησις indicates a superior cognitive state, which typically belongs to the philosopher – and in particular to his soul – and which is directed towards pure, non-material objects. The philosopher is said to reject any involvement with sense perception, because his body and senses impede the exercise of φρόνησις (64d-65b, esp. T3); and this is, by implication, the proper and most profitable activity for the soul (65c5-9 = T4), which, when leaving aside the senses, can grasp purer entities, that is the οὐσίαι (65d9-e4 = T5). In turn, the body, both as a source of passions and as a weak and deceiving 'perceptive instrument', is the main obstacle for the exercise of φρόνησις and for τὴν τοῦ ὄντος θήραν (66c2).

Now we can better understand in what the gap between philosophical and non-philosophical virtue actually consists: it is a matter of having access to true being by leaving aside all obstacles generated by the body. If this is the case, however, our distinction is again collocated at the level of intrinsic motivation: philosophers will act courageously, or with temperance, because their acting is dictated by a qualified internal state, shaped by φρόνησις, while non-philosophers will act courageously, or with temperance, because their acting is determined by the calculation of pleasure, pain, desire and fear. From all this, three important consequences follow. First, the gap between philosophical and non-philosophical virtue has nothing to do with

7 In a neutral sense, this is acknowledge both by those who assign a negative value to non-philosophical virtue (e.g. D. Frede) and by those viewing it in a positive light attempting a good evaluation (e.g. Th. Irwin): see the preceding footnote.
respective ways of acting, which accordingly must coincide. Nonetheless, Plato does establish a strict cut-off between levels of virtue, which is based on an internal cognitive state: reducing the gap between them from a practical point of view does not undermine the peculiar nature of philosophical virtue. Finally, Plato indicates the range of people who are in a condition to attain true virtue, that is those who have φρόνησις, are free from the limitations of the body, and can grasp true being: in a word, true philosophers. This might seem obvious, but actually represents a fundamental point, for ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοὶ, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι (69c9-d1). Even admitting that it is possible for men to be philosophers in this life, the cognitive state enabling men to own true virtue can be attained only by a very restricted minority of people. But at this point this is no more a problem, for Plato has provided men with a second-best on the basis of which to act, that is non-philosophical virtue: this is the fundamental, positive function of his ethical doctrine.

My interpretation is also supported by another passage. After the three (provisional) proofs of the immortality of the soul, Plato briefly outlines the destiny of each kind of soul after its separation from the body. A first kind of soul is that of the philosopher, which is free from any bodily contamination (81a4-10 = T6) and attains a godlike state. By contrast to this, there are a wide range of souls who do not spurn contact with the body and the material world (81b-82a). Now, since these souls are those of non-philosophers, they essentially amount to all souls apart from those of a very small minority. A distinction, then, is necessary from a theoretical point of view8, and the standard which Plato applies to identify the best non-philosophical souls is the exercise of 'popular and political virtue' (82a11-b3):

The happiest of these, who will also have the best destination, are those who have practiced popular and political virtue (τὴν δημοτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν), which they call moderation and justice and which was developed by habit and practice, without philosophy or understanding (ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονυῖαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ).

The kind of virtue which Plato refers to here could hardly be the true virtue of Phaedo 69a-b. If this were the case, we should admit at least that the virtue which is explicitly ascribed to philosophers, coinciding with the soul’s purification and belonging only to a small group of βάκχοι, is now taken to be ‘popular and social’ and to imply a huge involvement with the body9. Rather, the best candidate for δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἀρετὴ is the non-philosophical virtue which we have been describing. It is ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ, and is definitely lower in value than philosophical virtue. Hence, it ensures the capability of performing actions which can be defined as virtuous and of gaining an ethical condition which is a sort of second best with respect to that of philosophers. The noteworthy point here is that, once again, the difference between philosophical and non-philosophical virtue must consist in the internal state of the agent, and cannot be reflected in specific actions: if this were the case, Plato would be saying that these people possess no virtue at all. To put it the other way round: if non-philosophical virtue is a virtue, it must share some aspect of philosophical virtue; if this shared feature is not the internal state of the agent, it must consist in an agent’s specific mode of acting, for otherwise nothing would

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8 Indeed, the distinguishing of different destinies in relation to non-philosophical souls is also clear in a more focused passage in the Phaedrus (248a-e).

9 Moreover, this would produce a dangerous and quite implausible gap between φρόνησις (also thought of as an aspiration) and philosophy, reducing φρόνησις to ἔθος and μελέτη (it seems clear to me that this passage provides no reason for identifying this μελέτη with the philosophical μελέτη θανάτου).
really distinguish non-philosophical virtue from vice; but what Plato is doing here is precisely distinguishing 'virtuous' non-philosophers from other φιλοσώματοι. Therefore, non-philosophical virtue implies virtuous acting, albeit based on non-philosophical motivations.

One could still wonder whether the idea that also non-philosophers can act virtuously runs counter to Plato’s intellectualism, which is actually strongly confirmed by the decisive role ascribed to φρόνησις at Phaedo 68b-69b. Things are more complicated, however. A man who is completely virtuous will also act virtuously. Yet, his being completely virtuous – i.e., his internal cognitive state – is not a necessary condition for virtuous acting. On the contrary, it may be the case that φρόνησις is a necessary and sufficient condition for being virtuous, but only a sufficient condition for virtuous acting. Therefore, it is possible for someone to act virtuously, albeit without φρόνησις; non-philosophical virtue is another sufficient condition for virtuous acting. This makes Plato’s intellectualism much more effective: although φρόνησις remains a gold standard from both an ethical and an epistemological point of view, it is possible in principle to act virtuously also for the majority of men, who are not be automatically condemned to vice.

All this raises further questions. Although these deserve to be the object of a more extensive analysis, it is worth pointing them out and briefly outlining some solutions. It is quite astonishing that at Phaedo 68b-69b non-philosophical virtue is said to be based on a calculus of pleasure and pain, while at 82a it is grounded in ἔθος and μελέτη. Now, a calculus of pleasure and pain is based on some kind of reasoning, albeit a necessarily imperfect one. Although such a calculus is developed individually, there may be some precepts, or general rules, that make it more likely to prove correct. Consider, for instance, the case of a man who must decide whether enjoying a pleasure at the moment will damage him since it will compel him to abstain from future pleasures; Or consider the case of a man who must decide whether to enter a desperate battle or make a cowardly retreat. In both cases the man in question will have some belief as to what he should do based on empirical evaluations, previous experiences, education, or a system of social rules, constituting parameters for his calculus. All these element make up a corpus of beliefs which every individual possesses by force of habit and practice, and which ultimately stems (or could stem) from his social education. This is probably the reason why Plato says at Phaedo 68b-69b that non-philosophical virtue is based on a calculus of pleasure and pain, while at 82a he states that it is grounded in ἔθος and μελέτη; both motivations are aspects of a single cognitive state, one based on belief. Moreover, since in the Phaedo non-philosophical virtue is not based on φρόνησις, the cognitive state which it must be related to is some kind of belief, shaping and orienting ἔθος and μελέτη. This would also help understand a subtler practical difference between philosophical and non-philosophical virtue with respect to acting: given that knowledge implies stability, those who are perfectly virtuous will always act virtuously – which means both constantly and in all possible situations – while those following their beliefs will act virtuously only as long as their beliefs on the matter are correct (see ‘whenever they do so’ at 68d9)10. Such a distinction, while preserving the fundamental features of Plato’s epistemology, does not undermine

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10 Th. Irwin, Plato’s Ethics, Oxford 1995, 234-235 has established this by focusing on other dialogues. I tend to agree with him on the fact that there is also a difference in the actions of philosophers and non-philosophers, consisting in ‘counterfactual reliability’ (i.e., the incapability of non-philosophers to adapt themselves to unexpected situations, that is situations which cannot easily be interpreted in accordance with their beliefs.)
We have now obtained a definition of non-philosophical virtue in the Phaedo: it consists in acting virtuously and is not based on φρόνησις or any of the intellectual states belonging to the philosopher, but depends on a close relationship with the body and is grounded in a calculus of pleasure and pain, in ἔθος and μελέτη, or more generally in belief. Such a definition allows us to solve the philosophical puzzle which opened the paper, for this non-philosophical virtue is the very means allowing common people – potentially everyone – to act virtuously. In other terms, far from being an equivocal way to refer to vice, or a sort of travesty of philosophical virtue, the Phaedo’s non-philosophical virtue also has a positive pay-off in Plato’s ethics and saves it from substantial theoretical problems. One could wonder why, then, it is presented in such negative terms. The most reasonable explanation is that in the whole dialogue Plato is committed to emphasising the correctness of the philosophical way of thinking of death, and of life, and its cognitive requirements. Moreover, the dramatic context would have made superfluous to insist on the positive aspects of non-philosophical virtue, since Socrates’ interlocutors are presumably people aspiring to become philosophers and already possessing a good – albeit imperfect – internal state. And this is probably the most astonishing aspect of the story. In the Phaedo, where the philosopher, the truly virtuous man, seems to be celebrated and totally abstracted from ‘normal’ politics, Plato acknowledges that barring the vast majority of people – i.e. non-philosophers – from any participation in virtue is a philosophically unsuitable option, and offers an effective solution to this fundamental problem.

11 From this one could expand the analysis by referring, e.g., to the ethical implications of the distinction between true belief and knowledge drawn in the Meno, on which see my paper quoted in footnote 1.
πάντων, οίον μεγέθους πέρι, ὕγιειας, ἴσχυος, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐν λόγῳ ἀπάντων τῆς ὀσίας ὃς τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὅν· ἀρα διὰ τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν τὸ ἀληθέστατον θεωρεῖται, ἢ ὃ ὥδε ἔχει· ὡς ἐν μάλιστα ἡμῶν καὶ ἀκριβέστατα παρασκευάσῃ αὐτό ἕκαστον διανοηθῆναι περὶ ὁ σκοπεῖ, οὕτως ἄν ἐγγύτατα ἴοι τοῦ γνῶναι ἕκαστον;

Τό: Phaedo 81a4-10

Οὐκοῦν οὕτω μὲν ἔχουσα εἰς τὸ ὅμοιον αὐτῇ τὸ ἀιδὲς ἀπέρχεται, τὸ θεῖόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ φιλόσωμα, οἷ ἀφικομένῃ ὑπάρχει αὐτῇ εὐδαίμονι εἶναι, πλάνης καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἀπηλλαγμένη, ὡσπερ δὲ λέγεται κατὰ τῶν μεμυημένων, ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον μετὰ θεῶν διάγουσα; οὕτω φῶμεν, ὦ Κέβης, ἢ ἄλλως;

Se inteso in senso restrittivo e rigido, l’intelletualismo etico conduce a un problema filosofico di notevole peso. Assumendo infatti che solo chi conosce è virtuoso, e solo chi è virtuoso agisce in modo virtuoso, si ha come conseguenza che l’assoluta maggioranza degli uomini è tagliata fuori non solo dal possesso dell’autentica virtù, ma anche dalla possibilità di agire in modo corretto. Ciò non è solo controevidente da un punto di vista fattuale, ma pericoloso da un punto di vista dottrinale: l’etica platonica finirebbe in tal caso per condannare al vizio chiunque non sia filosofo. Una simile difficoltà sembra però confermata da Fedone 68b-69b, che contiene la chiara asserzione della dipendenza della virtù compiuta dalla φρόνησις e pare condannare in modo inappellabile ogni forma inferiore di virtù, presentandola come un calcolo edonistico e una contraffazione.

Probabilmente, però, le cose sono più complesse, e questo passo nasconde più di quanto appaia (non a caso, anche chi ha insistito sulla presenza di una dottrina della virtù non filosofica in Platone lo ha spesso trascurato). Il modo in cui Platone presenta la virtù non filosofica e la distingue dalla vera virtù, infatti, evidenzia che tra le due dimensioni c’è una parziale sovrapponibilità, sia in termini di “riconoscibilità” sia in termini di descrizione. Evidentemente tale zona di sovrapposizione non riguarda le rispettive motivazioni, ovvero le basi interne e cognitive che determinano per ciascuna dimensione il suo essere propriamente filosofica o il non esserlo. Essa riguarda piuttosto l’agire in cui le virtù si manifestano: anche chi agisce secondo un calcolo di piaceri e dolori, infatti, produce le stesse azioni realizzate da chi è propriamente virtuoso. Ciò è possibile perché in linea di principio il modello intellettualistico implica che la φρόνησις sia condizione necessaria e sufficiente per essere completamente virtuosi, ma è solo condizione sufficiente per agire in modo virtuoso: può in effetti esservi un’altra condizione sufficiente per questo, ovvero una virtù non filosofica, basata su valutazioni non epistemiche.

Questa prospettiva è confermata da Fedone 82a, in cui Platone descrive la virtù di coloro che, pur non essendo filosofi, sono i migliori tra i φιλοσώματοι. Si tratta della virtù definita δημοτική καὶ πολιτική, ovvero la virtù non filosofica di Fedone 68b-69b. Anche in questo caso, se si considera che il punto di contatto tra le due virtù non può consistere nelle motivazioni interne, occorre concludere che ciò che rende questa virtù una virtù è proprio l’agire che da essa scaturisce. In questo passo, inoltre, il calcolo di piaceri e dolori è sostituito da έθος καὶ μελέτη. Ciò si spiega nella misura in cui il calcolo dei piaceri e dei dolori, benché determinato individualmente, può basarsi su alcuni standard valutativi dati da abitudine e norme sociali, ovvero da opinioni che l’individuo acquisisce ed applica. Esse sono certamente incostanti e instabili, ma possono rappresentare la base cognitiva per un agire corretto.

Tutto ciò porta a concludere che paradossalmente il Fedone, dialogo incentrato sulla figura del filosofo e sulla sua forte peculiarità rispetto ad ogni altro
tipo umano, prevede e valorizza (benché implicitamente, per ragioni dialogiche) un piano di emergenza per l'agire di chi non è filosofo, una virtù di secondo grado che potenzialmente consente a chiunque di sfuggire alla condanna del vizio.
¿Cuántos y quiénes recuerdan? A propósito del alcance de la reminiscencia en *Fedón* 72e-77a

**de Pinotti, Graciela Marcos**

§1. El argumento expuesto en *Fedón* 72e-77a ha sido y continúa siendo objeto de controversia en muchos aspectos. Un problema que suscita su lectura es el del alcance del proceso descripto en términos de reminiscencia (*anamnesis*), en que la sensación es ocasión del pensamiento y pone en marcha el proceso rememorativo. ¿Cuántos y quiénes son, según Platón, los que “recuerdan”? ¿Se trata de una operación que atañe a todo hombre o de una búsqueda que solo algunos emprenden y menos aún consiguen llevar a término?1 No está en discusión que la reminiscencia compite al filósofo, en quien la sensación obra como estímulo del pensar. Parece problemático, sin embargo, restringirla a él, tanto como hacerla extensiva a todos los hombres, incluso a aquellos ajenos a la filosofía, al menos a la luz de las críticas que Platón dirige con frecuencia contra la mayoría, aun en *Fedón* mismo, por su propensión a ser engañada por los sentidos.2 Esas críticas sugieren que en principio son pocos, o casi ninguno, los individuos en quienes la sensación pone en acción dentro del alma el pensamiento.

Quisiera explorar el alcance asignado a la *anamnesis* en *Fed.* 72e ss., y sugerir que además de hacer referencia a la búsqueda que emprenden los amantes de saber, búsqueda que parte de lo sensible y se dirige a su fundamento inteligible, el pasaje proporciona las bases para explicar en términos de recuerdo el proceso corriente de formulación de juicios sobre lo percibido. Platón considera que al aprehender igualdades sensibles, leños o piedras iguales según su ejemplo, *todos* los hombres en cierto sentido recuerdan lo igual, de otro modo no podrían aprehender ese carácter en cosas que son un ejemplo tanto de igualdad como de lo contrario. Advierte que la mayoría de ellos, sin embargo, cree estar articulando algo dado a los sentidos y solo en algunos esa percepción motiva una reflexión explícita, que apunta más allá de lo dado a la propia experiencia. Y si bien solo en este último caso se daría algo del tipo de lo que entendemos habitualmente por *recuerdo*, es posible describir de este modo también el primero, es decir, no únicamente el caso en que la visión de una cosa mueve a pensar en otra ausente a los sentidos, sino también aquel en que se ve algo como P gracias a que se dispone de una noción que no se pudo haber forjado empíricamente, aun cuando se esté en el engaño sobre su origen. El argumento de


Fed. 72e ss. puede así ser leído en un doble registro, ambivalencia que no constituiría un defecto sino un mérito del planteo platónico, respetuoso de las diferencias entre tipos de saber como también entre las perspectivas que animan a la mayoría y a unos pocos, amantes del saber, a la hora de describir la propia experiencia. Muchas de las tesis que concitan la adhesión del Sócrates platónico ponen en tela de juicio opiniones comúnmente admitidas y envuelven explicaciones apartadas del punto de vista corriente. La explicación del fenómeno del conocimiento en términos de anamnesis constituye un caso paradigmático en ese sentido, al concebir como recuperación de un saber alojado en el alma lo que usualmente es entendido como captura de verdades que están fuera de ella.

En apoyo de la lectura propuesta, comenzaré por examinar aquellos tramos del argumento de Fedón 72e ss. que inclinan a ver en la anamnesis una prerrogativa exclusiva del amante del saber, para después ensayar una lectura más amplia, conforme a la cual todos los hombres, en cierto modo, recuerdan. Esto último no significa, desde luego, que todos se aplican a buscar e investigar al modo en que lo hacen los amantes del saber, pero sí que aun el más elemental juicio perceptual conlleva la apelación a conceptos que están en el alma, según Platón, desde antes del uso de los sentidos. La especulación filosófica saca a la luz su verdadero origen y combate el olvido.

§ 2. Un primer indicio para determinar el alcance del proceso descripto como anamnesis en Fed. 72e ss. lo proporciona la referencia de Cebes, al comienzo del argumento, al célebre episodio de corte mayéutico presentado en Men. 82b-86c, en que la reminiscencia se describe como un aprendizaje activado mediante el interrogatorio adecuado:3 “interrogados los hombres, si se lo hace bien, dicen todo como es”, lo que no serían capaces de hacer a menos que haya en ellos “ciencia y razonamiento correcto”.4 Si bien la referencia a «los hombres» en 73a8 podría sugerir que se trata de un proceso al alcance de todos, inclinándonos a interpretar en términos igualmente amplios el que Sócrates y su círculo presentan a continuación, la afirmación tiene, si miramos bien, un sentido más preciso. Sugiere que únicamente a quienes están dispuestos a someter a examen sus opiniones en una sesión dialéctica de preguntas y respuestas, allí cuando se les interroga adecuadamente,5 les sería dado aprender, i.e. recordar. Podemos esperar que la argumentación ofrecida a continuación haga de la anamnesis una prerrogativa de los amantes del saber, denominación que en este contexto será aplicable no solo al filósofo consumado sino también a quienes están dispuestos a dejarse guiar por él, capaces de examinar sus opiniones y de derivar conclusiones fundamentadas. El joven servidor de Menón en el diálogo de este nombre, tanto como Simmias y Cebes, fieles seguidores de Sócrates en Fedón, encarnan a ese

3 Platón debe considerar que la versión de la reminiscencia ofrecida en Menón, mas allá de las diferencias entre ambas, es compatible con la que ofrecerá ahora, de otro modo difícilmente introduciría el nuevo argumento con un sumario de aquel argumento (Bedu-Addo 1991: 31). Contra cf. Gallop 1986: 115, n. ad loc. Fed. 73a4-b10, para quien estas líneas no son necesariamente una alusión a Menón, si bien se refieren claramente al método adoptado allí.
4 Fed. 73a7-10. Orthos logos (73a10), observa agudamente Casertano 2015: 460, debe entenderse, antes que como un discurso correcto concreto, como una capacidad, la capacidad de razonar correctamente, de construir discursos correctos.
5 La exposición de Cebes, observa Dixsaut 1991: 343, n. 128 ad loc. 73b), retoma solo parcial y superficialmente lo establecido en Menón. El alma brilla por su ausencia y todas las mediaciones faltan. Se omite, entre otras cosas, que el saber presente en nosotros permite dar buenas respuestas cuando se es interrogado, no cuando se interroga.
Si avanzamos en la lectura de Fed. 71e ss., encontramos que además de reconocer que (i) “hay algo igual”, “algo distinto, fuera de todas esas cosas [iguales], lo igual en sí” (74a9-12) y (ii) saber “incluso, qué es” (74b2, cf. 75b5), recuerdan quienes (iii) al ver piedras y leños iguales, piensan “que todas ellas aspiran a ser tales como lo igual, sin lograrlo” (75a1-3; cf. 74d3-e5), percatándose de la deficiencia de esas cosas iguales respecto de lo igual en sí.

En lo que hace a (i), que niega la identidad entre lo igual y las cosas iguales, expresiones similares suelen aparecer en diálogos anteriores sin implicar una tesis metafísica, proferidas por personajes que están lejos de poder caracterizarse como amantes del saber. En Eutif. 5d1-2 p.e. el personaje homónimo no tiene inconveniente en conceder que lo pío en sí mismo “es una sola cosa en sí en toda acción”, un carácter (idea, 5d4) único propio de todas aquellas cosas que llamamos pías, pero es incapaz de comprender qué es lo pío. Tampoco Hipias niega que haya algo tal como lo bello, sin embargo no ve diferencia alguna entre preguntar, como Sócrates, qué es lo bello y preguntar qué es bello (Hip. Ma. 287d-e). En ambos casos la búsqueda fracasa por la ineptitud de los interlocutores para dar razón de un concepto con el que están suficientemente familiarizados, pero no consiguen definir. El caso presente es distinto, con todo, al de esos ejemplos tempranos, fundamentalmente porque Simmias y Cebes pertenecen al círculo fiel de discípulos de Sócrates y no son víctimas de la ilusión de creer saber lo que no saben, como Eutífrón o Hipias, sino amantes del saber. Cuando Simmias responde afirmativa y enfáticamente a la pregunta socrática acerca de si hay algo igual (74b1), responde como amante del saber que es, permeable a las enseñanzas de un filósofo como Sócrates. En cuanto a su admisión de (ii) saber qué es lo igual en sí, este saber no envuelve capacidad de dar razón (dounai logon, Fed. 76b5), signo de conocimiento, a juzgar por su afirmación posterior, cuando atribuye tal capacidad, con carácter de excepción, a Sócrates, cuya desaparición significará que no quede “nadie entre los hombres que sea capaz de hacerlo como es debido” (76b10-12).

En lo que hace a (iii), abona un sentido inequívocamente restringido de anamnesis, ya que lo que la sensación dispara en este caso es el reconocimiento no

6 Este significado amplio, literal, de philosophos opera p.e. en Rep.V, 475d-476e, donde Platón distingue al amante del saber del amante de opiniones (philodoxos) que no solo cree en las cosas bellas pero no en lo bello mismo, sino que además es incapaz, si alguien le guía, de elevarse a ese conocimiento (Rep. V, 476c1-3). Esto último distingue al philodoxos de quien con una guía adecuada se lanza a investigar y progresa en su búsqueda. Este individuo, inmune a las críticas que Platón dirige a los amantes de opiniones, integra junto al filósofo consumado el grupo de los amantes del saber, justamente quienes, en términos de Fedón, “recuerdan”.

7 Sobre la aparente contradicción entre Fed. 76b-c, donde Simmias se refiere a Sócrates como el único que posee el conocimiento de lo igual, y 74b2, donde admite saber él qué es lo igual, cf. Hackforth 1955: 75-77, Gallop 1986: 120, n. ad loc. 74b23 y 133, n. ad loc 76b4-c10, Rowe 1993: 168, n. ad loc. 74b1. Para conciliar ambas afirmaciones, Ackrill 1987: 192 distingue entre el conocimiento del hombre corriente, capaz de usar correctamente el concepto de igualdad, el conocimiento de los platónicos, para quienes la igualdad es una forma, y el del mismo Sócrates, capaz de dar razón de qué es lo igual. Bostock 1986: 68 formula críticas a estas distinciones (“…three levels of knowledge seems altogether too extravagant”). Para Dimas 2003: 194-195, n. 25, el conocimiento que Simmias declara poseer no es conocimiento filosófico de pleno derecho sino el suficiente para conocer y ser capaz de expresar el juicio de que los mismos leños y piedras que parecen iguales pueden también parecer desiguales.
de la mera diferencia sino de la deficiencia de las cosas iguales respecto de lo que es paradigmáticamente igual. Esta ponderación es privativa del amante del saber, dado que no todo hombre –más bien casi ninguno, expresa a menudo Platón– en ocasión de percibir, se percata de la imperfección de lo sensible. Esto es corroborado en Rep. V, 475d-476d, donde Platón atribuye al amante del saber el reconocimiento de la diferencia ontológica fundamental entre formas y cosas y rehúsa este discernimiento al amante de opiniones, al que caracteriza como aficionado a espectáculos (philotheamones) y a audiciones (philekooi). Estos términos expresan su apego a los sentidos, en particular a la vista y al oído, sujeción a la sensación que constituye un obstáculo para captar aquellas realidades que son por sí mismas, justamente las que son objeto de reminiscencia en Fedón. Leído (iii) a esta luz, llegamos a que únicamente el ojo filosófico, al ver cosas iguales, se percata de la deficiencia de las igualdades sensibles respecto de lo igual en sí. Esto significa que los sentidos, fuente de engaño para la mayoría de los hombres,8 son un estímulo para la especulación filosófica, vale decir que no son en sí mismos engañosos sino que admiten un uso legítimo y bajo ciertas condiciones –cuando quien percibe ama el saber– ponen en marcha la búsqueda cognoscitiva. Mientras que la mayoría se atiene acríticamente al testimonio sensorial, forjando juicios confinados a la apariencia, la percepción de la cosa sensible es para el ojo filosóficamente entrenado percepción de su deficiencia respecto de su fundamento invisible.9

Este reconocimiento propio del amante del saber no impide a Platón deslizarse hacia una tesis de alcance generalizado, que deja abierta la posibilidad de que todos en cierto modo recuerden.10 Su concepción del conocimiento es suficientemente generosa como para conceder a todo hombre la posibilidad de conocer, sin omitir los diferentes tipos de saber que cada uno alcanzará efectivamente según se mantenga viva o no en él la apetencia de saber. La asunción (iii) juega un papel crucial en la discusión justamente por dar paso a la afirmación, con carácter de necesidad, de que el conocimiento de lo igual tiene que ser previo a esa percepción de iguales que lleva al amante del saber a reconocer la brecha ontológica entre esas igualdades sensibles y lo igual mismo. Resulta forzoso, expresa Sócrates, “que hayamos contemplado lo igual antes del momento en que por primera vez, al ver tales o cuales cosas iguales, se nos ocurriera el pensamiento de que todas ellas aspiran a ser como lo igual, sin lograrlo” (Fed. 74e9-75a3).

Un pensamiento de esta naturaleza, quiero insistir en este punto, no se da siempre, ni siquiera frecuentemente, sino que es fruto del entrenamiento filosófico que distingue al amante del saber del resto de los individuos, quienes verán cosas iguales sin hacerse esas reflexiones. Proton no se refiere a la primera vez que percibimos cosas iguales, sino a la primera vez que las percibimos y reconocemos la deficiencia de la igualdad percibida comparada con aquello en que se concentra el alma cuando piensa en la igualdad.11 Queda abierta la posibilidad de que se tengan

8 Cf. p.e. Fed. 83a4-b1, donde queda claro que no son los sentidos mismos la fuente de engaño sino la investigación (skepsis, Fed. 83a4; cf. skopein, 65b10, skopeisthai, 82e3) que se lleva a cabo a través de ellos, contrapuesta a la que va más allá de las características visibles, perceptuales de las cosas, hacia su ousia invisible. Para Platón los sentidos pueden considerarse engañosos solo si se pretende alcanzar a través de ellos la verdad. Sobre el papel de la experiencia sensible en el argumento de la anamnesis cf. los trabajos citados supra n. 2.

9 En términos de Dixsaut 1991: 99 y 347 n. 140, únicamente en unos pocos, filósofos, la reminiscencia transforma la percepción de esta cosa en percepción de su deficiencia.

10 Como bien observa Scott 1987: 356-357, n. 25 tanto en Menón como en Fedón, Platón generaliza los resultados de su argumento de suerte que una vez probada la reminiscencia en uno o unos pocos casos, concluye que es posible para todos.

11 Sigo en este punto a Dimas 2003: 204.
muchas percepciones de cosas iguales antes de alcanzar este reconocimiento, e incluso de que no se lo alcance jamás, a pesar de las muchas percepciones de cosas iguales que se pueda tener. La posibilidad de conocer, si bien está abierta a todos, encuentra realización en unos pocos y solo gracias a un proceso arduo, que demanda tiempo y esfuerzo. Platón expresa esto claramente en Teet. 186b11-c5, pasaje que echa luz sobre la cuestión y se ha podido considerar, con razón, una formulación ajustada al sentido del argumento de la anamnesis. Allí, como conclusión de su prueba de que la aisthesis no constituye conocimiento, afirma que el conocimiento no reside en las impresiones que afectan a todos los seres vivos, hombres y bestias, desde su nacimiento, sino en los razonamientos acerca de ellas con relación a su ser y a su utilidad, los cuales llegan a darse, en aquellos en quienes se dan, a través de un prolongado y arduo proceso de educación. El conocimiento reside en las reflexiones que tienen como punto de partida las impresiones sensibles, continuum entre aisthesis y episteme que podría sorprender viniendo de un filósofo inclinado a separar el ámbito sensible y el real, inteligible. Sin embargo es en Fedón, donde por primera vez Platón hace explícita esa distinción, y precisamente en el pasaje que nos ocupa, donde la ruta hacia el conocimiento toma la forma de una indagación que parte de lo que nos es más próximo y deriva en el reconocimiento de que la realidad no se agota en lo observable, funda lo que aparece en la superficie y lo vuelve inteligible.
El resultado al que arribamos es que la reminiscencia en tanto proceso de búsqueda que envuelve el reconocimiento de una realidad suprasensible es prerrogativa del amante del saber, es decir, del filósofo y de quienes comparten su sed de búsqueda. A la mayoría de los hombres, amantes de opiniones, la falta de apetencia de saber les impide recobrar el conocimiento que hay en ellos y los confina a la ignorancia, estado del alma que el Sócrates platónico combate con frecuencia. Solo que en el marco de la concepción del conocimiento como anamnesis, la ignorancia no es tanto creer saber lo que no se sabe, al menos no únicamente, sino que se deja caracterizar, en tanto olvido, como un no saber que se sabe. La filosofía no se reduce a una práctica negativa dirigida a socavar la falsa presunción de saber sino que deja ver su faceta constructiva, aplicándose a la recuperación de un saber que de algún modo ya está en nuestra alma. La naturaleza de este saber lo distingue de cualquier otro: tenemos noticia de él gracias al reconocimiento ligado al acto de percepción que lleva a cabo el filósofo, así como es dado recobrarlo a través de una búsqueda esforzada. Y dado que los esforzados e indagadores no son otros que los amantes del saber, el ejercicio de la filosofía da prueba de la existencia de tal saber al tiempo que se constituye en el medio para recobrarlo. Alojado en el alma, resistente a cualquier forma de captura o transmisión de un individuo a otro, la particularidad del saber objeto de anamnesis es manifestarse, como el oráculo, mediante “signos” que remiten ya sea a su adquisición originaria, ya a su eventual recuperación, a lo que fue y a lo por venir. En el medio solo el olvido y la práctica de la filosofía.

§ 3. Ahora bien, ¿puede ese saber, aun antes de haber sido “despertado” por el interrogatorio, tener incidencia en nuestro trato con las cosas sensibles? En lo que sigue considero la posibilidad de que el bagaje de conocimiento prenatal al que se refiere Platón intervenga en la actividad del alma, ensayando una respuesta

12 Con relación a este pasaje de Teeteto, Bedu-Addo 1991: 60 afirma: “it is indeed difficult to imagine a more appropriate statement of the moral of the argument for recollection in Phaedo”. Cf. Casertano 2015: 309-310, n. ad loc. 74a12.
13 Nótese el paralelismo con Men. 86a-b, en que el ejercicio mayéutico de Sócrates con el esclavo da apoyo a la tesis de que conocer es recordar y termina por consolidar la creencia en que el alma es inmortal.
afirmativa a esta pregunta. La visión de cosas iguales supondría el rol activo del alma, no necesariamente reconocido por el sujeto, excepto que sea amante del saber, desde cuya perspectiva, la mera identificación de algo como P constituirá siempre una variedad de recuerdo. Por esta vía es posible dar con un significado de anamnesis más amplio que el visto hasta aquí, conforme al cual todos los hombres recuerdan. Esto no pretende sugerir, desde luego, que todos se aplican a buscar e investigar al modo en que lo hacen los amantes del saber, pero sí que para dictaminar sobre lo percibido, el alma apela a conceptos que, según Platón, están en nosotros desde antes del uso de los sentidos. Todo hombre, en su trato con las cosas sensibles, echa mano a ellos, aunque por estar sumido en el olvido acerca de su verdadero origen, crea valerse exclusivamente de sus sentidos.

La lectura que sugiero reposa sobre la distinción entre el punto de vista del filósofo y el de los demás individuos, que vertebra muchas de las discusiones que el Sócrates platónico lleva adelante. Un ejemplo claro lo brinda el pasaje de Menón que introduce la tesis de que el conocimiento es anamnesis. En 81e, Menón pregunta, intrigado: “¿cómo es que dices eso de que no aprendemos sino que lo que denominamos aprender es reminiscencia?”. Aquello que en sentido corriente se describe como aprender para Sócrates no supone propiamente adquisición de un saber nuevo sino más bien recuperación de uno anterior, de ahí que describa como anamnesis lo que corrientemente se llama aprendizaje (mathesis). No todos, sin embargo, compartirán esta redefinición socrática y posiblemente muchos abracen el argumento erístico formulado líneas antes por Menón, según el cual es vano buscar y no hay aprendizaje posible, en virtud de una escisión entre conocer e ignorar que impide el progreso del saber.

Otro modo en que opera la distinción entre el punto de vista del filósofo y el de la mayoría nos remite a Rep. VII, 523b-d, en el marco del argumento dedicado a fundar la inclusión de la matemática en el programa de estudios del futuro gobernante, como propedéutica de la dialéctica. Dentro de los objetos sensibles, Sócrates distingue aquellos que son juzgados suficientemente por los sentidos y otros que los últimos revelan de modo inadecuado, insuficiente, lo cual es filosóficamente fecundo pues hace que la inteligencia (noesis, Rep. VII, 523b1,d4,8) intervenga y los examine (episkopein, 523b1,3,524b2). En el primer caso están en juego ciertas características como “dedo”, para cuya identificación presumiblemente bastan los sentidos, la vista en este caso, que proporcionaría evidencia suficiente para fundar el aserto. Nada en el argumento justifica la competencia de la vista para llevar adelante esta operación, lo que da lugar a la objeción de que no es posible llevarla a cabo sin algún tipo de actividad asociativa o reflexiva. Platón indirectamente da respuesta a

14 Cf. Fed. 73b5. La afirmación de que lo que se llama aprendizaje es reminiscencia implica para Rowe 1993: 163, n. ad loc. 73b5 que “real learning, of course, must be the acquisition of new knowledge”. Creo más bien que todo lo que esa afirmación permite afirmar es que lo que corrientemente se llama mathesis es anamnesis, recobrar un saber anterior y no adquirir conocimiento nuevo, dejando abierta la posibilidad de que para Platón haya aprendizaje en este último sentido, como quiere Rowe, o que todo aprendizaje sea reminiscencia.

15 La confianza socrática en que el aprendizaje es reminiscencia nos hace laboriosos e indagadores, mientras que dar crédito a la otra posición nos vuelve indolentes (Men. 81d-e), diferencia decisiva a la hora de abrazar una u otra posición (cf. Men. 86b8-c1).

16 Según Fine 1980: 230, Platón está interesado en la explicación más que en la identificación de los ejemplos, más precisamente en “the limits of accounts phrased in terms of observable properties accessible to the senses”.

17 Para conocer qué es un dedo, objeta Fine 1980: 230-231, “one must go beyond surface observable features to unobservable structure, function, and the like”. Con todo, aun si su explicación de
esta objeción, sin embargo, cuando le hace a decir a Sócrates que es el alma de los más (*ton pollon he psykhe, 523d3-4*) la que no se ve forzada a preguntar a la inteligencia qué cosa sea un dedo, ya que “en ningún caso le ha indicado la vista que el dedo sea al mismo tiempo lo contrario de un dedo” (523d5-6). Esta referencia al alma de la mayoría es crucial: preserva la distinción entre el filósofo y el resto de los hombres, dando a entender que para el primero la sensación *siempre* obra como estímulo intelectual, aun si los sentidos no exhiben contrariedades. Todo pronunciamiento basado en los sentidos se sostendría para Platón sobre un andamiaje provisto por el pensamiento, aunque solo el ojo filosófico –en el contexto de *Rep. VII*, también el del matemático– pero no el de la mayoría, se percate de ello.

Este pasaje de *Rep. VII* corrobora que el testimonio sensorial es evaluado por los amantes del saber de modo diferente a como lo pondera la mayoría de los hombres, para quienes lo que hay se agota en lo visible, además de esbozar una distinción clave entre dos tipos de juicio, uno que se funda en la evidencia de los sentidos y otro que envuelve cálculo o reflexión.\(^\text{18}\) Aclara, además, por qué en *Fedón* Platón recurre al ejemplo de leños y piedras iguales –imperfectamente iguales, iguales y también desiguales– para mostrar el rol activo del alma en ocasión de percibir. El par igual/desigual corresponde al segundo tipo de características distinguidas en *Rep. VII*, las que penetran en los sentidos simultáneamente, cada una acompañada de su contraria, tales como grandor y pequeño, uno y múltiple.\(^\text{19}\) Estas contrariedades sumen al alma en perplejidad, la mueven a indagar (*aporei kai zetein*) y a acudir a la inteligencia, capaz de discernir lo que a la vista se le presenta mezclado. Son estos, concluye Platón, los objetos aptos para poner en acción dentro del alma el pensamiento (*Rep. VII, 524e5*) y para elevarla a la contemplación del ser y la verdad, a diferencia de aquellos cuya explicación pareciera poder efectuarse sobre la sola base de la sensación, es decir, atendiendo a las características observables con que la cosa se presenta. Esto último, sin embargo, si es correcta mi apreciación sobre la referencia a “los más”, para Platón es solo cuestión de apariencia. No se trata, en fin, de que el alma asuma un papel activo y recurra a la inteligencia en ocasión de ciertas percepciones pero no en otras, ni de que unas características sean captadas por ella y otras por los sentidos. Simplemente, ciertas características son más apropiadas que otras para hacer manifiesto que quien dictamina sobre lo percibido es el alma, no los sentidos alojados en el cuerpo.

Este es corroborado en *Teeteto*. 184b-186c, en el marco del argumento antes mencionado, que descalifica a la *aisthesis* desde el punto de vista del conocimiento.\(^\text{20}\) Su punto de partida es la afirmación de que el alma, no los sentidos, es la que percibe: percibimos *con ella*, “a través de” (*dia*) los sentidos como instrumentos.\(^\text{21}\) Y si bien esta actividad perceptual se distingue de otra más elevada en la que el alma actúa “a prediccados no discutibles (“nondisputed predicates”) como ‘dedo’, que no envuelven copresencia de opuestos, fuera inadecuada, Platón al menos está en lo cierto, reconoce la autora, al insistir en que ninguna propiedad discutable “is definable in purely observational terms”.

\(^\text{18}\) Aunque en este pasaje de *Rep. VII* no aparecen términos como *dóxa* o *doxázein*, Platón se refiere inequívocamente a cosas que la *aisthesis* es capaz de discernir suficientemente: *hikanos hupo tes aistheseos krinomena*, 523b1-2).

\(^\text{19}\) Se trata de características que las cosas poseen deficientemente en la medida en que quieren (*bouletai, Fed. 74d10*), aspiran (*oregetai, 75b1*), anhelan (*prothumeitai, 75b7*) vanamente ser como la forma. En *Rep. VII* el énfasis está puesto en la dificultad de explicarlas y aun identificarlas sobre la sola base del testimonio sensorial.

\(^\text{20}\) Dado que en *Teeteto* Platón omite referirse a las formas, la descalificación de la *aisthesis* reposa sobre fundamentos distintos de los ofrecidos en *Fedón* o en *República*, donde se subraya la precariedad ontológica del objeto captado por medio de los sentidos.

\(^\text{21}\) Cf. *Teet.184b8*-e6. Platón reserva el uso del caso dativo (“con”) para designar agencia y la preposición *dia* (“a través de”) para expresar instrumentalidad.
través de sí misma” (*di’ hautes, Teet. 185e1, 6), con independencia del cuerpo y sus facultades,22 Platón pone especial énfasis en el papel activo del alma al percibir. La terminología empleada en esa sección de *Teeteto* para diferenciar ambas actividades aparece ya en *Fedón*, donde Platón distingue el examen que el alma lleva a cabo a través de (dia) los ojos, los oídos y los demás sentidos alojados en el cuerpo del que emprende “ella misma por sí misma” (*aute kath’ haute*),23 “a través de sí misma” (*di’ hautes*).24 En ambos casos se trata de un examen o investigación25 que la tiene por sujeto, nunca de la recepción pasiva de datos de los sentidos, lo que no deja dudas de que es ella quien dictamina, con mayor o menor apoyo en los sentidos, sobre lo percibido.

Puntualmente en el pasaje que nos ocupa, la reminiscencia se pone en acción al percibir algo bajo un aspecto determinado, por ejemplo al ver estos leños y piedras iguales.26 Los sentidos, la vista en este caso, actúan como disparadores del proceso descripto en términos de reminiscencia, pero ¿de qué es ocasión propiamente la visión de estos leños iguales? No puede ser origen de la noción de igualdad que viene a nuestro pensamiento en ocasión de ver dos cosas iguales. El énfasis de Platón en la imperfección de estas igualdades es tal que nos impide atribuir un origen empírico al concepto de igualdad. Menos aún podría la visión de igualdades sensibles ser ocasión del pensamiento de lo igual en sí, como si a partir de la percepción, automáticamente, se generara conocimiento en el alma. Es decir, que aprender sea recordar, como quiere Platón, no nos libera del esfuerzo de la búsqueda.27 Aquello que la visión de estos leños iguales motoriza no es entonces ni un concepto de igualdad ni tampoco el pensamiento de lo igual en sí, no directamente al menos.

22 La una capta objetos propios (*idia*) de cada sentido, la otra se aplica a aquellas determinaciones comunes (*koina*) a los objetos de los distintos sentidos y aun a todas las cosas (*Teet. 185c4-5*), denominadas así justamente por su aplicabilidad a todo lo que hay. A través de la visión p.e. percibimos colores, no sonidos, así como a través del oído percibimos sonidos y no colores, en cambio podemos pensar que tanto el sonido como el color son, que cada uno es lo mismo que sí mismo, etc. Ser, mismo, diferente, semejante, son “comunes”, nómina a la que luego se añaden contrarios evaluativos como bello y feo, bueno y malo. Platón no se explica sobre los *koina* todo lo que esperaríamos, se limita a ilustrar su empleo sin inquirir p.e. cómo los poseemos, lo que llevaría a convocar a las formas.

23 *Fed. 79c2-d2;* cf. *65b9-d3.*

24 *Fed. 82e3-4.* La terminología similar en ambos diálogos no impide distinguir sus respectivos planteos (cf. Scott 1987: 364-365). En *Fedón*, los dos tipos de investigación, la que el alma lleva a cabo a través de los sentidos y la que cumple ella misma a través de sí misma, se correlacionan con distintos tipos de entidades, sensibles e intelígenes, mientras que en *Teet. 184b ss.*, la investigación del alma por sí misma, sin el concurso de los sentidos, se aplica a las características comunes a los objetos sensibles y a todo lo que hay.

25 Cf. usos de *skopein, episkopein* en *Fed. 65b10, 79c3, 5, d1, 82e4, Teet. 185e2, 7, 186a11.*

26 A propósito de la estructura misma de los ejemplos que proporciona Platón, Vigo 2009: 59 señala el deslizamiento, de modo casi inadvertido, desde el caso de la percepción de cosas (estructuras del tipo ‘ver X’, p. ej., el retrato de Simmias) al caso de la percepción de hechos o estados de cosas (estructuras del tipo ‘ver X como Y’, o bien ‘ver que X es Y’). El ejemplo de dos leños o piedras iguales corresponde al juicio perceptivo ‘veo los leños A y B como iguales’, el cual, como mera afirmación de un hecho y sin referencia expresa al acto de percepción, corresponde al enunciado ‘los leños A y B son iguales’.

En cuanto al reconocimiento de que las igualdades sensibles aspiran a lo igual sin lograrlo, vimos que compite únicamente al amante del saber. Los más, amantes de opiniones, ven cosas iguales sin hacer esa reflexión ni aplicarse a la búsqueda de conocimiento. ¿Hay algún sentido en el cual también ellos, así y todo, “recuerdan”? De la insistencia de Platón en que todo ejemplo de igualdad es también un ejemplo de desigualdad se desprende que sin la previa aprehensión de lo igual no dispondríamos del ‘respeto’ gracias al cual identificamos como iguales cosas que no lo son realmente. Esta es una de las principales enseñanzas del argumento de Fed. 72e ss., a cuya luz tiene sentido afirmar que todos en cierto modo recuerdan. Al ver cosas iguales no estamos haciendo más que ‘recordar’ lo igual, de otro modo no sería posible percibir estos leños bajo ese aspecto determinado y el acto perceptivo en cuestión no tendría lugar. Anamnesis, así como describe la búsqueda esforzada que emprende el amante del saber, que trasciende lo sensible y culmina en la aprehensión de la forma, es apropiado para dar cuenta del acto de dictaminar sobre lo percibido. A esta operación se refiere Platón expresamente en los pasajes aquí comentados del libro VII de República y sobre todo de Teeteto 184b ss. Si bien en ellos no se emplea el vocabulario de la anamnesis, se alude al uso de ciertos conceptos que no pueden haberse forjado empíricamente pero se aplican a los objetos de más de un sentido y, en rigor, a todo lo que hay.28 A la luz del argumento de Fed. 72e ss., su atribución a las cosas puede ser descripta (¿metafóricamente?) en términos de recuerdo, como resultado de una experiencia anterior del alma con las formas. No escapa a Platón que los más, amantes de opiniones, al ver leños o piedras iguales creerán estar articulando lo dado a sus sentidos sin reconocer allí algo diferente, puesto por el pensamiento. Creerán que una persona es más grande que otra por una cabeza,29 que algo es bello por su color brillante, por cierta figura o algo de esta índole,30 eludiendo describir lo que perciben recorriendo a formas o a ítems extraempíricos de cualquier tipo. Pero es parte de la misión del filósofo, entiende Platón, construir explicaciones que nos sacan de la ignorancia, afines a la creencia en realidades en sí de naturaleza suprasensible. Su argumento de la anamnesis va en esta línea con el propósito de dar cuenta de muchos conceptos de los que nos servimos en nuestro trato habitual con las cosas sensibles. En ese sentido constituye un logrado intento de sacar a la luz su verdadero origen y de ese modo combatir el olvido.

L’argument exposé dans Phédon 72e-77a est un sujet controversé, et ceci dans plusieurs aspects. L’un des problèmes qui se posent est celui de la portée du processus décrit comme «réminiscence» (anamnesis), procédure dans laquelle la sensation est l’occasion qui suscite la pensée et met en marche le processus du ressouvenir. Combien et qui sont, selon Platon, ceux qui se souviennent? S’agit-il d’une opération qui concerne tous les hommes ou plutôt d’une recherche que seulement certains individus entament, et moins individus encore réussissent à mener à bien? Il est incontestable que la réminiscence est propre au philosophe, pour qui la sensation n’est pas un obstacle mais une stimulation pour la pensée. Il est toutefois problématique de limiter ce processus seulement à lui, mais aussi de l’élargir à tous les hommes, même à ceux qui sont en dehors de la philosophie, du moins à la lumière de la critique que Platon adresse souvent à la majorité, même dans Phédon, étant donné leur tendance à être trompés par les sens. Ces critiques suggèrent que seulement quelques individus exceptionnels, presque personne, ont

28 Acerca de los comunes (koina) cf. supra n. 22.
la possibilité de trouver dans la sensation l'occasion de se lancer vers le processus de commémoration.

Mon propos est celui d'explorer la portée conférée à l'anamnesis dans Phéd. 72e ss., en fonction de l'hypothèse selon laquelle, en plus de se référer à la recherche des amants du savoir, c'est-à-dire, une quête qui part du sensible et vise son principe intelligible, le texte fournit surtout le fondement d'une explication du processus de l'élaboration des jugements sur ce qui est perçu, sujet développé dans quelques dialogues postérieurs. Platon considère que quand on saisit des égalités dans les choses sensibles (dans son exemple chez des bouts de bois ou des cailloux égaux), tous les hommes, d'une certaine manière, «se souviennent» de l'égal; autrement, ils ne pourraient pas saisir tel caractère dans des choses qui sont à la fois un exemple d'égalité et d'inégalité. Platon voit que pour la plupart d'entre eux, cependant, il ne s'agit que de mettre en ordre ce que les sens reçoivent, alors que seulement dans quelques cas exceptionnelles la perception suscite une réflexion explicite, qui va au-delà de ce qui est donné à la propre expérience. Et, même si seulement dans ce dernier cas il y aurait quelque chose qui se rapproche de ce que nous appelons d'habitude «réminiscence», il est possible, en nous appuyant sur Fed. 72e ss., de décrire aussi le premier cas, c'est-à-dire, non seulement le cas dans lequel la vision de quelque chose amène à penser à une autre, qui est absente à la sensation, mais aussi le cas dans lequel on voit quelque chose comme P grâce à une notion que nous ne pouvons pas avoir forgé de manière empirique, même si on s'est trompé sur son vrai origine.

L'argument de Phéd. 72e ss. peut ainsi être lu selon un double registre, ambivalence qui n'est pas un défaut mais une vertu de l' exposée platonicienne, respectueuse des différences qu'il y a parmi les types de savoir et aussi entre les perspectives qui poussent à la majorité des gens et à quelques-uns, les amants du savoir, quand il s'agit de décrire leur propre expérience. N'oublions pas que beaucoup des thèses qui suscitent l'adhésion du Socrate platonicien mettent en question les opinions communément reçues et conduisent à des explications éloignées du point de vue de la foule. Un exemple particulièrement pertinent est sans doute celui du processus de la connaissance en termes d'anamnesis : on conçoit comme la récupération d'un savoir enfoui dans l'âme ce que la plupart des gens considèrent comme la saisie de vérités qui lui sont extérieures.

L'analyse que je présente est divisée en deux sections. Premièrement j'examine une série de passages du Phéd. 72e-77a qui conduisent à conclure que l'anamnesis est une prérogative des amants du savoir. Mais la formule «amants du savoir» a un sens plus large que d'habitude chez Platon, car elle fait allusion non seulement au philosophe mais aussi aux «apprentis», c'est-à-dire, à tous ceux qui s'appliquent à chercher et à examiner, grâce à la mise en place des capacités qui sont en puissance chez tous les hommes, même si seulement quelques-uns, selon Platon, les développent. Dans la section suivante je me demande sur la possibilité d'une interprétation plus large de l'argument, selon laquelle la réminiscence concerne tous les hommes. Une telle interprétation est possible sur la base d'un autre des sens d'anamnesis, qui ne fait pas référence explicite à la quête philosophique, mais à la formulation des jugements à propos de ce qui est perçu par l'homme ordinaire. Afin d'établir si ce sens du mot est également présent dans Phéd. 71e ss., je m'appuie sur deux brefs passages de dialogues postérieurs, Rép. VII, 523a-524d et Théét. 184b-186c, où Platon décrit un processus similaire à celui décrit dans le Phédon, même si la terminologie propre à l'anamnesis n'y est pas utilisée. À la lumière de ce deux passages, il est possible trouver déjà dans Phéd. 72e ss. des éléments à l'appui de la thèse selon laquelle tous les hommes se souviennent. Cela ne signifie pas, bien sûr, que tous essaient de chercher et d'enquêter de la même façon que les amants du
savoir, mais plutôt que tout jugement que l'on fait sur la base des sens s'appuie sur un échafaudage fourni par la pensée. Le jugement perceptif plus élémentaire exige un appel tacite à des concepts qui sont dans notre âme, selon Platon, avant l'utilisation des sens. La spéculation philosophique met en lumière sa véritable origine et combat l'oubli.

Bibliografía citada


Le Phédon et les deux paradigmes de la séparation

Pitteloud, Luca

1/ La mort comme séparation de l’âme et du corps en tant que différenciation symétrique

1.1/ La définition de la mort

Il est question dans le Phédon d’un premier type de séparation que nous appellerons dans la suite de ce travail SEP1. Elle intervient dans le cadre de la définition de la mort que propose Socrate :

La mort, pensons-nous que c’est quelque chose (τι τὸν θάνατον εἶναι)? - Oui, assurément, fut la réponse de Simmias. - Se peut-il qu’elle soit autre chose que la séparation (ἀπαλλαγήν) de l’âme d’avec le corps? C’est bien cela, être mort : le corps séparé (χωρὶς (…) ἀπαλλαγέν) d’avec l’âme en vient à n’être que lui-même en lui-même (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτό), tandis que l’âme séparée (χωρὶς … ἀπαλλαγεῖσαν) d’avec le corps est elle-même en elle-même (αὐτὴν καθ’ αὑτὴν)? Se peut-il que la mort soit autre chose que cela? - Non, c’est bien cela dit-il.1

La mort est donc définie dès le commencement du Phédon comme étant identique à la séparation de l’âme et du corps. Autrement dit quand l’âme est séparée du corps (χωρίς), et ce de façon symétrique, le corps est séparé de l’âme, alors l’homme, précédemment constitué de l’union d’un corps et d’une âme, est mort.

1.2/ Symétrie et spatialité en question

Le genre de séparation qui se produit entre le corps et l’âme est une séparation symétrique. Platon emploie l’adjectif chôris qui peut impliquer une distinction spatiale2. Il semble qu’énoncer que A et B sont séparés signifie que A est distinct localement de B et B est distinct localement de A, donc qu’ils n’ont aucune partie commune3. L’âme séparée du corps se rend dans un lieu dont la situation

1 Phédon 64c2-c9 : «ἡγούμεθα τι τὸν θάνατον εἶναι; Πάνυ γε, ἔφη ὑπολαβὼν ὁ Σιμμίας. Ἀρα μὴ ἀλλο τι ἢ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπό τοῦ σῶματος ἀπαλλαγήν; καὶ εἶναι τούτο τὸ τεθνάναι, χωρὶς μὲν ἀπό τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπαλλαγέν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὑτό τὸ σῶμα γεγονέναι, χωρὶς δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν [ἀπὸ] τοῦ σῶματος ἀπαλλαγεῖσαν αὐτὴν καθ’ αὑτὴν εἶναι; ἄρα μὴ ἀλλο τι ἢ ὁ θάνατος ἢ τούτο; Οὔκ, ἀλλὰ τούτο, ἔφη.» Même si dans un premier temps Socrate parle de la séparation de l’âme d’avec le corps (« τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος »), ce qui montre que ce passage se concentre bien sur la problématique de l’âme et de son sort après la mort, les deux entités, à savoir âme et corps, sont dites χωρὶς l’une par rapport à l’autre. La contextualisation s’avère donc importante ici puisque Platon nous entraîne dans un contexte mythologique.


3 Même s’il s’avère difficile de savoir quelle est la relation de l’âme au corps durant leur union. Platon ne donne aucun détail à ce propos dans le Phédon.
géographique est rendue explicite à la fin du mythe du Phédon (107d-114c). L’âme et le corps semblent ainsi distingués spatialement.

Il faut relever l’équivalence affirmée dans la définition de la mort :
→ le corps séparé (χωρίς) est lui-même par lui-même (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ).
→ l’âme séparée (« χωρίς ») est elle-même par elle-même (« αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν »).

Ainsi, nous avons ici l’affirmation de la thèse qui postule l’équivalence entre les expressions « χωρίς » et « αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ » pour l’âme et le corps. Pour comprendre, ce que signifie donc la notion de séparation entre l’âme et le corps, dans cette première définition, il faut saisir la signification de l’expression « lui-même, par lui-mêmes ».

L’élément central de cet argument est que l’âme, lorsqu’elle est AKA, jouit d’une existence indépendante du corps. Pour le dire autrement, elle ne dépend d’aucune manière, non seulement dans son être, mais aussi dans son activité, du corps. L’âme en tant qu’elle est AKA est non seulement distincte, mais aussi affranchie du corps, c’est-à-dire indépendante. Que cette indépendance se situe dans un « quelque part » s’avère nécessaire. Que ce quelque part soit un lieu, localisable dans la géographie de l’univers, doit se comprendre dans le cadre de ce premier argument du Phédon.

Cette séparation du corps et de l’âme est une distinction symétrique. Sur le plan logique, nous pourrions rapprocher cela de la distinction entre deux concepts qui seraient isolés dans le cadre d’une démonstration. Nous nommerons dès maintenant ce type de séparation : SEP1. Or, SEP1 devra évidemment être différencié de la façon dont les particuliers et les Formes sont séparés. Platon ne va pas s’attarder, ni même se servir de cette distinction au-delà du premier argument. En fait, il va même l’abandonner et s’intéresser au rapport entre l’âme et le corps pendant l’existence terrestre.

Il n’est pas absurde de supposer que si dans leur union l’âme et le corps occupent le même lieu, alors dans le cas de SEP1, ils doivent nécessairement occuper des lieux différents. Puisqu’il s’agit d’une distinction symétrique, il n’est peut-être pas absurde de vouloir rapprocher SEP1 d’une séparation physique de deux objets qui, quelle que soit leur situation dans le cas de leur union, n’occupent plus le même lieu une fois leur

4 Vlastos (1987) suggère qu’il convient d’être particulièrement prudent lors de la traduction d’une expression comme einai ti chôris. Il faut préférer traduire cette expression par existe (est) séparément, plutôt que par est séparé. En effet, cette dernière traduction devrait correspondre à l’expression grecque χορίστον esti que Platon n’emploie pas ici. Vlastos souligne ici cette distinction car il souhaite indiquer que la notion de chôrismos, qui sera d’ailleurs reprise par Aristote en tant que critique fondamentale de l’hypothèse des Formes, ne sera jamais explicitement exprimée par Platon dans ses dialogues.

5 L’abréviation AKA fera dès maintenant référence à l’expression « αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ ». Il n’est pas absurde de supposer que si dans leur union l’âme et le corps occupent le même lieu, alors dans le cas de SEP1, ils doivent nécessairement occuper des lieux différents. Puisqu’il s’agit d’une distinction symétrique, il n’est peut-être pas absurde de vouloir rapprocher SEP1 d’une séparation physique de deux objets qui, quelle que soit leur situation dans le cas de leur union, n’occupent plus le même lieu une fois leur


7 Couper un morceau de bois en deux implique que les deux morceaux séparés
séparation effective. Mais il ne faut certainement pas vouloir pousser l'analyse trop loin dans le cadre du rapport de l'âme et du corps. Il s'avère néanmoins intéressant de noter que le vocabulaire de la séparation métaphysique fait son apparition dans le cadre d'une définition de la mort aux tonalités mythologiques, dans laquelle deux entités sont distinguées symétriquement l'une de l'autre : l'âme et le corps séparés n'ont plus de relation l'une avec l'autre. La symétrie est donc caractérisée par une absence totale de relation. Il semble clair qu'une telle conception ne pourra pas s'appliquer à la séparation entre les particuliers et les Formes (SEP).

2/ La transition vers les Formes : de la distinction âme-corps chez le philosophe à celle entre les Formes et les particuliers

2.1 L'âme et le corps dans la vie philosophique

Quel est donc le type d'existence posé entre l'âme et le corps, non pas après la mort, mais pendant la vie? Quel rapport existe-t-il, au cours de l'existence, entre ces deux entités? La première chose à noter est qu'il n'y a pas de distinction locale puisque dans ce cas, l'âme est unie au corps (66b5 : sympehymene et 66e3 : oion te meta tou somatos). Cependant il existe un type de relation entre ces deux entités, relation qui, dans sa description, utilise l'expression «AKA» afin de décrire exclusivement les âmes et non plus les corps. De même dans l'hypothèse des Formes, la même expression sera employée à propos des Formes et non des particuliers.

Platon envisage l'âme distinguée du corps non plus localement mais l'âme devenue elle-même par elle-même (AKA), isolée du corps par l'effort entrepris dans la vie philosophique. En effet, l'attitude philosophique consiste, pour Platon, à se séparer du corps qui est un obstacle pour l'âme notamment en ce qui concerne la connaissance des vraies réalités. Philosopher c'est se séparer de son corps et de son influence. Le philosophe doit ainsi faire approcher son âme du statut d'«elle-même par elle-même», statut dans lequel elle n'entretient plus de rapport avec le corps. Que cela soit possible ou non, qu'il s'agisse d'un idéal, Platon affirme que l'âme, pour être elle-même par elle-même, n'a pas besoin d'un autre lieu mais peut déjà exister indépendamment de l'influence du corps dans son union physique avec ce dernier. Cela ne présuppose ni l'existence d'un autre monde ni une eschatologie particulière. Ainsi Platon écrit :

— Quand donc, reprit Socrate, l'âme atteint-elle la vérité? Quand elle entreprend de faire quelque recherche de concert avec le corps, nous voyons qu'il l'induit en erreur.— C'est vrai.— N'est-ce pas en raisonnant (λογίζεσθαι), si en effet cela arrive, que le réel devient clair à l'âme (κατά δηλον αὐτὴ γίγνεται τί τῶν ὄντων)?— Si.— Mais l'âme ne raisonne jamais mieux que quand rien ne la trouble, ni l'ouïe, ni la vue, ni la douleur, ni quelque plaisir, mais qu’au contraire elle s’isole le plus complètement en elle-même (καθ᾽ αὑτὴν γίγνηται ἐῶσα), en envoyant promener le corps (χαίρειν τὸ σῶμα) et qu’elle rompt, autant qu’elle peut (καθ᾽ ὅσον δύναται), tout commerce (ἁπτομένη) et tout contact (μακρύειν) avec lui pour n’occuper pas la même place. Cela dit, ils n’occupaient pas non plus la même place avant la division. Peut-être faisaient-ils partie du même tout ou du même ensemble. Ce qui paraît pertinent dans le cadre de cet exemple illustratif est qu’ils sont symétriquement distingués dans le processus de séparation. Le lien spécifique de l’âme et du corps rend cette question délicate. Dans le Timée, l’âme sera décrite en tant qu’intermédiaire entre les Formes et le corps, ayant une certaine extension puisqu’elle enveloppera le corps (35a-b et 36d6-e8).

8 Phédon 66b-67b.
essayer de saisir le réel (τοῦ ὄντος).— C'est juste.— Ainsi donc, ici encore, l'âme du philosophe méprise profondément le corps, le fuit et cherche à s'isoler en elle-même (αὐτὴ καθ’ αὑτὴν γίγνεσθαι) ?— Il me semble.9

L'âme humaine, quand elle s'isole du corps, c'est-à-dire quand elle cherche à connaître, à atteindre le réel indépendamment du corps, peut atteindre une connaissance des vraies réalités10. Se Séparer (« καθ’ αὑτὴν γίγνεσθαι ») signifie ainsi, pour l'âme, s'éloigner des influences corporelles afin d'atteindre une connaissance des objets réels. L'âme est ainsi AKA quand elle raisonne (λογίζεσθαι) elle-même par elle-même, sans aucun recours au corps ni à tout ce qui est corporel. Pour Platon, il existe donc une relation possible entre l'âme et un type de réalités pures qui, elles aussi, comme nous le verrons plus tard, sont AKA, à savoir les Formes.

Cette thèse est réaffirmée à plusieurs reprises tout au long du Phédon avec insistance et constance:

Par contre, il nous est réellement prouvé que, si jamais nous devons avoir d'un objet une connaissance épurée (καθαρῶς), il faudra nous échapper (ἀπαλλακτέον) du corps et considérer (θεατέον) avec l'âme en elle-même (αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ) les choses en elles-mêmes (αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα).11

Ce passage exprime de manière condensée l'essentiel d'une relation qui pourrait s'exprimer ainsi:

- âme séparée αὐτὴ καθ’ αὑτὴν γίγνεσθαι
- âme pure («καθαρῶς»)
- âme en elle-même («αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ») considérant les réalités en elles-mêmes («αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα»).

Cette relation met en valeur ce que nous pourrions appeler l'indépendance de l'âme par rapport au corps dans l'attitude philosophique. Il s'avère particulièrement intéressant de remarquer que Platon qualifie cette indépendance d'effort de séparation dans les mêmes termes que pour SEP1 : l'emploi de «ἀπαλλακτέον» veut certainement signifier qu'il s'agit bien d'une séparation comparable à celle de la mort que définissait SEP1. En effet, cette attitude philosophique est d'une certaine façon assimilable à une mort ou plus précisément à une extraction du corps et du corporel. Elle consiste à faire comme si l'âme était détachée du corps, détachement qui n'aura lieu effectivement qu'au moment de la mort de l'individu. Dans cet état de détachement, l'âme est dite pure («καθαρῶς»), ou encore en elle-même dans la mesure où elle contemple («θεατέον») les réalités en elles-mêmes («αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα»).

Il faut ainsi différencier :

SEP1 : séparation symétrique de deux entités où l'une et l'autre n'entretiennent plus aucune relation réciproquement.

SEP1' : séparation non symétrique de deux entités où l'une des deux essaye de

9 Phédon 65b9-d3: «Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἕφη. Πότε οὖν, ἢ δ’ ὡς, ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀπτετα; ὅταν μὲν γὰρ μετὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπιχειρή τι σκοπεῖν, δῆλον ὅτι τότε ἐξαπατᾶται ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ. Αληθῆ λέγεις. Ἀρ’ οὖν οὐκ ἔν τῷ λογίζεσθαι εἴπερ ποι ἀλλοθι κατὰ δῆλον αὐτὴ γίγνεται τι τῶν ὄντων; Ναί. Λογίζεται δὲ γε ποι τότε κάλλιστα, ὅταν αὐτὴν τούτων μηδὲν παραλυπῆ, μήτε ἀκοὴ μήτε ὄψις μήτε ἀλγηδὼν μηδὲ τῆς ἡδονῆς, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ καθ’ αὑτῇ καθ’ αὐτῇ γίγνεται ἐῶς χαίρειν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ καθ’ ὅσον δύναται μή κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ μηδ’ ἀπομενέν ὀργητὴν τοῦ ὄντος. Ἐστι ταύτα. Οὐκ εἰς δ’ ἂν δύναι τοῦ φιλόσοφου ψυχή μάλιστα συνελθεῖ, τοῦτο γάρ ἐν αὐτῇ καθ’ αὐτῇ γίγνεται.»

10 Quelles sont ces réalités? Platon poursuit son analyse en affirmant qu'il existe des réalités qui ne peuvent pas être saisies par les sens comme le Juste en soi, le Beau en soi et le Bon en soi (65d), réalités qui peuvent être atteintes, ou plutôt connues, par l'âme et sa faculté de connaissance, la pensée.

11 Phédon 66d7-e2: «ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι ἐκεῖ ἦν οὕτω ὅτι, εἰ μέλλειν τοῖς καθαρῶς τῷ ἐκεῖ ἐστεναι, ἀπαλλακτέον αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτῆς τῇ ψυχῆ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα.»
se purifier de l'autre mais garde toujours un lien avec cette dernière.

SEP1' est un type de séparation spécifique puisqu’il permet de distinguer deux entités sans néanmoins couper toute forme de lien entre elles. Il est clair que dans cet effort12 de purification le corps et l’âme conservent toujours un lien l’un avec l’autre. Une purification absolue et complète n’est sans doute pas envisageable, puisqu’elle impliquerait précisément une absence totale de l’influence du corps sur l’âme.

SEP1’ permet donc de mieux cerner ce qu’est la notion d’indépendance dans le Phédon lorsqu’elle concerne le rapport de l’âme au corps. Dans ce dialogue, la notion d’indépendance émerge en effet lorsque Platon aborde la relation de l’âme au corps. Or si cette relation joue un rôle important dans le cadre de la définition de la séparation comme capacité pour les Formes d’exister indépendamment des particuliers, alors il est tout à fait utile de garder à l’esprit le contexte dans lequel cette notion fait son apparition, à savoir l’indépendance de l’âme par rapport au corps dans l’attitude philosophique.

2.2 L’indépendance en question

La séparation (SEP1’) philosophique de l’âme est dépendante, dans son explication, de l’existence des Formes. Autrement dit, il existe un rapport entre l’âme du philosophe, étant, tant qu’elle le peut, séparée ou isolée (SEP1’ du corps (AKA) et les réalités intelligibles qui sont dites également elles-mêmes par elles-mêmes (AKA). Remarquons néanmoins que dans cette situation, l’âme doit tenter de couper tout rapport avec le corps, ce qui implique que derrière cette idée il y a, d’une part, un dualisme entre l’âme et le corps, c’est-à-dire qu’il s’agisse de deux catégories ontologiques distinctes, et que, d’autre part, la fonction de l’âme ne soit pas exclusivement de prendre soin d’un corps. Il y a ainsi, sans doute, une tension avec la définition de l’âme telle qu’elle est présente dans le Phèdre. Le Phédon, en proposant une vision extrême du rapport entre l’âme et le corps13, dépeint l’âme dans une relation d’opposition forte avec le corps : si l’âme est un lien entre le corporel et l’intelligible, sa parenté et sa proximité avec les Formes la situe dans une relation dynamique par laquelle elle doit essayer de s’éloigner le plus possible du corps pour se rapprocher, tant que cela est possible, de l’intelligible.

Une question se pose : SEP1 et SEP1’ peuvent-ils servir à mettre en évidence une structure conceptuelle permettant de comprendre la séparation entre les particuliers et les Formes (SEP) ? Autrement dit, l’indépendance de l’âme dans SEP1 et SEP1’ peut-elle permettre de comprendre, voire s’appliquer, à la distinction entre les Formes et les particuliers

2.3 Le statut des Formes

Examinons maintenant quel est le mode d’être de ces réalités. Pour ce faire, il faut citer l’argument du Phédon qui tire l’immortalité de l’âme de sa nature propre, en affirmant la parenté de l’âme avec les réalités intelligibles :

Cette réalité même (αὐτὴ ἡ οὐσία), dont nous fondons en raison l’existence (λόγον δίδομεν τοῦ εἶναι) dans nos demandes et nos réponses, est-elle toujours invariable, identique à elle-même (ὡσαύτως ἀεὶ ἔχει κατὰ ταὐτά), ou change-t-elle selon le moment (ἄλλοτ’ ἄλλως)? L’Égal en soi (αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον), le Beau en soi (αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν), chaque Etre en soi (αὐτὸ ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστιν), ce qui est (τὸ ὄν), cela peut-

12 Platon emploie le verbe γίγνεσθαι pour bien signifier la dimension dynamique de cet effort.
13 Bien évidemment la mise en scène dans le Phédon de la mort de Socrate donne un accent clairement dualiste à la question du rapport entre l’âme et le corps.
il jamais être susceptible d’un changement quelconque (μεταβολὴν καὶ ἡντινοῦν ἐνδέχεται)? Ou bien chacune de ces réalités, étant uniforme et en soi par soi (ὁ ἐστι, μονοειδὲς ὅν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό), n’est-elle pas invariable (ὡσαύτως), identique à elle-même (κατὰ ταύτα ἐξει), sans jamais admettre nulle part ni en rien aucun changement (οὐδέποτε οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς ἀλλοίωσιν οὐδεμίαν ἐνδέχεται)?

L’opposition qui deviendra classique chez Platon introduit pour la première fois deux différents types d’être. Celui qui change («μεταβολὴν καὶ ἡντινοῦν ἐνδέχεται») est opposé à celui qui est («τὸ ὄν»). Or c’est le deuxième type qui est qualifié de «αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό», ou plus précisément, ce sont les réalités de cette catégorie d’être qui sont dites AKA. Or si nous suivons l’équivalence posée au moment de la définition initiale de la mort, cela équivaut à les affirmer comme séparées. De quoi sont-elles séparées? De même que l’âme est séparée du corps, les Formes sont séparées des réalités sensibles. Nous reviendrons par la suite sur la signification que ce texte semble donner à AKA, mais supposons, provisoirement, l'énoncé suivant:

(A) : L’âme est au corps ce que les Formes sont aux particuliers. Il s’agit de deux catégories de réalités, séparées, qui peuvent exister elles-mêmes par elles-mêmes.

Cette affirmation doit être rejetée pour plusieurs raisons. Néanmoins commençons par relever les ressemblances qu’elle met en valeur :

Il est à noter que tout comme le corps ne peut pas exister lui-même par lui-même, puisque séparé (SEP1) de l’âme il est amené à la destruction, les particuliers ne pourraient pas exister s’ils étaient séparés (c’est-à-dire sans aucune relation avec) des Formes dans un sens équivalent à celui de la première définition de la mort : tout comme le corps cesse d’être quand l’âme le quitte, si les Formes se séparaient des particuliers d’une façon similaire, c’est-à-dire si toute sorte de relation des Formes envers les particuliers était coupée, alors la sphère du changement cesserait d’être, car les particuliers, pour être ce qu’ils sont, dépendent d’une certaine façon des Formes. Mais cette hypothèse n’est pas envisageable car les particuliers, comme cela sera précisé en 102b, participent et donc dépendent des Formes dont ils tirent leur nom et les propriétés qui les qualifient.

Il existe un rapport de dépendance asymétrique entre le premier terme et le deuxième : le corps dépend de l’âme, il ne peut pas exister sans l’âme, alors que l’âme peut exister sans le corps. Pareillement, les Formes, quant à elles, ne dépendent pas des particuliers. Il faudra revenir par la suite sur cette idée d’indépendance en ce qui concerne les Formes.

Il existe donc dans le cas de SEP1’ des similitudes avec le rapport de distinction entre les Formes et les particuliers (SEP) :

Pas de distinction spatiale.

Rapport de dépendance : le corps dépend de l’âme et les particuliers, comme nous le verrons, dépendent des Formes.

Seule l’âme est appelée «elle-même par elle-même». Il y a ainsi asymétrie. Dans le rapport Formes-particuliers seules les Formes sont «AKA».

Il faut maintenant dire quelques mots sur le type de réalité qu’est l’âme afin de relativiser la portée de (A).

2.4 La parenté de l’âme

14 Phédon 78d1-7 : «αὐτὴ ἡ οὐσία ἢς λόγον δίδομεν τοῦ εἶναι καὶ ἐρωτῶντες καὶ ἀποκρινόμενοι, πότερον ὡσαύτως αἰὲ ἔχει κατὰ ταύτα ἡ ἅλλοτ’ ἅλλως; αὐτὸ τὸ ἴσον, αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν, αὐτὸ ἐκαστὸν ὁ ἔστιν, τὸ ὅν, μὴ ποτὲ μεταβολὴν καὶ ἤντινον ἐνδέχεται; ἢ αἰὲ αὐτῶν ἐκαστὸν ὁ ἔστι, μονοειδὲς ὅν αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό, ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταύτα ἔχει καὶ οὐδέποτε οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς ἀλλοίωσιν οὐδεμίαν ἐνδέχεται;»
D'un côté nous avons le corporel qui appartient au domaine du sensible et du changement, qu'il s'agisse du corps ou des particuliers, de l'autre, nous avons l'âme et les Formes. Appartiennent-elles au même niveau ontologique? Autrement dit l'âme est-elle une Forme? Platon fournit quelques éléments permettant de répondre par la négative à cette interrogation :

Posons donc, tu veux bien, deux espèces parmi les choses qui sont, l'une qu'on peut voir, alors que l'autre est invisible. —Posons, dit-il. —Posons aussi que celle qui est invisible (ἀιδὲς) est toujours même qu'elle-même (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ), alors que celle qu'on ne peut pas voir ne l'est jamais. —Posons aussi cela, dit-il. —Alors continuons, dit Socrate: ce qui nous constitue, n'est-ce pas d'une part, un corps et, d'une autre part, une âme? —Rien d'autre, dit-il. —Avec laquelle de nos deux espèces pouvons-nous donc affirmer que le corps a le plus de ressemblance (ὁμοιότερον) et de parenté (συγγενέστερον)? —Cela au moins, dit Cébès, est évident pour tout le monde : avec le visible. —Alors l'âme? C'est une chose visible ou invisible? —Visible? Pas par des hommes en tout cas, Socrate! Dit-il. (…) —Mais ce point-là, ne l'avions-nous pas justement établi il y a un bon moment, quand nous disions : toutes les fois que l'âme a recours au corps pour examiner quelque chose, utilisant soit la vue, soit l'ouïe, soit n'importe quel sens (par «avoir recours au corps», j'entends : «utiliser les sens pour examiner quelque chose») alors elle est trainée par le corps dans la direction de ce qui jamais ne reste même que soi (εἰς τὰ οὐδὲπότε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντα), et la voilà en proie à l'errance, au trouble, au vertige, comme si elle était ivre, tout cela parce que c'est avec ce genre de choses qu'elle est en contact? Oui absolument. Quant au contraire, c'est l'âme elle-même, et seulement par elle-même, (αὐτή καθ’ αὐτὴν) qui conduit son examen, elle s'élance là-bas (ἐκεῖσε), vers ce qui est pur (καθαρόν) et qui est toujours (ἀεὶ ὄν), qui est immortel (ἀθάνατον) et toujours semblable à soi (ὡσαύτως ἔχον)? Et comme elle est apparentée (συγγενὴς) à cela, elle reste toujours en sa compagnie, chaque fois précisément que, se concentrant elle-même en elle-même (αὐτὴ καθ’ αὑτὴν γέγενται), cela lui devient possible. Il en est fini alors de son errance : dans la proximité de ces êtres, elle reste toujours semblablement même qu'elle-même (ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως), puisqu'elle est à leur contact (ἐφαπτομένη). Cet état de l'âme, c'est bien ce qu'on appelle pensée (φρόνησις). (…) Examine alors, Cébès, dit-il, si nous arrivons bien, en fonction de ce qui précède, à la conclusion suivante : ce qui est divin (θείῳ), immortel (ἀθανάτῳ), objet pour l'intelligence (νοητῷ), uniforme (μονοειδεῖ), qui est indissoluble (ἀδιαλυτῷ) et toujours semblablement même qu'elle-même (καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον) voilà avec quoi l'âme offre le plus de ressemblance (ὁμοιότατον).15

15 Phédon 79a6-80b3 : «Θῶμεν οὖν βούλει, ἔφη, δύο εἴδη τῶν ὄντων, τὸ μὲν ὄρατον, τὸ δὲ ἄιδες; Θῶμεν, ἔφη. Καὶ τὸ μὲν ἄιδες ἂν κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον, τὸ δὲ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ; Καὶ τοῦτο, ἔφη, θῶμεν. Φέρε δὴ, ὡς τὸ ὄρατον ἄιδες ἂν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄτομον ἢ τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον.» Θῶμεν, ἔφη. Καὶ τοῦτο, ἔφη, θῶμεν. Φέρε δή, ὡς τὸ ὄρατον ἄιδες ἂν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄτομον ἢ τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄτομον ἢ τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον. ἔφη, ὡς τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον. ὥσπερ μεθ' ὑμῖν ξυλεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄτομον ἢ τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἄτομον ἢ τὸ σώματον τὸ ὄρατον μηδέποτε κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον.
L’âme n’est aucunement identifiée aux réalités invisibles que sont les Formes, toutefois elle est dite plus semblable («ὁμοιότατον») à ce qui est uniforme («μονοειδὲς»)\(^1\). L’âme possède une affinité/parenté (suggeneia) avec l’intelligible. Il s’agit d’une parenté qui n’implique pas de réciprocité. C’est l’âme qui est dite parente des Formes et non le contraire : en fait il s’agit bien d’une relation asymétrique puisque l’âme «s’élance vers les Formes» («οἴχεται») afin d’exister de façon séparée par la pensée. Les Formes sont elles-mêmes par elles (AKA), à proprement parler, l’âme durant sa vie terrestre ne peut qu’être elle-même par elle-même (AKA grâce aux Formes, pourrions-nous dire. L’âme n’est séparée du corps que lorsqu’elle est pensée («φρόνησις») ou connaissance des Formes. L’âme se situe bien à un niveau inférieur aux Formes puisqu’elle dépend des Formes quant à la possibilité d’être elle-même par elle-même, c’est-à-dire, d’une certaine façon, séparée du corps (SEP1)\(^1\\)\(^7\). En outre, il existe des différences importantes entre le rapport de distinction entre le corps et l’âme et celui, que nous allons examiner, entre les particuliers et les Formes :

A chaque corps est unie une seule âme, alors que plusieurs particuliers participent à la même Forme.

La relation entre l’âme et le corps est celle de l’union (dont Platon ne donne pas de détails dans le Phédon) et non celle de la participation.

Toute forme de causalité explicative (celle des Formes sur les particuliers) est exclue entre l’âme et le corps : l’âme n’explique pas pourquoi un corps est un corps tandis que la Forme du Beau explique pourquoi les belles choses sont belles.

L’âme n’est pas une Forme, elle ne possède pas la même nature ontologique qu’une Forme (elle s’élance vers la Forme 79d1). Elle possède une parenté : suggeneia.


\(^{17}\) Un problème semble surgir quand Platon parle d’un «là-bas» pour les Formes. Le style ressemble fortement à celui qu’il employait pour parler du lieu de séjour des âmes. Pourtant, cela serait une erreur de considérer ce «là-bas» comme autre chose que le «lieu des Formes» ou plutôt le lieu intelligible dont parlera Platon dans la République en 508c1. Le lieu du séjour des âmes est dépeint comme un lieu géographique, tandis que le lieu des Formes est celui de l’être qui peut être «visité» par l’âme lorsqu’elle s’élance vers lui et entreprend de connaître les Formes: il s’agit bien du lieu de la connaissance. Or en employant ce «là-bas» («ἐκεῖσε»), Platon sème peut-être le doute dans l’esprit de son lecteur puisqu’il donne l’impression qu’il existe un lieu des Formes, différent du lieu sensible à la façon dont l’Hadès est différent de la terre. Un tel rapprochement conduirait à situer les Formes dans un espace de la géographie de l’Univers, un troisième espace : nous aurions la terre, l’Hadès et le lieu des Formes. Cela n’est pas possible, car nous l’avons vu, le mode de séparation (SEP1) entre l’âme et le corps est à comprendre dans le contexte particulier d’une croyance religieuse à propos de la survivance de l’âme après la mort.
Ces différences montrent pourquoi l'affirmation (A) doit être relativisée puisqu'au final l'âme et les Formes ne se situent pas au même niveau ontologique. Il faut maintenant examiner comment s'articule la relation entre les particuliers et les Formes en termes de distinction, et examiner ce que signifie, appliquée à ces dernières, l'expression «AKA».

3/ Séparation de la Forme : indépendance et différence

Notre comparaison entre la séparation de l'âme et du corps (SEP1 et SEP1’) avec la séparation des Formes et des particuliers (SEP) implique une relation triangulaire entre le corps, l'âme et les Formes : l'âme est au centre de cette relation, puisqu'en essayant de se séparer du corps en devenant indépendante de son influence, elle cherche à se rapprocher des Formes, avec qui elle possède le plus de parenté. L'âme peut certes, dans une certaine mesure, acquérir une certaine indépendance par rapport au corps, cependant elle restera toujours dépendante des Formes. Ainsi, une conséquence de cette conception serait que puisque les âmes peuvent exister indépendamment des corps (SEP1 et SEP1’), les Formes devraient jouir d'une capacité d'existence indépendante par rapport aux particuliers. Cependant, il convient de se montrer très prudent à ce sujet car il semble délicat d'importer la problématique de la modalité d'existence dans le rapport entre les Formes et les particuliers. En effet, il est tout à fait légitime de situer le rapport de l'âme au corps dans le cadre d'une modalité d'existence : la dimension existentielle s'applique clairement à l'âme comme par exemple dans l'énoncé «l'âme existe», alors que, comme nous le verrons, la phrase «les Formes existent» peut sembler plus difficile à interpréter.

Etant donné qu'il n'est pas évident de comprendre ce que cela signifie pour une Forme d'exister, il s'avère encore plus délicat de vouloir saisir ce que cela voudrait dire pour la Forme F de pouvoir exister sans qu'aucun particulier ne participe en elle. Toutefois, cela fait parfaitement sens d'inférer que l'âme possède la capacité d'exister indépendamment du corps car d'une part, l'âme peut exister en étant séparée (SEP1) du corps, n'entretenant plus aucune relation avec lui, et d'autre part, même si le corps dont elle s'occupe est voué à la destruction, elle continuera à exister. En outre, l'âme peut, dans le cadre de l'effort philosophique, tenter d'acquérir une indépendance vis-à-vis de l'influence du corps (SEP1’). Il s'agit de deux possibilités de concevoir l'indépendance qui ne peuvent pas s'appliquer à la séparation entre les Formes et les particuliers (SEP) car 1) la notion de purification dynamique ne semble pas être pertinente dans un contexte métaphysique et 2) Platon n'introduit pas la notion de modalité d'existence dans sa métaphysique puisque les Formes servent à expliquer et à justifier les propriétés des particuliers et à ce titre les deux catégories distinguées sont supposées exister. Il faut donc faire attention à ne pas confondre la sphère psychologique avec le domaine de la métaphysique : se demander si les Formes ont la capacité d'exister indépendamment des particuliers, revient à se représenter les Formes comme des âmes qui existeraient dans les corps, alors qu'une Forme et une âme sont deux entités ontologiquement différentes. Certes Platon utilise un vocabulaire semblable dans les deux cas de figure (SEP1, SEP1’ d’une part et SEP d’autre part), mais cela ne doit pas fauser notre jugement : l'âme et les Formes peuvent être AKA précisément car la première possède une parenté avec les secondes, mais l'âme étant toujours liée aux Formes n'est jamais réellement AKA, sa séparation est un idéal à atteindre, seules les Formes sont pleinement AKA. La similarité du vocabulaire n'implique pas une identification possible des concepts explicatifs.

Comment comprendre l'indépendance propre au Formes par rapport aux particuliers, si elle n'est pas une capacité à exister indépendamment. Platon semble indiquer que les Formes ont une priorité ontologique par rapport aux particuliers.
puisqu'elles en sont les causes. Somme toute, il sera possible d'objecter que précisément, si A est la cause de B, alors A possède la capacité d'exister même si B n'existe pas, selon la définition que donne Aristote de la priorité ontologique. Mais cela ne semble pas être le sens de l'argument de Platon ici, puisqu'à la fois les Formes et les particuliers existent, à la différence que les Formes existent d'une autre façon, d'une manière plus fondamentale, pourrions-nous dire, par rapport aux particuliers.

Le premier trait notable de la séparation (SEP) est la différence. Comment donc imaginer cette différence lorsqu'elle concerne les Formes? Une façon assez naturelle d'interpréter la manière dont Platon décrit les Formes en tant que caractérisées par la pureté, la stabilité et l'imperméabilité au changement serait d'affirmer que la séparation (SEP) des Formes peut être comprise comme leur plénitude et leur autosuffisance. Il s'agirait d'une façon positive de décrire le statut des Formes par rapport aux particuliers : les Formes n'ont besoin de rien pour être ce qu'elles sont. À ce titre la comparaison avec l'âme s'avère utile : cette dernière, dans le cas de SEP1 (et non dans SEP1'), jouit d'une autosuffisance absolue par rapport au corps, puisqu'elle n'entretient aucun rapport avec lui. D'un autre côté, SEP1' met en valeur une tentative d'indépendance de l'âme par rapport au corps, opérée par un rapprochement en direction des Formes. L'âme n'est pas, dans ce cas, pleinement indépendante, elle dépend toujours des Formes pour être ce qu'elle est, ou pour le dire comme Platon, pour être elle-même par elle-même (AKA).

Summary :

This presentation aims to highlight the differences between two types of separation that can be found in the Phaedo: 1) the separation between soul and body, and 2) the separation between Forms and particulars. It is not clear that it is possible to affirm that there is a parallel between the relationships Forms-particulars and soul-body. It appears that, in terms of the soul-body relationship, there is equivalence between being separate, or in other words being itself by itself, and the notion of independent existence. Thus the soul, even in its union with the body, is somehow separated from the latter in the sense that it tends to be independent of it. It is certainly not an independent existence as such, but rather a liberation from the influence of the body. Two types of independence may apply to the soul when it is described as «itself by itself»: 1) a state of independent existence, 2) a mode of being precluding the influence of the body. Regarding the former, it is indeed a different situation from that between Forms and particulars since the idea of independent existence can not be strictly applied to Forms since it does not seem plausible to inject in the relationship between the sensible and the intelligible a n existential dimension.
La maschera di Socrate nel *Fedone*

Regali, Mario

Nel “Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates”, apparso nel 2013, nel capitolo dal significativo titolo “Prospects for further studies”, con il quale conclude il suo contributo “Socrates’ philosophizing”, David Wolfsdorf afferma che l’analisi degli argomenti di Socrate nei dialoghi non può esaurirsi nella logica formale ma “requires interpretation of the psychological attitudes of the participants [...] It is necessary to survey and clarify the evidence that informs our knowledge of the relevant psychological states of the characters”. Il *desideratum* espresso da Wolfsdorf in merito ai “relevant psychological states of the characters” chiama in causa di necessità un approccio letterario ai dialoghi, volto a comprendere come Platone metta in scena i propri personaggi e in particolare il suo protagonista Socrate.

I *Sokratikoi logoi* tuttavia, a causa dell’esclusione della voce dell’autore, non hanno favorito l’indagine sulla “poetica implicita” che è al centro dell’interesse della parte della critica più sensibile alla componente letteraria dei dialoghi; non a caso, i passi che il seminale lavoro di Konrad Gaiser del 1984 sceglie quali momenti di poetica, di *self-disclosure* secondo la recente definizione di Andrea Capra, appartengono a dialoghi come il *Fedro* o il *Simposio*, nei quali la forma del *Sokratikos logos* subisce variazioni di rilievo, come la notevole espansione della cornice o del ruolo di un narratore esterno, oppure a dialoghi come la *Repubblica* e le *Leggi*, dove il tema del dialogo offre a Platone occasione di suggerire la propria produzione quale poesia nuova per la città ideale. Scopo di un progetto di ricerca in corso, del quale questo intervento è parte, è contribuire all’indagine sulla “poetica implicita” di Platone anche nei dialoghi in cui la forma del *Sokratikos logos* prevede il fitto intreccio di domande e risposte che esclude la voce dell’autore, ma dove è tuttavia possibile, crediamo, individuare i momenti di *self-disclosure* nei luoghi in cui Socrate parla di sé, espone il proprio metodo, mostra la propria attitudine verso la ricerca. Grazie alla coincidenza senza residui fra il genere letterario del *Sokratikos logos* e il suo protagonista, comprendere la maschera di Socrate apre la strada per comprendere, ad un tempo, la poetica implicita di Platone.

Di norma la critica, pur nella sua multiforme varietà di approcci e prospettive, osserva la figura di Socrate nei dialoghi sempre alla luce di una generale interpretazione del pensiero di Platone. Dal Platone esoterico della scuola di Tubinga deriva il Socrate che nasconde la propria *sophia*; dal Platone socratico di Christopher Rowe deriva il Socrate maschera dell’autore che conserva sempre la sua funzione di portavoce; dal modello evolutivo della tradizione analitica di ambito anglosassone deriva il Socrate maestro del giovane Platone, un maestro che nei dialoghi della maturità è superato e presto sostituito. Il compito che attende oggi gli esegeti che si richiamano all’interpretazione letteraria di Platone è invece scegliere quale punto di partenza per l’analisi la funzione che Socrate svolge nei dialoghi, partire dal personaggio Socrate per interpretare l’autore Platone e non viceversa. E dall’esame complessivo dei luoghi nei quali Socrate definisce se stesso e la sua attività emerge una strategia coerente che Platone mette in atto per la caratterizzazione di Socrate, una strategia che non muta mai nel *corpus* perché mai muta la funzione protrettica che Platone attribuisce alla propria produzione. Platone costruisce per Socrate una maschera alla quale è assegnato il compito esclusivo di promuovere il metodo del *dialegesthai* mostrandone, rispetto ad ogni altro tipo di sapere, la maggiore efficacia quale mezzo per cogliere l’*eudaimonia*.
La strategia di caratterizzazione che Platone mette in atto appare coerente: il πρᾶγμα di Socrate dipende sempre da una fonte esterna, intesa in senso ampio. Quali fonti esterne intendiamo infatti gli interlocutori (dialoghi aporetici, *Fedone*, *Repubblica*, *Filebo*), i sogni (*Fedone*, *Teeteto*, *Cratilo*), gli dei o gli esseri divini come le Ninfe o il daimonion (*Fedro*, *Apologia*), i sofisti o i poeti (*Ippia Maggiore e Minore*, *Protagora*, *Gorgia*), autorità come Diotima (*Simposio*), Eutifrone (*Cratilo*) e Aspasia (*Menesesso*), oppure λόγοι che Socrate ha ascoltato in passato (*Fedone*, *Gorgia*). Mentre a partire dallo schema di Vlastos la critica, pur con innumerevoli sfumature e varianti, tende a distinguere tra il Socrate aporetico e il Socrate che trasmette un sapere positivo a partire dal *Gorgia*, il modo in cui Platone costruisce il personaggio di Socrate rivela un’intenzione che rimane ferma. Tratti costanti dell’agire di Socrate nei dialoghi sono la mancanza di αὐτárkeia, intesa come possesso di un sapere autonomo, e l’assoluta sincerità. In relazione all’ αὐτárkeia si distinguono in modo polare le caratterizzazioni di Socrate che offrono Platone e Senofonte. L’αὐτárkeia che Platone nega a Socrate è l’autonomia intellettuale che invece per Senofonte, nella chiusa dei *Memorabili*, costituisce uno dei cardini attorno al quale l’encomio di Socrate φρόνιμος, ἄριστος e εὐδαιμονέστατος si sviluppa (testo n. 1; Xen. *Mem*. IV 8, 11):

ἐμοὶ μὲν δὴ, τοιοῦτος ὃν οἴον ἐγὼ διήγημαι, [...] φρόνιμος δὲ ὡστε μὴ διαμαρτάνειν κρίνων τὰ βελτίω καὶ τὰ χείρω μηδὲ ἄλλου προσδέεσθαι, ἀλλ’ αὐτárκης εἶναι πρὸς τὴν τούτων γνώσιν, [...] ἐδόκει τοιοῦτος εἶναι οἷος ἂν εἴη ἄριστός τε ἀνὴρ καὶ εὐδαιμονέστατος.

Per Senofonte, Socrate non ha bisogno di nessuno (μηδὲ ἄλλου προσδέεσθαι) perché è autonomo, αὐτárκης, in relazione alla conoscenza, alla γνώσις di ciò che è migliore o peggiore. Nei dialoghi di Platone, Socrate invece dipende sempre da un fattore esterno che lo induce alla ricerca, la quale si sviluppa come esame di un interlocutore, di una tesi, di un sogno, oppure di un oracolo o di un παλαιὸς λόγος. Per la sua natura solo reattiva, la maschera di Socrate entra quindi in scena sempre priva di un sapere precostituito. Su questo tratto costante si fonda l’assoluta sincerità di Socrate, che non ha mai un sapere nascosto che il gioco dell’ironia dovrebbe presupporre. I due aspetti, mancanza di αὐτárkeia e sincerità, sono quindi in stretta connessione fra loro. Da questa prospettiva, la celebre ironia socratica non è altro che il frutto di un equivoco degli interlocutori che attribuiscono a Socrate una presunta σοφία nascosta, un sapere che anche il lettore dei dialoghi intuirebbe svelando la natura ironica delle professioni di ignoranza. Tuttavia l’ignoranza di Socrate non è mai assoluta: per Socrate il sapere è sì raggiungibile ma sempre a partire da una fonte esterna e all’interno dell’impegno di domande e risposte che Platone rappresenta nei dialoghi. Le peculiarità della maschera di Socrate soddisfano l’esigenza di creare un personaggio che, privo di ogni tratto individuale, coincida del tutto con il metodo del *philosophos*: l’esame condotto tramite il διαλέγεσθαι. Lo scarto reale tra i dialoghi aporetici e i dialoghi della maturità nei quali Socrate raggiunge un sapere positivo non coincide quindi con una svolta radicale ma deriva dal mutato contesto dialogico nel quale il personaggio di Socrate agisce. Mentre gli interlocutori dei dialoghi aporetici sono di norma sophoi che proclamano un sapere, oppure figure che credono di possedere una virtù, gli interlocutori dei dialoghi della maturità non promuovono loro stessi bensì partecipano all’esame dei λόγοι, provocando così una diversa reazione della maschera di Socrate che resta però immutata.

Grazie al profilo che Platone sceglie per Simmia e Cebete, il *Fedone* offre un’occasione privilegiata per la verifica della nostra ipotesi. Osserviamo in modo rapido la caratterizzazione di Socrate nel *Fedone*, dove dalle prime scene sino al mito
finale le fonti esterne sono sempre all'origine del *pragma* di Socrate (testi raccolti al punto 2). Socrate si è dedicato alla poesia durante l'attesa in carcere perché spinto da un sogno ricorrente (60d8-61e2); l'esame condotto con Cebete e Simmia sul suicidio (61d-62e) prende le mosse da ciò che Socrate ha ascoltato (61d9: ἐξ ἀκοῆς περὶ αὐτῶν λέγω) e dal discorso pronunciato nei misteri (62b3-4: ὁ [...] ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ λεγόμενος [...] λόγος); la scénes sulla presenza nell'Ade delle ἕγης (70c7-2-d) è avviata da Socrate a partire da un παλαίως λόγος del quale conserva il ricordo (70c6: παλαίως [...] ἐστὶ τις λόγος ὧν μεμνήμεθα); quando Socrate chiede a Simmia e Cebete di accoglierlo fra loro per sottoporre a nuovo esame il λόγος (84d1: καὶ αὐτὸ καὶ εἰμι συμπαραλαβέν), paragonando se stesso al cigno morente, afferma di avere ricevuto da Apollo l'arte mantica grazie alla quale si allontana in modo sereno dalla vita (85b6: τὴν μαντικὴν ἔχειν παρὰ τοῦ δεσπότου); Socrate introduce poi la sezione sulla μισολογία attribuendo a se stesso un ruolo ausiliario rispetto a Fedone, come Iolao che giunge in soccorso di Eracle (89c8-7: ἐμέ [...] τὸν Ἰόλεων παρακάλει); per il mito finale, la fonte di Socrate è un misterioso τις (108c7-8: ὑπὸ τινος πέπεισμαι).

Ma anche quando Socrate sembra introdurre come un sapere raggiunto in modo autonomo sia la dottrina della reminiscenza sia la dottrina delle Forme, la sua maschera resta immutata.

Quando Socrate constata di avere raggiunto un risultato certo in merito al “tornare in vita” delle anime dei morti, Cebete nota che l'esistenza della ψυχή nell’albìa è in accordo con quel λόγος che Socrate è solito ripetere, un λόγος che al lettore richiama in modo evidente la dottrina sulla conoscenza come *anamnesis* esposta nel *Menone* (punto 3; 72e1-5):

Καὶ μήν, ἔφη ὁ Κέβης ὑπολαβὼν, καὶ κατ’ ἐκεῖνόν γε τὸν λόγον, ὃ Σωκράτης, εἰ ἀληθῆς ἐστὶν, ὅν σὺ εἶδος σαφῶς λέγειν, ὃτι ἡμῖν ἡ μάθησι κατὰ τὸν τῶν ἀνάμνησις τυχάντων ἐστι, ἀπιστεῖς γὰρ πῶς ἡ καλουμένη μάθησις ἀνάμνησις ἐστιν;"  

Il λόγος sulla reminiscenza può apparire ad una prima lettura un esempio di sapere precostituito che Socrate introduce nella conversazione, mutando così in modo profondo il suo usuale procedere nel διαλέγεσθαι. Al contrario, numerosi elementi inducono a scorgere anche in questo passo la maschera consueta: in primo luogo, il λόγος non è introdotto da Socrate, come parrebbe naturale nel caso fosse un personale patrimonio di sapere, ma da Cebete che ne attribuisce a Socrate non la paternità - il λόγος non è *di* Socrate - ma il frequente impiego: Socrate infatti è solo solito ripeterlo (ὅν σὺ εἴδος θαυμά λέγειν). Inoltre, è Cebete ad esporre per Simmia, che non ricorda, la dottrina secondo la quale la conoscenza è *anamnesis*. Solo ora, dopo che Cebete ha esposto le ἀποδείξεις in merito, interviene Socrate, con parole che offrono un suggestivo esempio di *self-disclosure* (punto 3; 73b3-5):

Εἰ δὲ μὴ ταύτῃ γε, ἔφη, πείθη, ὡς Σιμία, ὃ Σωκράτης, σκέψαι ἃν τῇ δὲ πῇ σοι σκοπουμένω συνδόξῃ. ἀποτεῖς γὰρ δὴ πῶς ἡ καλουμένη μάθησις ἀνάμνησις ἐστιν;  

Socrate distingue in modo chiaro e netto il proprio metodo, fondato sull’intreccio di domande e risposte, dall’esposizione di una dottrina appena prodotta da Cebete. Non a caso quindi, Socrate torna a guidare la conversazione solo nel momento in cui Platone torna a rappresentare il consueto esame attraverso il διαλέγεσθαι. L’uniformità della caratterizzazione di Socrate trova poi conferma definitiva nel *Menone*, nel modo in cui era introdotta la dottrina della *anamnesis* (punto 4; *Men*. 81a1-8):
Nel Menone, Socrate raccontava a Menone di avere ascoltato un λόγος vero e bello da uomini sapienti sulle questioni divine, ἀκήκοα γὰρ ἀνδρῶν τε καὶ γυναικῶν σοφῶν περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα, dal quale emergeva che le anime immortali nascendo più volte sono in possesso di una conoscenza assoluta che deve solo riaffiorare alla memoria (81a5-6). La dottrina dell’anamnesis quindi non appartiene a Socrate, ma egli la sottopone solo ad esame, un esame al quale essa, nel Menone come nel Fedone, sembra resistere.

Al termine della sezione autobiografica, nella celebre “seconda navigazione”, Socrate racconta come si allontanò dagli studi sui fenomeni naturali che, sulla scia di Anassagora, aveva condotto sino ad allora. Socrate “fugge nei λόγοι» per proseguire la ricerca sulla verità degli ὄντα ed espone ora per Cebete e gli altri il proprio metodo (punto 5; 100a3-7):

...

Socrate sceglie come punto di partenza il λόγος che gli appare più solido, ἐρρωμενέστατος, e considera vero ciò che è in armonia, συμφωνεῖν, con tale λόγος, ciò che è in disaccordo come falso. Socrate compie cosi il primo passo verso l’introduzione di ciò che la critica, con vari gradi di adesione, definisce “teoria delle Forme”, un primo passo che sarà illuminato da ciò che segue. Per ora, osserviamo come, in ogni caso, l’attitudine di Socrate di fronte all’ipotesi, al λόγος che garantisce il criterio per la distinzione tra vero e falso, non sia estranea alla maschera che stiamo osservando. La decisione su ciò che è vero o falso appare determinata dal λόγος che Socrate giudica possedere il massimo grado di solidità, ὃν ἂν κρίνω ἐρρωμενέστατον εἶναι: Socrate rappresenta se stesso quale giudice dei λόγοι, tra i quali può scegliere il più solido per sviluppare, da quel punto in poi, la ricerca. Emerge con chiarezza come Platone anche per le dottrine esposte nel Fedone continui ad affidare a Socrate il ruolo passivo di un esaminatore di λόγοι, in modo non dissimile dal Socrate elenctico che sottopone ad esame i λόγοι dei presunti σοφοί nei dialoghi aporetici.

Per favorire la comprensione da parte di Cebete, Socrate presenta poi in modo esplicito il metodo della “seconda navigazione” come il suo metodo consueto, ben sperimentato sia in questa occasione sia in altre conversazioni (punto 5; 100b1-9):

...

In questo passo, snodo decisivo per l’argomentazione del Fedone, non a caso si accumulano i segnali che Platone invia al lettore al fine di conservare intatta la maschera di Socrate. Socrate presenta il metodo delle ipotesi come una consuetudine, οὐδὲν καινόν, non confinata alla presente argomentazione del Fedone (ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι λόγῳ), ma estesa, con particolare enfasi, ad altre occasioni (τε
Socrate non ha mai, dèi, cessato di ripetere queste cose. Si manifesta con particolare forza l’intenzione di non creare una frattura fra il Socrate del Fedone e la maschera dei dialoghi aporetici. Nella frase seguente, i segnali si moltiplicano: Socrate afferma di tornare, καὶ εἶμι πάλιν, alle argomentazioni πολυθρύλητα. L’aggettivo πολυθρύλητος, “much spoken of, well known, notorious” secondo il LSJ, allontana Socrate dal possesso di un sapere personale e autonomo: ciò che Socrate torna spesso a dire, il suo metodo, è molto discusso, noto a tutti. Coglie nel segno, credo, la traduzione offerta da C. Rowe “those much harped-on things” che non aggiunge al testo greco il complemento d’agente, come accade nella pur suggestiva resa di Long-Sedley “those things that have been our frequent refrain”. Proprio a partire da ciò che è così ben conosciuto, notorio, Socrate avvierà la propria dimostrazione, ἄρχομαι ἀπ’ ἐκείνων, giungendo finalmente all’introduzione della Forma, ciò che è in sé, qualcosa. Nel secondo, più disteso, tentativo di illustrare a Cebete il proprio consueto metodo, il λόγος ἐρρωμενέστατος è sostituito dalle Forme definite «notorie», che costituiscono per Socrate il punto di partenza (ἀρχομαι ἀπ’ ἐκείνων). Posto come ipotesi ciò che in sé è bello, buono, grande e così via, ottenuto il consenso dell’interlocutore in merito, Socrate spera, a partire da tali premesse, ἐκ τούτων, di dimostrare nello scambio di domande e risposte l’immortalità dell’anima, dopo le obiezioni di Simmia e Cebete. Secondo la consueta tecnica di caratterizzazione, Socrate pone quale starting point del suo esame una fonte esterna, come emerge dalle sequenze ἄρχομαι ἀπ’ ἐκείνων e ἐκ τούτων ἐπιδείξειν. Le forme πολυθρύλητα svolgono l’identica funzione che negli altri luoghi di self-disclosure svolgono i sogni, i παλαιοὶ λόγοι, gli esseri divini, il presunto sapere degli interlocutori: dare avvio al processo del διαλέγεσθαι. Di nuovo emerge la mancanza di αὐτάρκεια quale tratto centrale della maschera di Socrate, che attinge a una fonte esterna a sé, per di più “ben conosciuta”, per sviluppare la propria ricerca.

Non a caso, pur nel momento in cui introduce la teoria delle Forme, il passo decisivo per la dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima che supera ogni riflessione precedente sull’ἀρχή, Socrate descrive tale conquista come una scelta “semplice, grossolana, forse anche sciocca”, rinunciando poi a distinguere tra παρουσία, κοινωνία o un altro tipo di relazione tra Forme e particolari (punto 6; 100d3-8):

La sequenza di avverbi ἁπλῶς, ἀτέχνως, εὐήθως con cui Socrate connota la propria scelta lo allontanano in modo radicale da ogni pretesa di possedere un insieme organico e autonomo di dottrine. Si manifesta qui la coerenza con la quale Platone autore costruisce il personaggio di Socrate, una maschera che, come abbiamo visto, coincide con l’esame incessante e continuo rappresentato dal διαλέγεσθαι. E, non a caso, anche quando in seguito Socrate, ormai prossimo alla dimostrazione finale dell’immortalità dell’anima, offre una risposta κομψοτέρα, più raffinata, alla domanda sulla causa del calore nel corpo, una risposta che sostituisce la risposta “sicura ma ingenua” proposta in precedenza, Platone rappresenta di nuovo Socrate che avanza nella ricerca “grazie ai ragionamenti che abbiamo appena sviluppato”, ἐκ τῶν νῦν λεγομένων (punto 105;7b-6c1):

λέγω δὴ παρ’ ἂν τὸ πρῶτον ἔλεγον ἀπόκρισιν, τὴν ἀσφαλῆ ἐκείνην, ἐκ τῶν νῦν λεγομένων ἄλλην ὑπὸ ἀσφάλειαν. εἰ γὰρ ἔροι μὲ ὃ ἂν τῷ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐγγένηται θερμὸν ἔσται, οὐ τὴν ἀσφαλῆ σοι ἐρῶ ἀπόκρισιν ἐκείνην τὴν ἀμαθῆ, ὅτι
La ricerca di Socrate è descritta come una ricerca in corso, che solo “ora”, νῦν, grazie all’esame dei λόγοι di Simmia e Cebete, giunge ad un punto che appare sicuro: la maschera di Socrate non prevede alcun sapere pregresso che esuli dallesame continuo condotto nel διαλέγεσθαι.

In sintesi, la scelta di dare avvio all’indagine dai πολυθρύλητα, la rappresentazione di sé come del tutto estraneo al profilo del σοφός (ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀτέχνως καὶ ἴσως εὐήθως ἔχω παρ’ ἐμαυτῷ), la rinuncia a determinare il modo della partecipazione tra Forme e particolari (οὐ γὰρ ἐτι τούτο δισχυρίζομαι), il legame sempre inscindibile con la ricerca in corso (ἐκ τῶν νῦν λεγομένων... ἐκ τῶν νῦν) sono prova di come, con le parole di Wolfsdorf, descrivere il “relevant psychological attitude” di Socrate sia sempre al centro dell’interesse di Platone. Al fine di valutare gli argomenti esposti nel Fedone, credo non sia possibile prescindere da tale intenzione dell’autore che emerge con chiarezza e in pieno accordo con ciò che accade negli altri dialoghi nei quali Socrate compare. Con la maschera di Socrate, Platone intende mostrare la superiorità della vita filosofica, intesa quale indagine continua, tramite il διαλέγεσθαι, su ciò che è “buono”, ἀγαθὸν, per ogni agente, unica via possibile per l’ευδαιμονία. E a rappresentare un Socrate eudaimon anche di fronte alla morte, al maggiore dei mali nell’opinione dei polloi, mira Platone nel Fedone. L’equivalenza fra prassi filosofica, della quale Socrate è incarnazione, e eudaimonia ha lo scopo evidente di indurre il lettore a divenire philosophs, in piena corrispondenza con l’intenzione protrettica che emerge in modo costante dalla scrittura filosofica di Platone. Un’intenzione alla quale la maschera di Socrate, per come essa è costruita, risponde in modo pieno.

Anche nel Fedone, quindi, la maschera di Socrate resta immutata perché permette a Platone di instaurare il corretto rapporto tra il dialogo e il suo destinatario: imitando Socrate, il lettore desidera il sapere che scopre di non possedere e apprende il metodo utile per ottenerlo. Il nuovo genere letterario del dialogo socratico sfugge così al grave difetto che condanna agli occhi di Platone la produzione letteraria del passato, dall’epos al teatro: l’imitazione passiva, fondata sul piacere, delle passioni e degli errori degli eroi tradizionali, paradigmi di falsa virtù. Emerge per Socrate il profilo di un eroe nuovo, un nuovo Teseo dal quale nasce l’unica possibile salvezza per Atene: la conversione alla vita filosofica che la lettura dei dialoghi favorisce, una vita rivolta all’incessante esame dei λόγοι in cerca del βέλτιστον.

L’unica, reale svolta nella strategia letteraria di Platone avverrà, come noto, in dialoghi come il Sofista, il Politico, il Timeo e le Leggi, dove Socrate sarà sostituito nel suo ruolo di protagonista da nuove maschere come lo Straniero di Elea, Timeo e l’Ateiese. In apertura del Sofista, tale svolta è messa in scena da Platone in un modo che conferma l’interpretazione del personaggio Socrate ora proposta. Quando Teodoro introduce lo Straniero di Elea, Socrate chiede se, senza saperlo, Teodoro abbia condotto con sé non uno xenos, ma un dio, come racconta Omero (216a5-6). Lo Straniero di Elea fa il suo ingresso sulla scena del dialogo, quindi, come una delle autorevoli fonti esterne dalle quali di norma prende le mosse l’indagine di Socrate. Lo Straniero di Elea possiede infatti il sapere sui differenti generi del sofista, del politico e del filosofo ed è pronto a trasmettere la sua conoscenza a Socrate e ai suoi amici. Platone costruisce il nuovo personaggio in modo peculiare: esso è privo di nome e di ogni status sociale o familiare, come di un qualsiasi nesso con Atene e il suo ambiente sociale e politico. Il processo di completa depersonalizzazione che tramite lo Straniero di Elea Platone porta a compimento può essere interpretato come la creazione del types del nuovo filosofo, che ora sostituisce Socrate: dalla maschera del dialegesthai, l’ideale giudice di Atene e dei suoi cittadini, alla nuova maschera
Summary

In the “Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates” (2013), Wolfsdorf’s “Socrates philosophizing” provides for the most recent status quaestionis on the Socratic elenchos. In the chapter “Prospects for further study”, Wolfsdorf states that the study of Socratic arguments should not be limited to their logical form and “requires interpretation of the psychological attitudes of the participants, in other words, the pragmatics of argumentation... It is necessary to survey and clarify the evidence that informs our knowledge of the relevant psychological states of the characters” (p. 66). Wolfsdorf’s desideratum calls for a literary approach to the dialogues in order to elucidate how Plato depicts his characters and especially his main one, Socrates.

Scholars usually speak of several kinds of Socrates, even though they hold opposing views on the development of Plato’s thought, such as (among many others) Vlastos (1983, 1991) and Blondell (2003). In my proposal, I would argue instead for a consistent portrait of Socrates as a crucial device of Plato’s philosophical writing. Socrates’ hallmarks are frankness and reliance on external prompts, these being interlocutors (early dialogues, Phaedo, Republic, Philebus), gods or divine beings as the Nymphs or the daimonion (Phaedrus, Apology), sophists or poets (as in Hippias Maior, Minor, Protagoras), authorities like Diotima (Symposium), Euthyphro (Cratylus) and Aspasia (Menexenus), and things Socrates had heard in the past (Phaedo). Frankness and reliance on external prompts are strongly connected: in denying his knowledge Socrates is sincere because he always starts the argumentation without any knowledge and relying on some external source. Even when Socrates is more assertive, as in the Republic or in the Phaedo, the starting point of his argumentation is in any case independent from Socrates himself. My project comes close to the recent survey of Peterson (2011), but does not share her conclusion that the same attitude has to be attributed to Plato. From the aporetic elenchoi of the early dialogues to the grandiose theory of Forms in the Republic, Socrates’ characterization as frank and reliant on external prompts is a literary device Plato employs for various purposes. Until the Sophist, when Socrates leaves the stage to the Eleatic Stranger, Plato’s method remain unaltered, but it serves aims which change from one dialogue to another.

Following this, I would focus on some passages in the Phaedo where the unity of Socrates’ characterization can be tested. E.g., at the end of his autobiography (100b-d), even if he is pointing out a method of his own, Socrates introduces the theory of Forms as something already known, οὐδὲν καινόν, and much discussed, εἴμι πάλιν ἐπ’ ἐκείνα τὰ πολυθρύλητα (100b1-5). The adjective πολυθρύλητος is so rare that it only occurs in Republic VIII, where it designates a well known habit of the tyrants (566b4-7). The term becomes technical in the anonymous commentary to the Theaetetus, where it indicates doctrines introduced not only by Socrates but also by the sophists’ characters in the dialogues (col. VII, 27 CPF). A clear signal that Plato, even at his most doctrinal, never alters the essential hallmark of Socrates’ mask: his sincere reliance on external sources.
Hendrik Lorenz (2009) dans un article récent critique John Burnet (1916) d’avoir surestimé de beaucoup, comme bien d’autres à sa suite, la nouveauté de la conception socratique de l’âme, en tant que siège de la sagesse et de la vertu, par rapport à la conception traditionnelle grecque. Cette critique revient à dire que la question de l’âme chez Platon est inséparable de celle du rapport que celui-ci entretient avec la tradition qui le précède, notamment la tradition homérique. Je propose d’analyser la manière dont Platon conçoit ce rapport. La question est vaste et délicate, même confinée au seul Phédon, car la stratégie de Socrate personnage (et de Platon auteur) est ambivalente et son emploi des références homériques souvent ironique ou rhétorique. (Par « référence » j’entends ici non seulement les citations et les évocation expresses mais encore les allusions, parfois difficiles à établir ; le Phédon contiendrait au moins 18 références à Homère.)

La question du rapport de Platon à la tradition n’est pas étrangère à la façon dont il a choisi de mettre en scène la philosophie. Cette mise en scène présente la philosophie, ce nouveau mode de pensée, comme en train de se constituer sous nos yeux, en dialogue avec des non philosophes ou des philosophes potentiels, qu’ils soient général d’armée, rhapsode, etc. Certes, Platon peint volontiers la figure du philosophe en révolutionnaire, en rupture totale avec la tradition, comme dans sa critique, apparemment radicale, d’Homère dans la République (II, III, X). En revanche, la présence massive de la poésie, notamment homérique, ainsi que le recours au mythe dans l’œuvre de Platon témoignent d’une importante dette envers le passé. Les lecteurs anciens ont vu une profonde parenté entre les deux écrivains. Et ils avaient en partie raison. Car Platon fait partie du paysage littéraire autant que philosophique dans la mesure où la philosophie, comme la poésie, fait appel à des genres littéraires, en l’occurrence le dialogue, sans parler des diverses procédés littéraires mobilisés dans l’écriture des dialogues. La dette et la proximité relèvent en outre du contenu, puisque la poésie et la philosophie défendent l’une et l’autre des modèles de sagesse et de vertu.

Quels usages Platon fait-il de l’autorité d’Homère ? Yamagata (2012) en distingue trois types : premièrement, comme source de mots d’esprit ; deuxièmement, comme appui ou illustration de thèses, et troisièmement, comme inspiration poétique. Cette classification me semble adéquate dans une large mesure, mais il est nécessaire de la préciser. Je vais me concentrer sur le second type (l’usage argumentatif comme appui ou illustration d’une thèse) et tenter de l’approfondir. Il faut, selon moi, distinguer deux types bien distincts d’usage argumentatif : (2a)

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1 Cf. Yamagata 2012, 131.
3 Selon Brandwood (1976, 991-1003) on dénombre 275 citations de poètes dont 225 d’Homère.
6 Ces trois emplois contribuent tous, selon Yamagata, à la représentation de la figure de Socrate.
d’une part, l’autorité comme illustration de thèses déjà défendues dialectiquement7 ;
(2b) d’autre part, comme point de départ de la discussion en vue d’une justification ultérieure. Je tenterai de montrer que ce second emploi comporte à son tour deux sens possibles qu’il importe de distinguer : (2bi) un point de départ « contingent », éventuellement réfuté ou confirmé, et (2bii) un point de départ « nécessaire », tel un savoir « divinatoire » ou un « pressentiment » dont la pensée a besoin qu’elle cherche à démontrer sans peut-être jamais y parvenir. Autrement dit, il est juste de dire, comme le fait Halliwell (2000), que l’usage argumentatif d’Homère consiste à « soumettre le muthos au logos ». Il m’apparaît cependant nécessaire de distinguer, en outre, entre un muthos (ou une tradition) qui doit être fondé et un antique logos qui est en quelque sorte fondement. Je propose à cette fin d’examiner trois passages : 94d-e, 70a-c (cf. 63c) et 100b.

1. Usage rhétorique, postérieur à l’argumentation (94d-e)
Le premier passage survient à la fin de la réfutation de la thèse matérialiste, évoquée par Simmias, selon laquelle l’âme est une harmonie qui dépend du corps (91e-95a). Socrate cherche à illustrer la thèse contraire, celle selon laquelle l’âme est capable d’opposer et de gouverner ses composantes, telles les émotions et les appétits (94c9-d5). L’âme est une entité distincte du corps qui domine celui-ci. Socrate cite alors l’Odyssée (XX, 17-19) :

« Homère, dans l’Odyssée, a représenté la chose à peu près ainsi, quand il fait dire à Ulysse : ‘Se frappant la poitrine, il apostrophait son cœur, lui disant, Endure, mon cœur ; tu sus bien, jadis, endurer pire chiennerie ! (στῆθος δὲ πλήξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μῦθῳ / τέτλαθι δή, κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ’ ἐτλης » ; 94c6-e1, trad. Dixsaut).8

Socrate cherche ainsi, en invoquant l’autorité d’Homère, à convaincre ses interlocuteurs sceptiques. Mais aucun nouvel argument n’est avancé. L’usage est donc rhétorique9. Cela se voit aussi au fait que Socrate dans la République (441b-c) cite ce même passage de l’Odyssée, en version abrégée (XX, 17), afin d’appuyer une thèse bien différente. Tandis que dans le Phédon la citation illustre le conflit entre l’âme et le corps, dans la République il s’agit du conflit entre les parties de l’âme. Dans les deux cas, la citation ne sert qu’à illustrer, en invoquant l’autorité d’Homère, une thèse défendue indépendamment de celle-ci10. Dans le Phédon Socrate le précise à la fin : accepter la thèse selon laquelle l’âme est une harmonie (harmonia) signifierait que « nous ne serions d’accord ni avec Homère, poète divin, ni avec nous-mêmes (οὔτε αὐτοὶ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς) » (95a2-1). L’usage de l’autorité d’Homère remplit donc ici une

7 Les deux paradigmes héroïques, Achille et Ulysse, par exemple, sont mobilisés de manière négative ou positive selon le contexte, notamment pour caractériser la figure de Socrate. Cet usage serait donc surtout d’ordre rhétorique. Dans le cas d’Achille par exemple, voir Apol. 28b3-d6 pour l’usage positif (son courage devant la mort) et Rép. 379d-39e1 comme modèle négatif (le thumos non maîtrisé) ; cf. Hobbs 2000, 199-219.
8 Odyssee XX, 17-19 : στῆθος δὲ πλήξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μῦθῳ ‘τέτλαθι δή, κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ’ ἐτλης’.
10 On pourrait alors être tenté, comme le sont de nombreux commentateurs, de supposer que ces deux portraits de l’âme sont incompatibles et que nous avons ici affaire au passage, dans l’éuvre platonicienne, de l’intellectualisme à la psychologie tripartite (p. ex. Hackforth 1955, 11, 56). À cela il convient d’objecter qu’on aurait tort de s’attarder à ce que Platon dise, dans chaque dialogue, tout ce qu’il pourrait affirmer sur un sujet donné, notamment eu égard à la forme dialoguée et à la finalité propre de chaque dialogue. Il n’est pas exclu que le vers homérique (Od. XX, 17) puisse sans contradiction illustrer la thèse, dans le Phédon, de la gouvernance de l’âme sur le corps et celle, dans la République, des parties supérieures de l’âme sur les inférieures. Mais cela est le sujet d’un autre exposé.
fonction d’importance bien secondaire, subordonnée à l’argumentation. Doit-on en conclure de manière générale que l’autorité de la tradition poétique, notamment homérique, n’a de valeur pour Platon que par rapport à un \textit{logos} (philosophique) qui la fonde et la justifie?\footnote{C’est l’avis notamment d’Halliwell (2000, 107-108): « If we are to turn to the poets at all for the wisdom of true logos, we need to be able to do so with a prior (and larger) understanding that can subject poetic utterances to enlightened judgement, rather than accepting them as intrinsically au-
thoritative ».}

2. Recours à une « antique tradition », antérieur à l’argumentation (70b-c)

La nature de l’usage en 70b-c est plus difficile à déterminer. Premièrement, contrairement à l’usage en 94d-e, celui-ci survient non à la fin mais au début d’une suite arguments. Socrate répond aux doutes de Cébès inspirés par le matérialisme contemporain (70a). Deuxièmement, Socrate se réfère ici à une « antique tradition » (παλαιὸς λόγος). Il évoque, d’abord, la vision homérique en posant la question suivante : « est-ce que les âmes des hommes qui ont cessé de vivre existent dans l’Hadès (ἐν ᾨδου) ou non ? » (70c4-5 ; trad. Dixsaut). L’autorité d’Homère est ainsi évoquée, sur le mode interrogatif, en vue de contredire le matérialisme moderne. Socrate enchaîne alors en faisant appel à une cette « antique tradition » (παλαιὸς λόγος), selon laquelle les âmes reviennent à la vie :

« Il existe une antique tradition (παλαιὸς λόγος), dont nous gardons mémoire, selon laquelle les âmes arrivées d’ici existent là-bas, puis à nouveau font retour ici-même et naissent à partir des morts » (70c5-8 ; trad. Dixsaut).

Il s’agit là de la doctrine de la métempsycose. Certes elle est d’origine orphico- pythagoricienne et non homérique. Cependant l’évocation de cette « antique tradition » rappelle dans sa formulation celle à laquelle Socrate a eu recours un peu plus tôt, en 63c, pour présenter la vision homérique :

« J’ai bon espoir (εὔελπίς) que, pour les morts, quelque chose existe et, comme cela se dit du reste depuis longtemps » (πάλαι λέγεται, que Robin pour sa part traduit également par « antique tradition » ; 63c5-6 ; trad. Dixsaut).

Comment faut-il interpréter l’accord de Socrate avec ce qu’il a entendu d’anciens sages ? Il est vrai qu’il ne se contente pas de citer ce παλαιὸς λόγος mais qu’il entend l’examiner\footnote{12 Il est intéressant de noter que, juste avant notre passage (en 70b6), Socrate emploie le terme διαμυθολογεῖν (« raconter entièrement ») comme synonyme de διασκοπεῖσθαι, « examiner » ou « discuter de » (70c3). Il fait de même en 61e1-2 (μυθολογεῖν pour διασκοπεῖν). Socrate pose la question : « Veux-tu qu’à ce propos nous nous mettions à raconter toute l’histoire (διαμυθολογῶμεν), en nous demandant s’il est ou non vraisemblable (eἰκὸς) qu’il en soit ainsi ? » (70b6-7 ; cf. Rowe 1993, 153, n. sur 70b6). Mais comme le fait remarquer Rowe (1999, 265), la particularité en 70b6 réside dans le fait que le terme διαμυθολογεῖν présente une suite d’arguments, ce qui pose problème car « if the argument begins from a \textit{palaios logos} (70c5ff.) there is no clear sense of a reference in \textit{diamuthologiein} to that. » Rowe (266-267) estime néanmoins que le terme est bien choisi puisque Socrate entend signaler le genre d’attitude que ses interlocuteurs devrait adopter à l’égard de ce qui suit, soit une attitude de réceptivité, non sans une certaine réserve comme pour toute histoire racontée. Selon Rowe toutefois, l’essentiel \textit{in fine} est le fait que toute histoire, comme toute opinion, doit faire l’objet d’un examen.}12. Toutefois, il n’exprime au départ aucune réserve, aucune méfiance à son égard, car elle semble confirmer son espoir (εὔελπίς) en l’immortalité. La discussion
qui s'ensuit, portant sur la Réminiscence et visant à tester sa validité, aura même pour résultat d'accorder à cette « antique tradition » une importance singulière 13. Enfin, ce passage en rappelle bien d'autres, ailleurs dans l’œuvre platonicienne, évoquant des autorités anciennes, au moment où Socrate est sur le point de présenter des enseignements de grande importance. Citons le passage du Ménon (81a-b)14 :

« Ce langage, ce sont ceux des prêtres et des prêtresses qui s'attachent à rendre raison des choses (λόγον οἷοις τ´ εἶναι διδόναι) auxquelles ils se consacrent, qui le tiennent. C'est aussi Pindare qui parle ainsi, comme beaucoup d'autres poètes, tous ceux qui sont divins. Ce qu'ils disent, c'est ceci. Voyons, examine s'ils te semblent dire la vérité » (81a-b).

Comme dans le Phédon, il s'agit dans le Ménon de l'immortalité de l'âme et de la réincarnation. Quel type d'autorité Socrate assigne-t-il à ces prêtres et à ces poètes ? Leur vision ne semble avoir rien de mystique, puisque Socrate leur attribue la capacité de « rendre raison » des choses (λόγον διδόναι), donc de défendre de manière raisonnée ce qu'ils affirment. Comme le fait remarquer Halliwell, l'autorité de la poésie serait donc subordonnée à une compréhension philosophique (ou ce qu'il appelle « the subjection of muthos to logos »)15. Autrement dit, la tradition orale (selon la métaphore de l'ouïe)16 doit être testée et, éventuellement, fondée par la vision de la raison. Elle est néanmoins un point de départ.

3. Invocation de « ces formules cents fois ressassées » (100b)

En revanche, en 100b, Socrate accepte une tradition orale sans l'examiner. La « tradition orale » dont il est question a cela de particulier que Socrate y a part depuis longtemps en tant que dialecticien. Il faut traiter ce logos, insiste-t-il, comme un point de départ ou comme une « hypothèse » (quoique la justesse du terme « hypothèse » me semble discutable pour des raisons que je signalerai ci-dessous). Or, l'enjeu philosophique du passage (100b-d) est considérable puisque Socrate y présente explicitement la « doctrine » des Idées :

« je ne dis rien de nouveau (οὐδὲν καινόν) en parlant de cette façon ! Ce langage, jamais je n'ai cessé de le tenir, maintes fois ailleurs (ἅπερ ἀεί τε ἄλλοτε), et en particulier au cours du raisonnement précédent. Car j'en arrive à ceci : j'essaie de te montrer l'espèce de cause (τῆς αἰτίας τὸ εἶδος) en vue de laquelle je fais tous ces efforts, et aussitôt voilà que je reviens à ces formules cents fois ressassées (τὰ

13 Une remarque de Sedley et Long (2010, xxvii) à ce sujet mérite d'être citée : « And that the souls of the dead exist in Hades was a well-entrenched popular belief too, with its roots in Homer (Odyssey 11). Socrates’ aim in the Phaedo is to establish both the scientific respectability and the realmeaning of these traditions. The soul’s survival in Hades and its eventual reincarnation start out with the credibility that ancient tradition is assumed to confer on a belief, and Socrates’ central strategy is to establish scientific laws (as we might call them) to which these particular beliefs conform. Arguments which fail as complete proofs of a thesis may nevertheless have considerable corroborative force when used in this way ».
15 Halliwell 2000, 112.
πολυθρύλητα ; cf. 76d8)\textsuperscript{17} et c'est en elles que je trouve mes points de départ (ἀρχομαι ἀπ' ἐκείνων) ; je commence par poser (ὑποθέμενος) qu'il existe un beau en soi et par soi, un bon (τι καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ καὶ ἀγαθὸν), un grand, et ainsi de suite […]

Pour ma part, je refuse de compliquer les choses et de chercher plus loin, et je m'en tiens, avec naïveté sans doute (ἀτέχνως καὶ ἴσως εὐήθως), à ceci : rien d'autre ne rend cette chose belle sinon le beau » (100b1-d6 ; trad. Dixsaut).

Le point de départ de Socrate consiste donc à « supposer » (ὑποθέμενος) un beau en soi, un bon (ἀγαθὸν), etc. Il se réfère ici à la discussion en cours et non à un logos antique comme en 70c et 63c. Toutefois, il s'agit de sa façon habituelle de procéder, depuis toujours, soit celle qui consiste à discuter en supposant l'existence de notions générales, nommées ici Idées, telles qu'exprimées dans un logos. Les Idées semblent en ce sens constituer une présupposition qui « fonde » la discussion et la dirige.

Rappelons le contexte. Anaxagoras et d'autres physiologues de l'époque tentent de comprendre la causes des choses de manière immédiate, au moyen des sens. Cette méthode mène, selon Socrate, à des conclusions absurdes parce qu'elle fait l'économie de la notion du bien et ce qu'en disent les Athéniens. Socrate propose donc une « seconde navigation » en prenant refuge dans le logos des choses, c'est-à-dire dans la raison d'être des choses, leur finalité, telles que révélée par la parole ou les opinions humaines (λόγοι). Certes, ces opinions (sur le beau, le bien, etc.) manquent souvent de clarté et sont contradictoires\textsuperscript{18}. La dialectique a justement pour fonction de tester la véracité de ces opinions et de dépasser leur caractère contradictoire. En revanche, il convient de faire valoir que, selon Socrate et Platon, ce désaccord n'est possible que sur le fond d'un accord fondamental qui en constitue le socle. L'accord universel le plus important est assurément celui concernant le bien. Selon Socrate, en République 505d11-e2 par exemple, tous les êtres humains affirment que le bien (ἀγαθὸν) est ce qu'ils désirent réellement. Le bien est ce que toute âme recherche ; il est quelque chose dont l'âme « pressent (ἀπομαντευομένη) l'existence sans pouvoir, dans sa perplexité, saisir pleinement ce qu'il peut être » (trad. Leroux)\textsuperscript{19}. Autrement dit, les êtres humains supposent l'existence du bien et le désirent comme le but de toutes leurs actions. Certes, certains le définissent comme le plaisir, d'autres comme les richesses, ou encore les honneurs, ou toute chose de cet ordre, mais tous sont en mesure, selon Socrate, de le concevoir - s'ils y réfléchissent bien - comme la vertu et la sagesse. Cette connaissance « divinatoire » du bien réside dans l'âme\textsuperscript{20}, mais elle vient de plus haut (cf. Phéd., 79d). La philosophie est l'art de rechercher le bien véritable en dirigeant le regard de l'âme dans la bonne direction. Le lieu de cette connaissance divinatoire, qui pressent, qui suppose l'existence du bien, est le logos. Le logos (c'est-à-dire la raison, mais aussi et d'abord la parole) a donc quelque chose d'originaire, puisqu'il révèle à l'être humain le critère au moyen duquel il peut s'examiner lui-même et s'orienter dans sa vie et dans la nature\textsuperscript{21}.

En somme, la mise en scène du dialogue platonicien présente la philosophie telle qu'elle émerge du monde du mythe et de l'opinion. Elle tente certes de le dépasser,

\textsuperscript{17} 76d8 : « ce dont nous parlons toujours » (ἂ θρυλοῦμεν ἀεί).
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. Euthyphron 7c10-d5.
\textsuperscript{20} Cf. Rép. 518b-c.
\textsuperscript{21} Cf. Rép. 473a1-3 : Ἀρ᾽ οίον τέ τι πραξάν ψήναι, ἢ φύσιν ἔχει πράξειν λέξεως ἢ τοῦ ἀληθείας ἐφάπτεσθαι, κἂν εἰ μή τω δοκεῖ ἄλλα σύ πότερον ὁμολογεῖς οὕτως ἢ οὐ; Ὁμολογῶ, ἐφη.
mais sans l’effacer, sans nier cet arrière-fond pré-philosophique dont elle émane. Car le dialogue écrit ne présente pas tant la philosophie achevée, devenue sagesse, que la philosophie en train de se faire, en se fondant sur l’expérience et les intuitions humaines originaires, dont la tradition, notamment homérique, est le dépositaire, et la philosophie l’examinante. Par conséquent, si Socrate a recours à cet héritage ancestral, qu’il présente parfois volontiers comme intemporel, ce n’est pas seulement, semble-t-il, afin de mieux persuader ses interlocuteurs (ou Platon ses lecteurs), mais aussi par conviction, par nécessité, dans la mesure où cet héritage constitue le fondement de l’entreprise philosophique.

Abstract

What is Plato’s relationship to Homer and the tradition? The question is vast and difficult, even if confined to the Phaedo alone, as Socrates’ strategy (Plato’s as author) is ambivalent and its use of Homeric references often ironic or rhetorical. The question is not unrelated to the way in which Plato has chosen to stage philosophy. The setting of the dialogues presents philosophy - the new way of thinking – not as fully constituted but as gradually emerging, in conversation with non-philosophers or potential philosophers, be they army generals, rhapsodists, etc. Admittedly Plato tend to portray the figure of the philosopher as a revolutionary, breaking entirely with the tradition, as in his - apparently radical - criticism of Homer in the Republic (II, III, X). However, the massive presence of poetry, especially Homeric, as well as the use of myth in Plato’s work, testify to an important debt to the pre-philosophical past. Not unsurprisingly the Ancient interpreters saw a profound affinity between the two writers. Indeed Plato is part of the literary landscape just as much as of the philosop, insofar as philosophy, just as poetry, makes use of literary genres, the dialogue in Plato’s case, as well as various literary techniques. The debt and proximity be tween them also pertains to the content, as poetry and philosophy both defend models of wisdom and virtue.

What kind of use does Plato make of Homer’s (and the tradition’s) authority? Yamagata (2012) distinguishes three types: (1) as a source of wit, (2) as support or illustration for an argument, and (3) as poetic inspiration. This classification is adequate as far as it goes, but requires some important specification. I shall concentrate on the second kind of use and attempt to elaborate on it. It is necessary to distinguish two uses of the argumentative kind: (2a) the authority as illustration of an argument that has already been defended dialectically; (2b) as a starting point for discussion with a view to ulterior justification. I will defend the view that this second use has two possible meanings that need to be kept separate: (2bi) a “contingent” starting point, to be later refuted or confirmed, and (2bii) a “necessary” starting point, such as a “divinatory” knowledge or a hunch, which human thought needs and seeks to demonstrate. In other words, it is quite correct to say, as does Halliwell (2000), that the argumentative use of Homer and of the poetic tradition consists in “submitting muthos to logos”. It is necessary, however, to distinguish further between a muthos (or a tradition) that has to be grounded and an ancient logos that is in a certain sense foundational. For this purpose I will analyze the following passages: 94d-e, 70a-c (cf. 63c) et 100b.

Bibliographie


22 Cf. Rép. 606e1-607a8.


PLATON = Œuvres complètes, sous la direction de L. Brisson (divers traducteurs), Paris.


Qu’est-ce qui, dans la question de l’anonyme, a pu troubler Socrate (Phéd. 103 a -4c 5) ?

Rombaut, Karine Tordo

1. Une incompatibilité entre deux régimes d’opposition

Ma communication s’inscrit dans la lignée des commentaires1 du Phédon qui supposent que certains des défauts (relevés par les commentateurs2) de la démonstration de l’immortalité et de l’indestructibilité de l’âme ont pour fonction de susciter une lecture active. Les personnages du dialogue eux-mêmes ne se lassent pas de réexaminer les preuves avancées par Socrate (84 c 3-85 b 9, 115 c 7-8). Leurs objections entrent dans la logique des raisonnements, dont la visée est aussi de démontrer le bien-fondé de l’activité philosophique. La pensée qu’abrite l’intelligence de Socrate (63 c 8-9) est telle que sa perpétuation est assurée par les objections raisonnées des juges auxquels il la confie3. La lecture active répond également à l’insistance de Socrate sur la distinction entre l’âme et le corps et sur la distinction entre les sensibles et les Idées intelligibles. Socrate rappelle que les termes de ces distinctions sont régulièrement pris les uns pour les autres et ce, par des humains qui croient les discerner. Le lecteur actif se donne pour règle de vérifier ces distinctions afin d’éviter les confusions et les contresens, auxquels les personnages du dialogue eux-mêmes sont exposés.

L’échange entre Socrate et l’anonyme (103 a 4-c 5) invite à comparer deux parties de la démonstration de l’immortalité ou de l’indestructibilité de l’âme : le premier argument ou « argument cyclique » (70 c 4-72 e 2) et le dernier argument ou « argument final » (102 a 11-107 a 1). L’anonyme signale une contradiction entre

1 D’après R. Burger (1984) p. 1-13, la compréhension partielle que les interlocuteurs de Socrate ont de ses propos laisse place à un échange entre Platon et son lecteur. Elle écrit p. 4 : « […] the very charges typically directed against Plato […] would be precisely the critical issues deliberately raised by the dialogue itself. » D’après R. Burger, le lecteur qui, comme les personnages, vérifie la justesse des arguments effectue une purification. M.C. Beck (1999) soutient que la démonstration du Phédon appelle une lecture à la fois active et critique.

2 Le rappel des défauts de la démonstration est un lieu commun des commentaires du Phédon. Par exemple, D. Bostock (1986) admet p. vi que l’évaluation qu’il propose des arguments du Phédon « pays more attention to their faults than to their merits. » Il suppose que Platon aurait approuvé son approche, mais pas que l’évaluation fait partie intégrante des arguments.

3 N.R. Baima (2015) p. 268 et p. 271 remarque que Socrate encourage ses amis à chercher sans répit, en philosophes, la vérité sur l’immortalité de l’âme (91 c 1-5, 107 b 4-9, 115 b 4-c 10), alors qu’une croyance dans ce domaine leur permettrait d’avancer sans peur dans la voie philosophique et que Socrate est prêt à se satisfaire, pour lui-même, d’une croyance. N.R. Baima explique ce « verity puzzle » p. 274 par le fait que Socrate, à la différence de ses amis, est une « epistemic authority ». Or la voie qui consiste à chercher la vérité sans répit suppose que l’on croie (sans prendre cette croyance pour une connaissance) à la pérennité de l’activité de l’âme ; c’est en suivant cette voie que Socrate se qualifie comme philosophe. Le passage du Phédon (114 d 1-6) que N.R. Baima prend en compte p. 279 assimile à un noble risque l’activité philosophique qui, fondée sur une croyance en l’immortalité, va jusqu’à mettre en doute cette croyance.
deux propositions opposées (ἐναντίος) 4, solidaires, l'une, de l'argument cyclique, l'autre, de l'argument final :

la génération, pour les opposés, a lieu simplement à partir des opposés (cela renvoie à 70 e 1-71 a 11) ;

aucun des opposés, étant encore ce qu'il était, ne consent à devenir ni à être en même temps l'opposé (102 e 8-103 a 1).

Afin de résoudre la contradiction, Socrate invoque la différence (τὸ διαφέρον) entre les choses possédant les propriétés opposées et ces propriétés éponymes :

la chose opposée advient à partir de la chose opposée (ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου πράγματος τὸ ἐναντίον πράγμα γίγνεσθαι) ;

l'opposé lui-même ne pourrait jamais devenir son propre opposé, ni l'opposé en nous ni l'opposé dans la nature (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον ἑαυτῷ ἐναντίον οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο, οὔτε τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν οὔτε τὸ ἐν τῇ φύσει).

Après avoir donné cette explication, Socrate fait allusion à quelque chose qui, dans ce dont l'anonyme a parlé, aurait pu l'avoir troublé. Mon intention est de proposer une interprétation de cette allusion.

La réponse à l'anonyme n'épuise peut-être pas la difficulté soulevée par l'opposition entre les propositions (A) et (B). La répartition – qui rapporte la génération mutuelle des opposés (A), aux choses possédant les propriétés opposées, et l'impossibilité pour un opposé de devenir ou d'être son propre opposé (B), aux propriétés éponymes – ne permet pas de clarifier la relation entre le premier régime d'opposition (A), applicable aux choses opposées, et le second régime d'opposition (B), applicable aux opposés. Les objets respectifs des deux propositions entretiennent pourtant une triple relation : d'homonymie (78 e 2, 102 b 1-3), de causalité (αἰτία, διά et l'accusatif, et le datif instrumental), et de possession, participation (102 b 1-2), présence ou communauté (100 d 5-7)5. La méthode exposée par Socrate (100 a 3-102 a 1) consiste en effet à poser au départ une réalité éponyme et à reconnaître en elle un responsable, une cause ou une explication6, capable de rendre compte des homonymes qui en participent. Or, la répartition opérée en réponse à l'anonyme ne dit pas comment le principe (B), applicable aux opposés, peut, sinon rendre compte du processus par lequel une chose opposée devient une chose opposée, du moins s'accommoder de la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle des choses opposées. Les deux arguments, l'argument cyclique et l'argument final, ne peuvent

4 La traduction de ἐναντίος par « opposé » correspond à l'usage anglo-saxon de « opposite » ; à la différence de « contraire », « opposé » n'exclut aucune (ou presque : voir 116 b 3) des significations que l'analyse de ses emplois dans le Phédon permet d'attribuer au mot ἐναντίος. Pour des emplois de ἐναντίος et du verbe correspondant, voir : 60 b 5 (ce qui paraît opposé à l'agréable, le pénible) ; 70 c 4-72 e 2 (argument cyclique) ; 82 d 5 (ne pas faire l'opposé de la philosophie) ; 83 b 5 (ne pas s'opposer à cette délaisson) ; 84 a 6 (faire sur son métier une œuvre à l'opposé de celle entreprise par Pénélope) ; 92 e 5-95 a 6 (réfutation de l'objection de l'âme-harmonie) ; 97 a 8 (une cause opposée à une première est assignée à la génération du deux), 101 a 6 (un raisonnement opposé) ; 102 d 5-103 c 9 [régime d'opposition (B) et question de l'anonyme] ; 103 c 10-107 a 1 (argument final) ; 112 e 8 et 113 c 4-8 (mythe) ; 115 d 7 (donner à Criton une garantie opposée à celle qu'il a donnée aux juges). En 116 b 3, ἐναντίος signifie « en face de ».

5 A. Nehamas (1973) p. 464-465 souligne la diversité des expressions employées pour désigner « the relation connecting Forms and particulars » ou exprimer « the agency of an aitia » (voir la n. 6).

6 Pour les différentes significations attribuées à αἰτία dans l'exposé de la méthode socratique (100 a 3-102 a 1), voir G. Vlastos (1969). G. Vlastos se prononce en faveur d'une conception logico-métaphysique de l'αἰτία.
être complétés que par quelqu’un qui s’emploierait à agencer ces deux parties de la démonstration du Phédon (envisagée dans sa globalité)7.

Ma communication porte donc sur la relation entre les deux régimes d’opposition (A) et (B). Elle part de l’argument cyclique (70 c 4-72 e 2), dont elle examine la première partie (70 c 4-71 b 11), où Socrate donne une preuve du régime d’opposition (A). Elle s’appuie sur les deux exposés, l’exposé de la méthode socratique (100 a 3-102 a 1) et l’exposé du régime d’opposition (B) (102 b 3-103 c 9), qui introduisent l’argument final (102 a 11-107 a 1). Elle esquisse alors un examen de la seconde partie (71 c 1-72 e 2) de l’argument cyclique, mais seulement dans le but de contrôler l’examen de sa première partie. Elle revient enfin sur la relation entre les deux régimes d’opposition (A) et (B) et propose ainsi une interprétation de l’allusion à quelque chose qui aurait pu troubler Socrate dans la question de l’anonyme.

2. L’invraisemblable vraisemblance de l’argument cyclique

Le problème (70 a 1-b 4) auquel l’argument cyclique répond est posé du point de vue des humains (ἀνθρώποι)8, qui attendent de Socrate une preuve de l’immortalité et de l’indestructibilité d’une âme qu’ils tiennent pour une chose corporelle, exposée à une dispersion (διασκεδάσθαι, διαφυσάν) et comparable à un souffle (πνεῦμα), ou à une fumée (καπνός)9. Si Socrate accède à la demande, il s’engage à établir qu’une fois séparé du corps, auquel, sous le nom d’« âme », ceci était mêlé, quelque chose de corporel est encore ; s’il refuse, il paraît renoncer à soutenir qu’une fois séparé du corps, l’âme est encore. C’est pourquoi il compose un argument à deux entrées, à la fois mythe (70 b 6) ou tradition (70 c 5-6)10 et examen rationnel valide (70 c 3, 72 d 4-7 ; cf. 77 d 4-5). Socrate signale que l’argument cyclique est à deux entrées quand il évoque la possibilité de lui substituer un raisonnement différent (70 d 4-5)11 : en revenant sur une première approche du problème, que l’on compare alors à un mythe, on mène un examen, qui équivaut à une nouvelle approche du problème. Cet examen entraîne un changement de point de vue, et rend attentif à cette chose invisible qu’est l’âme.

L’adoption du point de vue de la plupart des humains trahit la difficulté à s’élever au point de vue des philosophes12. La distinction entre les sensibles et les

10 La qualification de mythe va de pair avec « consolation et persuasion » (70 b 2-3 : παρακρημθεὶ καὶ πίστις), « opinion » (70 b 9 : δόξα) et même (malgré la possibilité d’opposer mythe et vraisemblance) « vraisemblable » (70 b 7 : εἰκός).
11 Voir 106 d 1 pour la possibilité de proposer un raisonnement substitutif, en cas d’échec d’un argument.
12 L’effort pour quitter ce point de vue (64 c 1-2) y reconduit, d’autant plus fermement que l’on croit l’avoir abandonné.
réalités intelligibles a été introduite (65 a 9-66 a 10), avant l’argument cyclique13, afin de décrire l’activité du philosophe, qui délèe le plus possible l’âme de son association avec le corps, d’une manière différente des autres humains (64 e 8-65 a 2). Or l’argument cyclique n’applique pas la règle prescrivant de se séparer le plus possible des yeux, des oreilles et pour ainsi dire de tout le corps, qui trouble et empêche l’âme d’acquérir la vérité et l’intelligence, quand il s’associe (66 a 3-7). Cette règle trouve une justification dans la suite du dialogue. L’argument de la réminiscence l’illustre par un exemple : les objets que l’on voit égaux, parfois, étant les mêmes, paraissent égaux, parfois non, alors que les égaux eux-mêmes ne paraissent jamais inégaux, ni l’égalité, inégalité (74 b 4-c 5). Dans l’argument de l’affinité, l’identité – négation du changement et de l’altération – caractérise les réalités ; l’absence d’identité caractérise les humains, chevaux, vêtements et autres choses de ce genre, beaux, égaux, tous homonymes de ces réalités (78 d 1-e 6). C’est le constat des contradictions des sensibles qui fonde l’obligation de rapporter leurs appellations aux réalités intelligibles.

L’argument cyclique ignore sinon ce constat, du moins sa conséquence : il part d’une vision (70 e 1, 72 a 11 : ἰδεῖν) et prend pour objets (70 d 7-e 1) les humains, les animaux, les plantes et, en somme, tout ce qui possède génération (καὶ συλλήβδην ὅσαπε ἔχει γένεσιν). Cet argument suit le style de la méthode (97 b 5-6) de l’enquête sur la nature (96 a 7), dont Socrate raconte (95 e 9-99 e 6) qu’il a renoncé à l’employer pour découvrir pourquoi quelque chose naît, pérît ou est (δι’ ὅτι γίγνεται ἢ ἀπολλύται ἢ ἔστι), et ce, par crainte que son âme ne devienne totalement aveugle en regardant vers les choses (πρὸς τὰ πράγματα) avec les yeux et en entreprenant de les toucher avec chacune des sensations (99 e 2-4 ; voir 96 c 3-7). Le procédé de généralisation à partir d’une série d’exemples (70 e 4-71 a 11, 71 b 2-11, 72 b 8-c 9), qui incite les commentateurs à qualifier la méthode de l’argument cyclique de méthode inductive14, apparente encore cet argument à l’enquête sur la nature15. Les commentateurs qui invoquent des contre-exemples pour réfuter l’argument cyclique s’appuient sur la méthode qu’il paraît emprunter16. Or Socrate fait lui-même une revue critique des effets que cette méthode produit sur lui : il se renverse sens dessus-dessous (96 b 1), désapprend ce qu’il croyait savoir (96 c 6-7, e 6-7), est persuadé d’assigner au même fait des causes opposées (96 e 7-b 7).

La première partie de l’argument cyclique donne au régime d’opposition (A) la forme d’une loi de la génération mutuelle des choses opposées à partir des opposés.

13 M. Pakaluk (2003) p. 108-111 soutient que Socrate a déjà entrepris de démontrer que l’âme est capable d’exister sans le corps quand il propose l’argument cyclique ; lequel, avec les deux arguments suivants, démontre que l’âme existe sans le corps, alors que l’argument final démontrera que l’âme existe nécessairement quand le corps est détruit.
15 La construction ἐκ avec le génitif et un verbe comme γίγνεσθαι est commune à l’argument et à l’enquête (96 b 6, b 7, c 9), ainsi que certaines des questions étudiées, par exemple la question « pourquoi un humain grandit ? » (96 c 7-d 7 ; voir 71 b 2-5). J. Barnes (1978) p. 403-404 s’interroge sur le sens de ἐκ.
L'examen démontre que cette loi est une description de ce qui apparaît à celui que son usage du corps et des sensations entrave (65 a 10, 66 c 2) dans sa chasse aux êtants (66 a 3, c 2). Elle résulte d'une tentative de conciliation entre le constat des contradictions des sensibles et l'incapacité à quitter le point de vue des humains, à appliquer la règle prescrivant de ne pas emporter les sensations avec le raisonnement mais d'utiliser la pensée sans mélange (65 e 9-66 a 3). Les contradictions des sensibles prennent, pour les humains, l'apparence d'une génération mutuelle des opposés. Tant qu'ils ne font pas la distinction entre les choses opposées et les opposés eux-mêmes, la loi (A) leur offre une présentation cohérente des contradictions. Voici comment cette approche peut être étayée. La loi ou régime d'opposition (A) contient deux volets établis successivement (en 70 d 7-71 a 11 et 71 a 12-b 11) :

(A1) : génération : « tous naissent ainsi, les choses opposées à partir des opposés » (71 a 9-10) ;

(A2) : génération mutuelle : « ils naissent les uns des autres, et il y a génération de chacun vers l'autre » (71 b 9-10).

Les énoncés de ces deux volets reflètent la confusion, entre les choses opposées et les opposés, que la question de l'anonyme obligerà Socrate à dissiper17. Les deux volets de la loi (A) concluent chacun un raisonnement qui s'appuie sur une nécessité [70 e 5, e 7 (avec που) pour (A1) ; 71 b 9 pour (A2)] dont la méthode inductive apparemment suivie ne suffit pas à rendre compte : les commentateurs de l'argument cyclique mettent en doute la possibilité de donner à ses raisonnements une confirmation empirique18. La référence à la nécessité peut s'expliquer différemment19 : l'examen y découvre le signe d'une conscience de l'incompatibilité entre les contradictions des sensibles, du moins « tous ceux pour lesquels il y a un opposé » (70 e 5, en écho à e 2), et le principe de contradiction, fondement de l'activité rationnelle. La nécessité qui impose la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle est la nécessité logique du principe de contradiction. Une description de l'apparence sensible compatible avec ce principe suppose deux choses :

(A1) Un processus de génération, indiqué par les termes temporels (70 e 7, 71 a 1) et le verbe « devenir ». En effet, l'emploi de « être » avec pour sujets des opposés qui passent les uns pour les autres se heurte au principe de contradiction.

(A2) Une réciprocité du processus de génération, qui implique un dédoublément du processus, indiqué par les noms et les verbes20 substitués alors à « génération » et à « devenir ». En effet, le problème que soulève la confusion, constatée empiriquement, des deux opposés n'est pas résolu si l'on suppose qu'un premier opposé engendre son opposé sans supposer que ce second opposé engendre à nouveau (αὖ et πάλιν) le premier opposé. Par exemple : il apparaît que le grand est le petit et que le petit est le grand ; on pose alors qu'à partir d'un plus grand est

18 A. Greco (1996) p. 230 signale que le volet (A1) de la loi (A) exprime la condition logique de tout changement impliquant une paire de propriétés opposées, mais que le volet (A2), loin d'être une vérité logique, a le caractère d'une généralisation empirique, laquelle paraît fausse. Elle écoute p. 231 des interprétations qui échouent à rendre ce volet (A2) « empirically plausible ».
19 J. Barnes (1978) rappelle que l'argument cyclique a souvent été pris pour une loi de la nature, par des commentateurs qui le rapprochent de la doctrine heraclitienne. Il soutient que le lien avec Héraclite est illusoire et allègue la référence à la nécessité pour qualifier la loi (A) de « logical truth ». Il confronte pourtant la loi à des illustrations empiriques, avant de préciser sa pensée en qualifiant la loi (A) de « theorem in the logic of change ».
20 L'introduction de ces noms et ces verbes est soulignée par καλεῖν et ὀνόμα (71 b 2-11).
engendré un plus petit ; mais le petit ainsi engendré paraît encore être le grand ; on pose alors qu'à partir d'un plus petit est à son tour engendré un plus grand. L'interposition d'un processus entre (μεταξύ) les deux opposés ne rend compte de la contradiction, autrement dit ne la ramène à une apparence, qu'à la condition d'être complétée par l'interposition d'un processus symétrique.

Le volet (A2), développement analytique du volet (A1), est requis pour conserver à chaque opposé son identité : il s'agit d'attribuer un sens au processus, donc de le compléter par un processus symétrique. Au point de vue des humains prisonniers de leur usage du corps et des sensations, les deux volets de la loi (A) forment « une théorie du changement » assez vraisemblable (70 b 7) pour avoir pu être discutée comme telle. L'examen, qui écarte comme un mythe cette apparente théorie, démontre que la loi (A) est une application du principe de contradiction au niveau des sensibles.

On remarque que la loi (A) met en rapport les deux régimes d'opposition. Le premier (A), applicable aux choses opposées, paraît absorber l'incompatibilité entre les confusions constatées empiriquement et le principe de contradiction. Le second (B), applicable aux opposés, correspond en fait à ce même principe. Le régime d'opposition (A) peut ainsi être rapproché d'un argument, l'« argument des

21 Diaprs R. Loriaux (1969) I p. 128, le a où (71 a 12) qui introduit le volet (A2) « indique la reprise, à un autre point de vue, de l'analyse du devenir et des contraires. » Il écrit : « ἀμφοτέρων : entre tous ces contraires “ pris par couples ” » et « δυοιν ὅντοιν : participe à valeur causale » (71 a 12-b 1 : οἶον μεταξύ ἀμφοτέρων πάντων τῶν ἐναντίων δυοίν ὅντοιν δύο γενέσεως). C'est parce que les opposés sont deux (voir R. V 475 c 8-476 a 8) que l'on pose deux processus de génération, qui tiennent les opposés à distance l'un de l'autre, pour ainsi dire.


23 Voir D. Sedley (2012). Il explique p. 148 que Platon entend donner une respectabilité scientifique à une tradition religieuse en apportant la preuve de sa conformité avec une loi universelle du changement. R. Loriaux (1969) I p. 131 écrit : « s'il est vrai que, conceptuellement parlant, ces deux devenirs existent, il n'est nullement prouvé qu'ils se réalisent concrètement dans chaque être particulier. Or c'est cela qu'il faudrait prouver. »

24 L'emploi ici de l'expression « principe de contradiction » ne préjuge pas la question du sens de évavtrioc, traduit par « opposé » plutôt que par « contraire », afin de ne pas projeter sur évavtrioc une distinction anténisée entre « contraire » et « contradictoire. » Parler de « principe de non-opposition » aurait encore exigé des précautions oratoires, sans apporter davantage de clarté.


26 R. Loriaux (1975) II p. 122-123 discute la tentation de ne voir dans l'argument final que des considérations de logique formelle. Il admet que « le principe logique de l'exclusion des contraires figure bien à la base de cette preuve nouvelle », mais qu'il y est « confronté à la thèse philosophique de la participation. »

27 Pour ce rapprochement, voir par exemple D. Sedley (2012) p. 156. D. Sedley refuse de croire que la conception platonicienne des opposés ait pu changer radicalement entre la République et le Phédon, mais continue à comprendre l'argument cyclique comme une « théorie du changement ».
opposés», qui prend lui-même appui sur le principe de contradiction et dont la finalité explicite, dans les dialogues où il figure (par exemple R. V 478 e 7-479 b 7 ou VII 523 a 10-524 d 5), est de poser la distinction entre les sensibles et les réalités intelligibles. Cet argument, qui marque le passage du point de vue des humains à celui des philosophes, amène à qualifier de « génération » (γένεσις) ce qui était auparavant tenu pour la « réalité » (οὐσία) (R. VI 508 d 3-9, 509 b 1-3, 534 a 2-3). Il arrive que, comme dans l'argument cyclique, le vocabulaire du « devenir » fasse oublier l'incompatibilité, entre le constat empirique et le principe de contradiction, qu'il était censé signaler : la génération, d'abord opposée à la réalité, paraît ensuite avoir une réalité (71 b 10, c 7, 72 a 1, 103 a 8 : γένεσις avec εἶναι). Cet usage du mot « génération » s'apprète à celui des savants (Crat. 411 b 6-c 6), que l'instabilité des apparences pousse à accuser les choses mêmes (αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα) d'être toujours pleines de transport et de génération (γένεσις)28.

L'examens conduit donc à mettre en doute la possibilité, pour le régime d'opposition (A) de se maintenir face au régime d'opposition (B). Cette hypothèse trouve un appui dans l'exposé de la méthode socratique (99 d 4-102 b 3), qui précède l'argument final (102 a 10-107 a 1). Le ralliement à l'espèce socratique de cause est déterminé par la peur de se heurter à un argument opposé (101 a 5-6), donc d'être pris dans des contradictions. Les mentions successives de la peur (101 b 2, b 5, b 8, c 1, d 1)29 placent le principe de contradiction au fondement de la méthode socratique30. La méthode tire de ce principe la sécurité (100 d 8-e 3, 101 d 2) que manifestent ses énoncés tautologiques31 et qui distingue les philosophes des contradicteurs (101 e 6-102 a 1). Or l'espèce socratique de cause seule rend compte de l'attribution des propriétés éponymes à leurs homonymes sensibles, indiquée et par εἶναι et par γίγνεσθαι, comme dans la proposition « et tu déclarerais que tu ne sais pas comment chacun devient, si ce n'est en participant à la réalité particulière à laquelle chacun participe » (101 c 2-4), dans un contexte où « devenir » (γίγνεσθαι) est glosé par « se préparer à être » (μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι ; cela empêche d'y voir un synonyme de εἶναι) et où la valeur explicative des processus, comme les scissions et les additions, est niée (101 b 10-c 2, c 7-9). La cause socratique ne rend compte de la génération qu'en la dissipant comme une apparence32. Cela invite à vérifier que la loi

29 D'après R. Loriaux (1975) II p. 100, la peur tient à la volonté d'éviter la contradiction ; il remarque que l'objet de la crainte se modifie : après avoir craint d’« être en butte à la controverse », Cèbès craint « d’adopter l’attitude des ἀντιλογικοί eux-mêmes. » J. Van Eck (1996) relève p. 217-218 (n. 6) et p. 220 le rôle de la peur : Socrate ne dit pas des autres explications qu'elles sont fausses mais qu'elles le troublent et qu'il craint des objections tirées de leurs implications maladroites et paradoxales. J. Van Eck rapproche p. 221-222 les contradicteurs de 101 e 6-102 a 1 de ceux de 90 c 3-6.
32 R. Sharma (2009) part de la divergence entre deux conceptions de la cause socratique : (1) comme explication causale du changement (cause de type aristotélicien) ; (2) comme explication logique ou métaphysique, centrée sur l'être (« a state of affairs ») et non sur le devenir. R. Sharma se rallie à la conception (2) mais s'efforce de
(A) de la génération mutuelle finit par s’effacer devant l’application du principe de contradiction ou régime d’opposition (B).

3. Les choses elles-mêmes et leurs homonymes

L’examен (70 d 8 : μαθεῖν ; 70 d 7, e 4 : σκόπειν) requis pour éviter d’être induit en erreur par la déceptive vraisemblance (92 c 11-d 6) de l’argument cyclique charge peut-être cet argument d’une signification nouvelle, capable de rendre compte d’une réalité. L’échange avec l’anonyme (103 a 4-c 5) guide cet examен en faisant porter l’attention sur les choses (70 e 5-6 : τι ; 71 a 10, b 2 : πρᾶγμα), dont les propriétés opposées, exemplifiées par ces choses homonymes, paraissent s’engendrer mutuellement. La mention de ces choses s’impose comme condition de la description du processus de génération, qui requiert un repère permanent auquel ce processus puisse être affecté33. Cela ne va pas sans tension, puisque les choses sont alors à la fois identiques, comme repères permanents, et non identiques, comme sujettes à la génération. Cette tension est inscrite dans le texte. Les choses participent et de la génération (70 d 9) et de la réalité (70 e 5, e 7, 10, 71 a 13 : εἶναι, à côté de γίγνεσθαι)34. Surtout, elles paraissent parfois indissociables (71 a 10, 103 b 3, où πρᾶγμα est répété) parfois dissociables (71 b 2-4) des propriétés qu’elles exemplifient35. La loi de la génération mutuelle ne précise pas si la chose reste la même en recevant des propriétés opposées ou si le processus lui fait perdre son identité36. La réalité même des choses mentionnées dans l’argument cyclique fait problème. La fonction de repère permanent assignée aux choses dans la description de la génération, parfois alléguée pour prouver la réalité de ces choses, se retourne au contraire contre cette notion de « génération », dont elle souligne les limites.

rendre compte des passages où Socrate rapporte son type d’explication au devenir, donc de résoudre la tension entre les conceptions (1) et (2). R. Sharma admet p. 140-145 que le problème tient à l’attitude contradictoire de Socrate, qui se démarque des physiologues, mais ne paraît pas renoncer à rendre compte du devenir. Il s’oppose en cela à G. Vlastos (1969) qui soutient p. 313-314 que Socrate aurait confondu les deux types de cause avant de se tourner vers le second. R. Sharma ne découvre en fait dans le texte que des signes de l’impuissance de la cause socratique à offrir une explication du processus de changement (cette cause traduit plutôt un intérêt pour les définitions). D’après R. Sharma p. 173, il aurait été préférable que Socrate renonce à se mêler de l’explication de la génération et de la corruption ; Socrate reconnaît que sa théorie est incomplète (R. Sharma renvoie à la première partie du Parménide). 33 Voir A. Nehamas (1973) p. 469 pour une remarque similaire. 34 Les choses ressemblent au navire du pèlerinage de Délos (58 a 6-c 4), avec ses réparations multiples. 35 F. Karfík (2011) p. 51 relève l’ambiguïté, dont il admet qu’elle n’est dissipée que par l’échange avec l’anonyme. 36 D’après J. Barnes (1978), « Plato is not talking of the emergence of one object from another ; he is talking of a change undergone by one single object. » ; pour Th. Ebert (2001) p. 223, il s’agit de propriétés d’un objet identique. F. Karfík (2011) p. 51 admet que l’alternative (la chose reste la même ou perd son identité) recouvre la distinction entre propriétés accidentelles et propriétés essentielles ; il allège l’échange avec l’anonyme pour se prononcer (malgré la répétition de πρᾶγμα en 103 b 3) en faveur du premier membre (la chose reste identique). L’argument cyclique impose l’alternative, c’est l’exposé du principe (B) (102 b 3-103 c 9) qui impose la solution retenue par ces commentateurs, mais en fait peu conforme aux termes de l’argument cyclique. D. Sedley (2012) propose p. 153-158 une analyse du changement qui pourrait aller dans le sens du second membre de l’alternative (la chose se modifie).
ou les contradictions. L'interposition de deux processus symétriques entre les deux opposés censés s'engendrer mutuellement, soulève aussi des difficultés (voir 96 e 6-97 b 3). Chacun des deux processus, eux-mêmes opposés (71 e 8-10 : ἐναντία γένεσις), annule le résultat de l'autre (autres sens de ἀνδρεῖον). La réciprocité du processus sape la réalité de la génération, qui paraît pourtant impliquer cette réciprocité. Le volet (A2), imposé par l'application du principe de contradiction (B), est, pour le régime d'opposition (A), à la fois un appui et une faille. Le volet (A2), complément du volet (A1), contient de quoi lui faire objection.

L'exposé du principe (B) (102 b 3-103 c 9) donné au début de l'argument final va dans le sens de cette analyse des limites du régime d'opposition (A). La distinction entre les choses opposées et les opposés, que le principe (B) admet pleinement, ne rend compte du processus de génération (la chose devient un homonyme de l'un ou l'autre des opposés) qu'en posant une absence de génération effective (la chose qui possède les propriétés opposées n'est pas naturellement portée à devenir une chose possédant l'une de ces propriétés par ceci, le fait d'être la chose qu'elle est, mais par la propriété qu'il lui arrive de posséder ; voir 102 e 3-5 : ἕτερ ὃν ἄπειρον εἰκόνα, οὕτως ὅ ἀντίκειται συμμετρίᾳ εἰμί). La chose est « neutre » au sens que les commentateurs de l'argument cyclique donnent à ce terme quand ils observent que Platon, par ailleurs conscient de cette possibilité (Banq. 201 e 10-202 b 5), ne tient pas compte de l'existence d'un état intermédiaire entre les deux opposés. Cela corrobore l'examen qui assimile la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle des opposés à une description de ce qui apparaît au point de vue des humains incapables de se séparer le plus possible du corps et des sensations. Le principe (B) déjoue la vraisemblance de l'opinion, alors comparable à un mythe, que les humains se font du régime d'opposition (A). La conviction de pouvoir mener, par le corps et par les sensations, un examen des choses fait obstacle à la contemplation des choses mêmes (66 e 1 : αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα). Ce genre de confusion caractérise les faiseurs de discours contradictoires (90 c 3-6 ; 37 A. Nehamas (1973) p. 469 se réfère à Crat. 439 d-440 b pour affirmer la réalité des choses auxquelles des propriétés opposées sont attribuées. Ce passage du Cratyle signale plutôt que, comme l'écrit C. Dalimier n. 445 p. 277 de sa traduction : « la thèse du Flux total se détruit donc elle-même. » Cette thèse pose comme réelles des choses dont elle peut alors prétendre qu'elles sont en devenir.


38 F. C. White (1977) p. 306 soutient que la distinction tend à contraster ce qu'une chose est avec ce qu'elle a ou possède. D. Frede (1978) admet p. 28-29 qu'à partir de 102 b 3-103 c 9, la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle est à la fois clarifiée (par la réponse à l'anonyme) et restreinte (avec la distinction ultérieure entre propriétés accidentelles et qualités essentielles). Pour S. Menn (2010) p. 51, l'ajout d'une troisième chose entre les deux opposés est rendu nécessaire par le fait que les opposés ne s'engendrent pas mutuellement. D'après M. Pakaluk (2010) p. 663, il s'agit de rendre compte du changement en posant la coprésence des opposés – mais sans en déduire que l'objet du changement change aussi – et aussi de bloquer l'inférence allant de la coprésence à la doctrine du flux universel.


40 J. Van Eck (1996) contraste p. 225 l'exposé du principe (B) (102 b 3-103 c 9) avec la théorie Héralcitienne du changement. Il écrit : « one cannot by relying on the senses refute Heraclitus' statement that opposites in us change into each other, that one becomes the other : in point of fact it is not an error of perception, but an error of thought. One cannot establish empirically that the opposites, whether in a change or in a copresence, do not clash or intermingle so as to change into each other and become identical. » Il admet n. 21 p. 225 que les opposés sont indifférenciables par exemple dans la personne de Simmias.
voir 101 e 1-6), qui en viennent à admettre que rien de sain ni de stable n’appartient à rien ni parmi les choses ni parmi les raisonnements, mais que tous les étants, sans art (ἀτεχνῶς), comme dans un Euripe, sont retournés sens dessus-dessous, et ne demeurent aucun temps en rien41. Le rappel, par l’anonyme, de la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle précise que cette génération est sans art (103 a 8)42.

Le problème des « choses » mentionnées dans l’argument cyclique oblige à reconsidérer la réponse à l’anonyme, qui restitue aux propriétés les appellations utilisées par l’argument cyclique pour nommer les choses possédant ces propriétés (103 b 5-c 1). Les propriétés, qui procurent un contenu réel aux appellations, en sont les référents ; cette précision rectifie un emploi qui a pour effet de rompre le lien, que cette rectification rétablit, entre les appellations et la réalité. L’emploi que les humains font des appellations ne paraît ordonner ces appellations à une réalité que parce qu’ils font un emploi similaire du mot « réalité ». Cette apparence est entretenu par les appellations « chose », « humain » ou « animal », qui, à côté des adjectifs substantivés, « beaux » ou « égaux », qualifient encore les choses possédant les propriétés désignées par ces adjectifs (78 d 10-e 2). Or le problème que pose l’emploi des noms des propriétés affecte aussi l’emploi de ces appellations : cet emploi substitue, aux référents adéquats de ces appellations, les homonymes qu’il engendre43. Les homonymes gardent leur apparence de réalité tant que l’homonymie n’est pas repérée, opération qui, en vidant une appellation de son contenu supposé, conditionne la possibilité de rapporter cette appellation à la réalité qui est son référent. Le fait que les choses, les humains ou les animaux ne soient ordinairement pas rangés au nombre de « tous ceux pour lesquels il y a un opposé » (70 e 5) contribue à masquer l’homonymie, qu’une analyse des emplois de ces noms peut révéler. Dans les contextes rapprochés par l’anonyme, le mot « nature » est utilisé (71 e 9, 103 b 5) en des sens divergents, le régime d’opposition (A) de la nature homonyme, objet de la méthode des physiologues, contrastant avec celui (B) de la nature éponyme, objet de la méthode socratique44. Cela pousse à généraliser l’analyse, et donc à vérifier la nature des « choses », par exemple les « humains », dont il est question dans l’argument cyclique. Cet objectif pourrait commander l’examen de la seconde partie de l’argument. Les remarques ci-dessous esquissent cet examen, afin de confirmer la possibilité d’attribuer à l’argument cyclique, par un changement de point de vue, une signification nouvelle. Cette esquisse pourra éclairer l’analyse de la relation entre les deux régimes d’opposition (A) et (B) comparés par l’anonyme.

4. Les humains au point de vue des humains

41 Après avoir entendu les objections de Simmias et de Cébès, les auditeurs du dialogue se disent que les choses elles-mêmes pourraient être non fiables (88 c 6-7 : τὰ πράγματα αὐτὰ ἄπιστα ᾖ).
42 L’absence d’art est associée, avec les mots ἀνευ τέχνης (89 d 5-6, e 6, 90 b 7) et ἀτεχνία (90 d 3), à l’analyse de la misanthropie et de la misologie, elles-mêmes engendrées par des contradictions. L’adverbe ἀτεχνῶς va de pair avec : l’expression d’un affect contradictoire, mélange de plaisir et de peine (59 a 5) ; la description de la condition de l’âme attachée au corps (82 e 1) ; la cause socratique (100 d 4) ; l’état des personnages orphelins privés de leur père par la mort de Socrate (116 a 7).
43 Une fonction éponyme est attribuée à chacune des Idées (102 b 1-3) et l’Idée a un nom qui lui est propre (103 e 3 ; 104 a 5-6). Pour la notion d’homonymie, voir Phéd. 78 d 1-2 ; R. X 596 a 6-7.
44 La méthode (79 e 4) fondée sur la distinction entre les sensibles et les réalités conduit à désigner la nature (80 a 1) comme ce qui prescrit à l’âme de gouverner et au corps de se soumettre, quand ils sont au même endroit.
Le *Phédon* invite à détacher le mot « humain » (ἄνθρωπος) de l’aspect visible qui, sous le nom de « corps », paraît lui correspondre, et à le reporter plutôt à une chose (94 d 6, e 5 : πράγμα) invisible pour les humains (79 b 7-15), dont le nom est « âme » (63 b 8, 115 c 3-116 a 1). Le fait de mourir (64 c 2-9) ramène le corps vers la génération, l’âme, vers la réalité : « à part d’un côté séparé d’avec l’âme, le corps devient lui-même conformément à lui-même, à part d’un autre côté, séparée d’avec le corps, l’âme est elle-même conformément à elle-même. » Le corps et l’âme nous appartiennent certes l’un et l’autre (79 b 1-3), mais cela signifie surtout que, pour nous identifier enfin à l’âme, nous devons renoncer à nous identifier au corps. Le problème dont part l’argument cyclique situe les humains (70 c 5, d 7) à la place des choses. Cébès, porte-parole des humains, admet, à ce point de vue, les deux propositions suivantes :

« vivre » a un opposé, qui est « mourir » (71 c 1-5, d 6) ;
à partir du vivant, quelque chose, le mort, est engendré (71 d 10-11).

Tant que les humains sont assimilés à leur aspect visible, le fait que par exemple les humains vivants deviennent des humains morts est une évidence empirique (71 e 5 : σαφῆς) ; ce qui participe de la vie (72 c 6-7), peut en être dépossédé par la mort, qui s’oppose alors à la vie. La loi (A) de la génération mutuelle (71 d 8-9) contraint Cébès à accorder une troisième proposition :

le vivant est engendré à partir du mort (71 d 12-e 1).

Cette conséquence, telle une apparence (71 e 1, e 3), contraste avec la vision empirique que Cébès a de la réalité. La référence à la nécessité (71 d 13, e 10) marque le point où l’incompatibilité entre sa vision de la réalité et la loi (A), qui commande la déduction (71 d 14, e 2, 72 a 4 : ἄρα), décide Cébès à s’écarter de cette vision et à admettre la réalité du processus « revivre » (71 e 13-72 a 2 : ἀναβιώσκεσθαι). La conséquence contrefactuelle (le vivant est engendré à partir du mort) ne s’impose pas moins (72 a 5 : οὐδὲν ἡττον) que l’évidence empirique (le mort est engendré à partir du vivant). La déduction appelle une reprise et un développement (71 e 8-9, 72 a 12-d 5) de la preuve du volet (A2) (réversibilité du processus) de la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle. La forme du raisonnement, par l’absurde, atteste que cette preuve se fonde sur le principe de contradiction ou régime d’opposition (B). La phrase « tu sais que tout finirait par avoir le même

45 Le mot « humain » est fréquemment rapporté au corps humain (73 a 1-2, 76 c 12, 77 b 7-8, 92 b 6, 95 d 2).
47 La thèse contient parfois (70 d 1, 71 e 2) le pronom « nous », apparemment synonyme de « humain » (62 b 8 : ἡμείς οἱ ἀνθρώποι).
48 Le point de vue de Cébès est souligné par les pronoms oú (71 c 10-11, d 5) et ἄρα (71 d 7). Voir A. Greco (1996) p. 235 (n. 19). Dans l’argument final, Socrate demande encore à Cébès de répondre non pas à lui, aux questions qu’il pose, mais en l’imitant (105 b 1-2).
49 Pour l’Idée de la vie, voir 106 d 5-6 (αὐτὸ τῷ τῆς ζωῆς ἐδοκεῖ).
50 A. Greco (1996) remarque p. 236 que Cébès paraît hésiter.
51 D’après A. Greco (1996), le volet (A2) de la loi n’est vraiment établi que dans cette seconde partie de l’argument cyclique.
aspect, éprouverait le même affect et cesserait de devenir » (72 b 4-6) décrit une situation, la confusion des opposés, rendue absurde par son incompatibilité avec le régime d'opposition (B). Pour démontrer le volet (A2) de la loi (A), Socrate soutient que la négation de ce volet (A2) entraînerait une confusion capable d'illustrer le mot d'Anaxagore « ensemble sont toutes choses » (72 c 4-5), dont l'impossibilité lui paraît manifeste (voir Gorg. 465 d-e). Or l'exposé de la méthode socratique tire argument, afin de justifier cette méthode, du contraste entre l'espèce socratique de cause et la sagesse des contradicteurs (101 e 1-6), rendue responsable d'une confusion capable d'illustrer, elle aussi, ce mot d'Anaxagore.

La conclusion de l'argument cyclique s'appuie sur l'indice (τεκμήριον) fourni par la conséquence contrefactuelle de la déduction. Au point de vue adopté par Cébès, il semble (72 a 6, a 9 : δοξεῖν) nécessaire (72 a 7, a 10) que les âmes des morts soient quelque part53, d'où elles naissent à nouveau54. Le corps auquel Cébès rapporte le mot « humain », faisant fonction de repère permanent55, est affecté d'une double génération dont l'explication implique un principe différent du corps, l'âme, qui, faisant participer le corps à la vie (72 c 6-7), s'impose comme le référent adéquat de « humain ». La pétition de principe régulièrement reprochée à l'argument cyclique, qui paraît présupposer la permanence de l'âme56, reflète l'impossibilité de poser la non réalité de l'âme ou de percevoir la mort (88 b 2-3) : elle pourrait être opposée à l'objection initiale de Cébès (qui suppose la non réalité de l'âme). La thèse « elle sont les âmes, les nôtres, chez Hadès » (71 e 2 ; voir 70 c 4-5, c 9-d 1) découle moins de la conséquence contrefactuelle elle-même, que de son admission par Cébès, indice d'une activité de l'âme indépendante du corps et des sensations, donc de la réalité de l'âme dans l'invisible, référent adéquat du nom Hadès (80 d 6-7, 81 c 2). Ainsi compris, l'argument démontre effectivement que, l'humain mort, prisonnier du corps et des sensations, l'âme est et a une puissance et une pensée (70 d 3-4)57, qui lui permettent de ramener cet humain à la vie. Ce serait là le sens adéquat du verbe « revivre », employé ensuite avec, pour objet, le raisonnement qu'il s'agirait, s'il arrivait à sa fin, de ramener à la vie (89 b 10-c 1). Cette esquisse de l'examen de la seconde partie de l'argument cyclique confirme que l'intelligibilité de l'argument appellerait une réflexion sur la nature des choses que l'argument présente comme

57 Th. Ebert (2001) rappelle p. 211 qu'en démontrant qu'une fois l'humain mort l'âme est et a une puissance et une pensée, comme Cébès le lui demande en 70 b 3-4, le Socrate du Phédon prend le contre-pied de la description de la condition des âmes chez Hadès dans Homère, Odyssey XI. M. Dixsaut n. 110 p. 339 de sa traduction renvoie à Iliade XVI 857 et XXIII 104.
soumises à la loi (A) de la génération mutuelle des opposés.

5. Les opposés eux-mêmes et leurs homonymes

La loi (A), qui concilie ce qui apparaît aux humains et le principe (B), est déterminée par ce principe, dont l'application conduit à remplacer le modèle du processus de génération mutuelle des opposés par le modèle d'une participation aux opposés intelligibles. La compatibilité entre les deux régimes d'opposition tient à ce que le premier (A), une fois rapporté aux opposés homonymes, reconduit au second (B), qui fixe le rapport entre les opposés eux-mêmes. Cette première conclusion paraît éclairer l'allusion à quelque chose qui, dans la question de l'anonyme, aurait pu avoir trouble Cébès, mais qui n'a pas produit cet effet. Cébès, porte-parole des humains destinataires de l'argument cyclique, paraît à la fois disposé à être troublé par la question posée, et capable de la résoudre, suivant la méthode socratique, exposée avant l'échange avec l'anonyme. Pourtant, cette première conclusion n'identifie pas le point qui, dans la question de l'anonyme, aurait pu troubler aussi Socrate. Le contexte de l'allusion invite plutôt à étendre l'analyse de l'homonymie, rendue responsable de la contradiction relevée par l'anonyme (103 b 5-c 1), aux emplois du mot « opposé » (ἐναντίος) lui-même. Dans l'argument cyclique, la notion d'« opposé » ne parait pas admettre une définition homogène, capable de s'ajuster aux exemples d'opposés constitutés par les couples d'adjectifs positifs (70 e 3 : beau et laid, juste et injuste) et les couples de comparatifs (70 e 6-71 b 10 : plus grand et plus petit, plus fort et plus faible, plus lent et plus rapide, meilleur et pire). Dans l'argument final, certains emplois de « opposé » soulèvent des difficultés similaires. L'indétermination du sens de ἐναντίος est parfois objectée à Platon ou à ses personnages par les commentateurs qui demandent : « que signifie le mot ἐναντίος ? »58 L'échange avec l'anonyme, qui rapporte l'argument cyclique aux sensibles homonymes, distingués des réalités éponymes, confirme le bien-fondé de cette interrogation. Les études qui entreprennent d'y répondre se transforment souvent en revue des difficultés, accrues par le recours aux comparatifs et au verbe « devenir » (γίγνεσθαι)59. Cela invite à transposer à l'opposé lui-même (103 b 4 : αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον) ce qui vaut pour les autres réalités. Cette transposition appelle quelques éclaircissements.

L'incapacité des sensibles à exemplifier correctement les réalités (65 d 4-7, 74 a 9-76 e 7) fait objection à la possibilité de rapporter aux sensibles les appellations propres aux réalités, voire de les leur attribuer à titre de « propriétés », mot souvent employé par commodité mais qui ne traduit aucun terme grec. Le verbe « être » (εἶναι), impropre à relier, aux réalités, les choses censées les posséder, laisse place

au verbe « devenir » (γίγνεσθαι) et la forme positive des adjectifs, à leur forme comparative60, comme dans l'argument cyclique (70 c 4-72 e 2) ou dans l'énoncé du principe (B) (102 b 3-103 c 9). La relation entre les sensibles et les réalités ne va pas de soi : sa dénomination même pose problème (100 d 5-7)61. L'argument de la réminiscence précise que la déficience interdisant aux sensibles de procurer la connaissance des réalités éponymes ne les empêche pas de contribuer, en dirigeant l'attention sur ces réalités, à cette connaissance, bien au contraire : cette connaissance, qui n'est pas autrement donnée aux humains (76 b 8-c 3), ne peut partir que des sensibles (74 a 9-75 b 9 : emplois de ἐκ et ἀπό), augmentés d'une attention à leurs imperfections. Ce point rend compte de l'apparente restriction (qui, ainsi comprise, implique aussi une expansion) apportée à la règle prescrivant de se séparer le plus possible du corps et des sensations62. La condition que cette règle pose à l'usage du corps et des sensations est de soumettre cet usage à un examen vigilant et assidu, comparable à une purification (67 c 5-d 3). La connaissance des réalités repose donc entièrement sur le repérage des imperfections contenues dans les perceptions que les humains croient avoir de ces réalités63, auxquelles se rapporte alors l'entretien par questions et réponses (75 d 1-4, 78 d 1-3).

L'indétermination du sens de « opposé » (ἐναντίος) conduit à supposer que ce mot ne fait pas exception : le problème de sa définition n'est pas résolu par l'énumeration d'exemples d'« opposés » ; les exemples censés illustrer le rapport d'opposition, ne permettant pas de dégager une définition homogène, invitent plutôt à faire de ce rapport d'opposition l'objet d'un questionnement. Or cette indétermination affecte la méthode socratique, davantage que l'indétermination de mots comme « beau », « juste » ou « égal » : elle compromet l'application du principe de contradiction, qui fonde l'obligation de rapporter aux réalités intelligibles les appellations auxquelles les sensibles se montrent incapables, une fois leurs contradictions révélées par ce principe, de procurer un contenu satisfaisant. La possibilité de distinguer entre les

60 F. C. White (1977) p. 304-306 s'étonne de ce fait que, d'après la méthode socratique, si par exemple une chose est plus petite qu'une autre, cela est dû à la présence de la petitesse dans la première. F. C. White s'appuie sur ce point pour discuter p. 308-309 la suggestion de Ch. Kirk (1974) qui observe que l'éponymie des Idées conduit à qualifier de « petite » une chose qui ne l'est pas puisqu'elle est seulement « plus petite ». Les efforts de F. C. White pour expliquer l'anomalie la soulignent. D. Sedley (2012) remarque p. 154 que l'emploi du comparatif ne suppose pas l'attribut du positif (une chose plus grande n'est pas nécessairement grande).

61 G. Vlastos (1969) suppose p. 301 que Platon espérait pouvoir clarifier ce point ; il admet n. 31 que « the expectation was never adequately fulfilled », mais que cela n'a pas conduit Platon à abandonner le modèle de la participation. R. Loriaux (1975) II p. 95-96 observe que « le texte comporte, ici encore, une réelle imprécision ». Ch. Rowe (1993) écrit p. 56 « beauty is there in the beautiful thing as a separate item » (nous soulignons et précise, n. 17, qu'il ne s'agit pas d'attribuer à Platon une théorie des Formes immanentes. Pour la difficulté que soulève le participe προσγενομένη en 100 d 5-7, voir R. Loriaux (1975) II p. 96-97 ; Ch. Rowe (1993) p. 56.

62 M. Pakaluk (2003) p. 98-102 examine la difficulté que constitue cette restriction, mais il paraît la contourner en supposant qu'il s'agit de rendre l'état à atteindre ne diffère que par le degré de l'état déjà atteint.

63 Ce point rend compte de l'usage de l'adverbe ἀτεχνῶς dans l'exposé de la méthode socratique (100 d 4). L'assignation de la fonction de « cause » aux Idées n'empêche pas Socrate d'être privé de la cause proprement dite, ou plutôt, disposé à l'apprendre (99 c 6-9 : μαθητής). Pour cette dernière observation, voir G. Vlastos (1969) p. 302-303 ; à la p. 308, il rappelle que la réponse de type socratique est aussi dite « ignorant ». (105 c 1 : ἀμαθῆ).
opposés homonymes et l’opposé éponyme, référent adéquat de cette appellation, entre en tension avec la règle prescrivant de se séparer le plus possible du corps et des sensations afin de se lancer à la poursuite des étants. La règle, qui repose sur la mise en évidence de rapports d’opposition, invite elle-même à vérifier la réalité de ces rapports : la règle oblige à revenir sur les applications qui en sont faites. Les rapports d’opposition mis en évidence pourraient refléter la méconnaissance du sens de « opposé », que ces rapports d’opposition sont chargés d’exemplifier.

En effet, la définition de la notion d’« opposé » n’est pas indépendante du principe de contradiction ou régime d’opposition (B) : le principe qui fixe le rapport entre les opposés les définit par ce rapport. Le principe ne se contente pas d’interdire la confusion des opposés, il les identifie par l’impossibilité de les confondre. La position d’un rapport d’opposition prend donc appui sur la perception d’une génération mutuelle des opposés, que l’application du principe de contradiction invalide, en lui substitutant le modèle d’une participation à des opposés irréductibles, mais qui détermine la décision de les qualifier d’« opposés ». La formule générale du principe de contradiction est négative (102 e 8-103 a 2, b 4-5, c 1-2) : ce régime d’opposition (B) s’oppose au régime d’opposition (A), que cette opposition entre les deux régimes amène alors à rapporter aux choses opposées ; lesquelles, une fois distinguées des opposés qu’elles exemplifiaient, cessent également d’apporter une illustration au régime d’opposition (A). Le principe de contradiction s’impose, sous la forme d’un régime d’opposition (B), contre un régime d’opposition (A), en alléguant les contradictions que (A) tend à contenir (à tous les sens des termes). Ainsi le régime d’opposition (B) se fonde-t-il sur une notion antéposée de l’« opposé », qui ne peut tirer de nulle part ailleurs que des oppositions décrites par le régime d’opposition (A), l’opposé même (103 a 6 : αὐτὸ τὸ ἐναντίον) de (B). L’interruption de l’anonyme, qui ravive et dissipe la confusion entre les opposés homonymes et les opposés éponymes64, porte cette difficulté à l’attention de Socrate. Cette difficulté a de quoi troubler même un Socrate, surtout un Socrate, plus disposé qu’un Cébès, à s’en aiser et à en mesurer la portée65. La difficulté tient effectivement à « ceux [les objets] dont celui-ci [l’anonyme] a parlé » (103 c 4 : ᾠν ὅδε εἶπεν) : le second régime d’opposition (B), qui rappelle la distinction entre les opposés homonymes et le référent adéquat du mot « opposé » (la réponse de Socrate invite l’anonyme à accomplir une réminiscence), repose sur l’emploi indifférencié de ce mot, « opposé », qu’implique le régime d’opposition (A). Cette difficulté obère non seulement l’exposé du régime d’opposition (B), mais également l’ensemble de la démonstration du Phédon, à laquelle la qualification de « mythe » peut alors être étendue, moins pour invalider cette démonstration que pour en exiger l’examen.

Car l’analyse de cette difficulté met en lumière la fonction de l’âme et réaffirme la fonction du lecteur actif. L’exposé du principe (B) fait des opposés les sujets de verbes qui supposent que les opposés, personnifiés, entretiennent, avec leurs opposés, une relation, que ces verbes décrivent certes comme un rapport d’opposition, mais dont ils soulignent aussi le caractère paradoxal66. Le rapport d’opposition fait fond sur


65 Le trouble est régulièrement associé, dans le Phédon, à la perception de contradictions [59 b 4 (état paradoxal des amis de Socrate), 88 c 4 (effet des objections opposées à Socrate), 100 d 3 (conséquence des explications savantes) ; 66 a 5, d 6, 79 c 7 (effet du sensible)].

66 Les verbes employés immédiatement avant et après l’échange avec l’anonyme (avec pour sujets les opposés mais aussi les termes qui apparaissent toujours avec eux
l'épreuve (103 a 2 : πάθημα) d'une rencontre, contre laquelle le principe (B) se dresse, la rendant impossible. L'application que les opposés mettent à s'éviter suppose qu'ils se réfèrent eux-mêmes au principe de contradiction, qui dirige leur comportement. La condition pour que les opposés puissent eux-mêmes se démarquer les uns des autres est qu'il se comparent les uns aux autres : la garantie de l'impossibilité d'une rencontre implique un point de rencontre. Le contraste entre la situation de Socrate et celle de la grandeur, qui n'accueille pas la petitesse (102 e 3-5) suggère que le maintien du rapport d'opposition entre les opposés repose sur l'activité de l'âme : l'âme, placée au point de vue occupé par Socrate, réunit les opposés afin de les séparer par l'interposition d'un double processus de génération. L'emploi de « appariement » (71 c 9 : συζυγία) pour désigner les couples de générations opposées rappelle que l'opération consistant à poser un rapport d'opposition saisi conjointement les deux opposés que cette opération disjoint. 

L'argument de la réminiscence attribue aux sensibles personnifiés (74 d 9-75 b 9) comme une perception de leur propre incapacité à exemplifier correctement les réalités : la personnification indique quelle part l'âme prend à cette perception, qui implique des rapports d'opposition. L'argument de l'affinité décrit ce que l'âme éprouve quand elle se soustrait à l'errance qu'entraîne pour elle le recours au corps, et qu'elle se met à examiner elle-même par elle-même les réalités (79 c 2-d 9). La réfutation de l'objection de l'âme-harmonie allège la possibilité pour l'âme d'entrer en opposition avec elle-même (93 a 8-10, ces opposés), indiquent : (1) un refus : 102 d 6-7, d 8, e 3, e 7 (οὐκ ἐθέλειν) ; 102 d 8, e 2, 103 d 6, d 11, 104 b 7-8, b 9, e 8, e 9, 105 a 1-2, a 5, a 7, b 1, d 10-11, d 13, d 16-17, e 2, e 4, 106 a 5-6, b 4, d 3 (οὐ δέχεσθαι et composés) ; 102 e 5-6, 103 d 11 (οὐ τολμᾶν) ; (2) un retrait : 102 d 9 (φεύγειν) ; 102 d 9-e 1, 103 d 8, 104 c 1, 106 e 6 (ὑπεκχωρεῖν) ; 103 d 10-11, 106 a 4 (ὑπεξιέναι) ; 103 a 1, 106 a 10 (ἅπερχεσθαι) ; 106 c 6, e 6 (ἅπερχεσθαι) ; (3) une disparition : 102 e 2, 103 a 2, d 8, d 11, 104 c 1, c 2, 106 a 5, a 10, b 3, c 1, c 3, d 7 (ἀπολλύναι) ; (4) une attaque : 106 b 3 (τέναι) ; 102 e 1, 103 d 7, d 10 (προσίεναι) ; 104 b 10, 106 a 9, b 8, e 4 (ἐπέναι) ; 102 e 1-2 (προσέρχεσθαι) ; 104 d 10 (ἐρχεσθαι) ; 106 c 5 (ἔπερχεσθαι) ; 104 e 1 (ἐξεκινεῖν). Pour d'autres verbes décrivant un rapport d'opposition avec personification des opposés : 104 c 2 (πᾶσσειν) ; 104 c 2, c 7, 106 a 6 (ὑπομένειν). R. Loriaux (1975) II p. 112-113 soutient contre R. Hackforth (1955) que οὐκ ἐθέλειν « n'a, en soi, rien qui doive étonner. » D. O'Brien (1977) commente la métaphore du mouvement.


D'après R. Burger (1984) p. 64-65, la citation d'Anaxagore (72 c 4-5) rappelle la double fonction, le mouvement et la séparation, que ce philosophe attribue au noûs ; cette citation implique une allusion à l'activité de l'âme. D. Sedley (2012) remarque p. 161 que les exemples de doubles processus sont choisis de façon à préparer le passage au couple « mourir, revivre ». A. Greco (1996) p. 252 découvre « an unresolved tension at the very heart of the Cyclical Argument. Plato is torn between including souls in the realm of becoming and thinking of souls as entities transcending physical perceptible objects. »

M.C. Beck (1999) p. 16 commente ce passage en disant : « […] soul is claimed without evidence to be capable of admitting opposites attributes in ways nothing else we know of admits opposites. »
94 b 4-95 a 1), comme si elle dialoguait, étant différente, avec une chose différente (94 d 6-7). La puissance et la pensée que l’âme, séparée du corps, possède encore (70 b 2-4) se définissent par cette activité dialectique, qui tient ensemble les termes en tension qu’elle dissocie.

Ainsi les deux régimes d’opposition (A) et (B) entretiennent-ils, dans le Phédon, une relation diachronique d’engendrement mutuel, suivant la loi (A), et une relation synchronique d’opposition, suivant le principe (B)70. L’accomplissement, par le lecteur actif, des opérations ambivalentes qui lui sont prescrites conditionne la possibilité de conserver sa puissance et sa pensée à l’âme de Socrate. C’est parce que, tel Socrate, il se croit privé du bien et de ce qui est exigé (99 c 1-9), que ce lecteur, par son activité, entreprend, à l’échelle du Phédon, de lier et de tenir ensemble ce qui, sans cela, serait menacé de dispersion et de destruction.

Abstract

My paper takes over the hypothesis that the flaws in the demonstration of the immortality of the soul are deliberately aimed at prompting an active reading. The dialogue with the Unnamed leads to a comparison between the cyclical argument CA and the final argument FA. The Unnamed observes that the following assertions, each belonging to one of the two arguments, are in opposition:

- opposites are simply generated from their opposites;
- none of the opposites, while still being what it was, will become nor be its opposite.

Socrates removes the inconsistency by allocating different objects to each assertion: (A) refers to opposite things whereas (B) refers to the opposites themselves. But Socrates still hints at something, in the discourse of the Unnamed, which may have troubled him. My interpretation of that hint is based on the fact that Socrates’ answer says nothing about the relationship between the opposition schemes (A), relevant for opposite things, and the opposition scheme (B), relevant for opposites themselves. The existence of a relationship between the objects respectively allocated to each assertion is assumed by the Socratic method, which involves setting down an eponymous reality and taking it as explanatory of its homonyms. The reader is entitled to ask how the opposition scheme (B) is supposed to explain or at least tolerate the opposition scheme (A). Both arguments, CA and FA, are to be linked together.

CA is addressed to humans who, being unable to refrain from examining things through the senses, picture the soul as a body. CA, which apparently follows the method of investigation about nature, is discussed as a plausible argument by commentators who object empirical counterexamples to the law of mutual generation or opposition scheme (A). Yet sense perceptions have been previously dismissed as unfit instruments for any research about real things. As an empirical « theory of change », the law (A) is a myth, which, under examination, can display a rational meaning. Indeed, the law (A) is an attempt to put up with the contradictions of sense perceptions: the replacement of « being » by « becoming » is directed at making sense-perceptions compatible with the principle of non-contradiction, akin to the opposition scheme (B). The Socratic cause, which is related to the principle of non-contradiction, accounts for anything being or becoming what it is called.

In CA, the law (A) applies to « things » which are supposed to undergo many changes while they do not change at all, since each thing is differentiated from

both the opposites it possesses as mere proprieties. The neutrality of the thing is corroborated by the presentation of the opposition scheme (B). The empirical law (A) is dispelled like an appearance. Now, the things themselves (αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα) may be confused with their homonyms. The distinction between the humans themselves and their bodily homonyms is required to identify the human’s souls as what the word « humans » properly refers to. This paves the way to read CA as a valid piece of reasoning.

The opposition scheme (A) yields to the opposition scheme (B) which the former intended to express at sense-perception level. But this doesn’t account for the philosopher in Socrates to be troubled. The context of the hint induces to admit that homonymous opposites could be mistaken for the eponymous opposite itself. Commentators struggle to find a definition of the word « opposite » adjustable to the examples given by Socrates. The defective particulars perceived through the senses are the only available means to grasp a knowledge of the idea they endeavour to exemplify. Indeed, that knowledge depends on a close examination of their imperfections. The problem is deeper in the case of the opposite itself because the principle of non-contradiction (B) is at the core of the Socratic method. Socrates must acknowledge that his understanding of the word « opposite » can only be derived from the opposition scheme (A), denounced by the opposition scheme (B). This quite troublesome point doesn’t invalidate the demonstration as a whole, but encourages the reader to scrutinise the applications of the principle of non contradiction.

This analysis enlightens the soul’s function. The personification of the opposites themselves suggests that the soul is designed for holding together the opposites in order to separate them, a task performed by Socrates in CA, which may eventually refer to it. CA and FA are related according to both the opposition scheme (A) and the opposition scheme (B). The active reader, who, like Socrates, feels deprived of the Good, is thus expected to connect together the different parts of the demonstration that would otherwise stay disorganized and void.

Bibliographie

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El último consejo del *daimón* y la duda de Sócrates: *Fedón*, 60d-61b

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I

Consideremos resumidamente el mensaje de Sócrates. Sócrates defiende en muchas ocasiones que la excelencia y la función propia del alma humana dependen crucialmente del *logos*. La razón es, sino la esencia misma de la *psyché*, con certeza su facultad más notable y valiosa, única capaz de tomar con propiedad las riendas de la acción y dirigir el carruaje hacia lo alto: “cuando el alma íntegra sigue a la parte filosófica (…) cada una de las [otras] partes hace en todo sentido lo que le corresponde y que es justo, y también cada una recoge como frutos los placeres que le son apropiados, que son los mejores y (…) los más verdaderos” (*Rep*. 586d), dice Sócrates.

Este credo se relaciona con aquel otro según el cual es necesario trascender el perpetuo fluctuar entre *ser y no ser* que afecta a lo sensible y, en su lugar, empeñarse en el esfuerzo dialéctico – se trata de escalar las cumbres del topos noético y contemplar allí, con la inteligencia directa y autónomamente, la eternidad de las Ideas. El precepto también exhorta a erradicar progresivamente cualquier interferencia que pueda obstruir la labor: todo lo relativo al mundo de ilusión revelado por los sentidos ha de ser poco a poco puesto de lado, hasta que el pensamiento se mueva de manera independiente (*Rep.*, VI 509d e ss.); en paralelo, se recomienda que la razón esté atenta a cualquier motivación de naturaleza distinta a la suya, cualquier impulso no-racional que pueda obstaculizar el esfuerzo de la inteligencia. Si el enorme ámbito de lo irracional, esto es, de las emociones y los deseos de toda índole, se revela contrario a la tarea especulativa, pues debe entonces ser extirpado, reprimido o, por lo menos, controlado cuánto sea posible mediante el adiestramiento, la persuasión o por la fuerza. Así se perfilan, al tiempo que se explica, esa crítica rigurosa de lo sensorial y lo somático que permea la filosofía de Sócrates y que se encuentra, tal vez, en la base del conocido ascetismo al que sometía a su persona.

II

Consideremos ahora el texto que nos convoca, y atendamos a la última jornada de Sócrates tal como la relata Platón en el *Fedón*. Sócrates, en consonancia con su modo de ser característico, explica serenamente los motivos por los que la muerte no es para él causa de angustia: la posibilidad, por ejemplo, de que su parte divina (la razón, la inteligencia) pueda sacudirse las pesadas cadenas que la lian a la carne y, así, continuar el periplo más liviana y despojada, parece darle lo que necesita para dejar la existencia con sosiego y hasta con júbilo. A pesar de la proximidad del fin el maestro se mantiene de ánimo tranquilo, irradiando la calma del hombre moderado y sabio; el contraste entre su serenidad y el estado de excitación de sus interlocutores, en especial de Apolodoro (*Fed.*, I 59b), es notable. Estando los detalles de la ejecución combinados, el carcelero afloja las cadenas y Sócrates aprovecha para reflexionar finamente sobre el placer y el dolor. Enseguida sucede el hecho que llama la atención. Por boca de Cebes se expresa la demanda de los poetas¹, quienes exigen una explicación, perplejos al enterarse de que su crítico más empedernido se dedicaba justamente a la poesía a tan corta distancia de la muerte. Para justificar una conducta tan desusada, Sócrates relata haber sido movido por una voz en los sueños, cuyo mensaje había recibido otras veces en la vida e interpretado de una manera que ahora se le revelaba inadecuada. Sócrates se declara presa de una instancia de vacilo,
de titubeo; finalmente, temiendo haber cometido una falta para con los dioses e imbuido de un fuerte sentido del deber propio de su carácter, se aboca a la poesía, como que para redimirse del pecado. Quizá la hesitación y el arrepentimiento hayan quebrado, por un fugaz instante, la serenidad de Sócrates.

III

El mensaje que se repite a Sócrates reza lo siguiente: ‘ὦ Σῶκρατες […] μουσικὴν ποίει καὶ ἐργάζου’ - “Sócrates: haz música! ¡trabaja/ocúpate en ella!” (Fed., I 60e). Con complacencia, Sócrates había interpretado hasta entonces que se trataba de un incentivo a perpetuarse en el empeño que ya se encontraba realizando: como los espectadores apoyan a los participantes en las carreras, la voz en sus sueños lo instaba a continuar el ejercicio de la filosofía (Fed. I 61a). Como se sabe, las Musas presidían no solo la poesía sino la eloquencia, la persuasión, las ciencias, la sabiduría - y Sócrates leía el dictamen como un mensaje de aliento, desde que siempre había sido claro para él que “la filosofía es la música más elevada” (Fed., I 61a). Sin embargo, en los días previos a la ejecución lo invade la sospecha de haber errado en su apreciación; más específicamente: de que la voz de sus sueños lo estuviera instando a dedicarse a “aquello que ordinariamente se llama música” (ταύτην τὴν δημώδη μουσικὴν. Fed. I 61a). Así, sabiéndose filósofo y no poeta, Sócrates compone un himno a Apolo y toma prestadas unas fabulas de Esopo y las pone en verso. De esta manera se libra del escrúpulo y retoma en paz su tarea predilecta, abocándose inmediatamente a una crítica del suicidio y, en seguida, embarcando en el gran asunto del diálogo: la inmortalidad del alma.

IV

Pero ¿qué significa la fugaz urgencia que invade al personaje y que lo hace tomar una actitud tan desajustada – componer poesía en el sentido popular del término - a su forma corriente de hacer uso del lenguaje? Es evidente que la tarea poética que Sócrates emprende no surge de una simple inclinación a la fruición que la actividad suscita; antes, el gesto responde claramente a la incómoda conciencia de un error. El error a remediar está vinculado a una determinada comprensión de lo poético. Esto no significa que Sócrates esté dudando si la Filosofía es o no la forma musical más elevada; supongamos, más moderadamente, que el mensaje dado a Sócrates pudiera tergiversarse como sigue: “Sócrates: ¡aprecia la música también en el sentido popular del término!” La falta socrática estaría entonces en haber rezagado injustamente, excesivamente, una clase de música hacia la cual debería haber sido más gentil. Es como si su voz interna le estuviera diciendo: “Sócrates: debes tener por la poesía popular mayor estima de la que has tenido hasta ahora! Más aún: debes ejercitarte tú en ella!” Para entender lo que sea esta “poesía popular” quizá sea lícito buscar en la extensa reflexión respecto a la poesía y los poetas que Platón pone en boca de Sócrates en República.

En este diálogo se propone una supervisión rigurosa de la música y una faena selectiva basada en una apreciación crítica de la poesía en sus expresiones más tradicionales - Hesíodo, Homero, Esquilo. Sócrates es, como se sabe, bastante destructivo en su apreciación. Por un lado deja en claro como no debe ser la poesía, censurando como portavoces de la inmoralidad y propiciadores del vicio largos trechos de las obras más clásicas; por el otro, prescribe “reglas” para lo que resta, y presenta una poesía ajustada a su concepción de la justicia, el bien y otros nobles ideales semejantes. Promover la falsedad, la mentira, la ignorancia: de esto acusa Sócrates a los poetas tradicionales, artífices de relatos “sacrílegos” e “inconvenientes” (Rep. III 380c) que “inducen al error” (Rep. 380c) y, lo que es peor, al vicio. El “hombre de bien” no es dado al llanto y los lamentos (Rep. 3807a, 388a) ni es tomado por la risa (Rep. 389a) o la gula (Rep. 390b), la lujuria (Rep. 390c), la cobardía (Rep. 386a y ss.) o la avaricia (Rep. 390e): todos los excesos deben ser
desterrados, y también el acontecimiento artístico si los imita o induce. La imitación debe ser atentamente vigilada, dado que es en sí un alejamiento de la verdad e inocula el hábito con facilidad. En República es quizá más nítido que en cualquier otro lugar cómo y por qué el paradigma de Sócrates se separa del de la poesía griega tradicional: esta poblada de incontinencias, orgía e intrigas; la suya diáfana, lúcida y moralizante. “Por ello solicitaremos a Homero y a los demás que no se encolericen si tachamos estos versos” dice Sócrates, y se justifica: “no porque estimemos que no sean poéticos y agraden a la mayoría sino, al contrario, porque cuánto más poéticos tanto menos convenientes” (Rep., 387b). Sócrates abdica explicitamente del placer en nombre del bien, aunque con esto exilia un elemento fundamental a la creación: el arrebato irracional. Si en lo que toca al contenido la poesía debe, según Sócrates, expresar solamente la nobleza del “hombre de bien”, en lo que respecta a la forma sucede un empobrecimiento semejante. Las pautas musicales para las creaciones poéticas sufren en el molde socrático una castradora simplificación: nada de ritmos excitantes, o letárgicos en demasía; todo en “la misma cadencia y la misma armonía (...) sin grandes variaciones” (Rep., III, 397b). La simplificación y la pérdida que sufre que la poesía bajo el rigor de su látigo es para Sócrates, según parece, una pérdida asumida.

V

Quizá sea esta pérdida y este exilio la causa del remordimiento que aflige a Sócrates en el Fedón. Si durante toda su existencia Sócrates realizó voluntaria y aplicadamente el pesado esfuerzo por refrenar el carácter orgiástico de la realidad en general, y del arte en particular, tal vez lo que lo invade en su última jornada sea la sensación de haber censurado no del todo justamente, en ambos hemisferios, un ámbito del ser y quehacer que no merecía ser de esa forma aplacado. Acaso al componer el himno a Apolo y poner en verso las fábulas de Esopo Sócrates obedece a un deseo subrepticio de dar un lugar más holgado a ese caudal pulsional, a ese “estado afiebrado” del cual el hombre cuerdo se diferencia por su frialdad, o en un caso menos radical por su templanza.

VI

Sócrates de repente recuerda que, además de la Filosofía, existe otro tipo de consumación musical: aquella tan cara al común de los griegos, cuya expresión más típica se halla en Homero y los otros y respecto a la cual había sido tan duro. Tal vez la duda que lo invade y la blasfemia que se apura a espia apunten a la sospecha de que no solo gracias a la razón se realiza el hombre. Una comprensión en este sentido parece ser la de Nietzsche, cuando dice que Sócrates:

“sintió… la presencia de una omisión, de una laguna, de un pesar, de un deber quizá incumplido. Mientras estaba en su prisión, les hablaba a sus amigos acerca de un sueño en el que se le aparecía… una sombra… que le repetía las mismas palabras: “Sócrates, cultiva la música!” Hasta sus últimos momentos se había tranquilizado con la idea de que la filosofía es el arte supremo que nos han legado las musas y no podía imaginarse que una divinidad hubiese venido a recordarle que ejercite la música común, popular. Finalmente en su prisión, para aliviarse completamente su conciencia, decidió ocuparse de esta música que tan poco estimaba y… compuso un himno a Apolo y puso en verso algunas fábulas de Esopo. Lo que impulsó a estos ejercicios fue algo análogo a la voz de su daimón familiar, fue su intuición apolínea de que se encontraba como un rey bárbaro, ignorante, ante una imagen noble y divina, y que corría el riesgo de ofender a una divinidad con su ignorancia. Esta aparición en los sueños es el único indicio de una duda, de una preocupación en Sócrates acerca de las limitaciones de la naturaleza lógica. Acaso debiera haber dicho a sí mismo que lo que no es comprensible para mí no es necesariamente lo incomprendible. Quizás haya una región de la sabiduría de la cual está desterrado
el lógico. Quizás el arte sea un correlato, un suplemento obligatorio de la ciencia” (Nietzsche, NT., p. 105-106).

VII
Una interpretación menos escandalosa del episodio que nos convoca se relaciona con la idea de que el paradigma poético socrático-platónico y el de la poesía tradicional no se encuentran en una relación tan excluyente.

*Este escrito es un boceto. Una versión actualizada en: https://unicamp.academia.edu/NataliaCosta

Abstract: What follows is an attempt to understand Socrates’ peculiar involvement, during the last moments in prison before execution, with popular music (δημώδη μουσικὴν), as well as the justification he gives for this involvement, as Plato portrays in Phaedo 60d-61b. The voice in Socrates’ recurrent dream brings a clear sense of tension and regret and carries, also, a demand of self-criticism. This self-criticism is performed as the revision of a previous way of conceiving and making music and poetry. We will compare music as Socrates conceived of it - one whose highest expression is philosophy and that is, in itself, fountain of moral inspiration - , with popular music - the traditional poetry of Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, specially as pondered in Republic. Music, as Socrates wants it, entails a sort of sobriety and moderation that popular poetry, signed rather by irrationality and excess, completely lacks. Socrates, on the quick gesture of exercising music in the popular way, is perhaps making a slight, nonetheless symbolic concession, to the instinctual element he had always combated so fiercely. Perhaps his hesitation has to do with the recognition that rational luminescence sometimes paradoxically overshadows an entire realm of experience without which poetry, and life as a whole, loses something essential.

(Endnotes)
1 Si se trata de Eveno de Paros, se trata entonces de un poeta y filósofo (¿sofista? A lo que parece cobraba por sus lecciones, pero de esto Platón no dice nada) contemporáneo de Sócrates. Poco citado, difícil de rastrear aunque, según parece, bastante respetado: Platón se refiere a él también en la Apología y en el Fedro y Aristóteles en EN, VII, 10. De este solo queda el dicho: “ἢ δέος ἢ λύπη παῖς πατρὶ πάντα χρόνον” – el hijo es todo el tiempo motivo de angustia y sufrimiento para el padre. Existe también un Eveno de Ascalon, otro de Atenas, otro de Sicilia y un gramático. Hay una serie de poemas atribuidos a “Eveno” en la Antología Palatina. Tales poemas tratan principalmente sobre arte, por lo cual parece factible que la referencia en el Fedón apunte a este Eveno.
2 E incluso un difuso temor al castigo: el acatamiento de la orden desatendida hará la partida “más segura” (Fed. I 61a)
3 No hemos encontrado noticia del himno a Apolo, pero al respecto de la versificación de Esopo, Diógenes Laercio dice: “Compuso una fábula como las de Esopo, no muy elegante, que empieza: Dijo una vez Esopo a los corintios/ La virtud no jugasen/ Por la persuasión y voz del pueblo”, Vida de los filósofos ilustres, Ateneo, 1947, p. 121.
4 E incluso un difuso temor al castigo: el acatamiento de la orden desatendida hará la partida “más segura” (Fed. I 61a)

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The Reception of Plato’s *Phaedo* in Philo of Alexandria

Runia, David T.

1. Introduction: the reception of the *Phaedo*

Last year three Belgian scholars published an excellent volume on the ancient reception of the dialogue that is the focus of our attention during this conference. Aptly entitled *Ancient Readings of Plato’s Phaedo*, it starts with his pupil Aristotle during his own lifetime and extends right through to Simplicius at the end of antiquity. Interestingly it treats the dialogue’s reception in three other schools (the Peripatetics, the Stoics and the Sceptics) before turning to a philosopher who consciously stood in Plato’s own tradition. The first Platonist to get a chapter is Plutarch. By his time well over four centuries had passed since Plato founded the Academy and the period that we now call Middle Platonism was well under way. But the evidence for Academic and early Platonist readings of the *Phaedo* is disappointingly limited. So it is very welcome that we have a witness right at the beginning of our era who has left behind a very considerable body of writings and of whom we can be certain that he was an avid reader of the dialogue. I am speaking of course about the Hellenistic-Jewish writer Philo. It is an additional attraction that Philo spent almost all his life in Alexandria, the great eastern intellectual centre who played an important role in the development of the history of Platonism that we would like to know a lot more about. I thank the organisers of this conference for the opportunity to give this paper. My aim is to set out the evidence for Philo’s use and knowledge of the *Phaedo*, and reach some conclusions on how important it was for him and what he might be able to tell us about its interpretation at that time.

2. Philo and Plato’s legacy

The affinity that exists between Plato’s and Philo’s writings and thought was already recognised in the ancient world. The Church father Jerome writes (*Vir.ill.* 11.7): ‘Concerning this man [Philo] it is commonly said among the Greeks [he probably means Christian scholars or theologians] ἢ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει ἢ Φίλων πλατωνίζει—either Plato philonises or Philo platonises—so great is the similarity in doctrines and style.’ Byzantine scholars recognised the patent exaggeration involved in this *bon mot*. No doubt it was the neatness of the formulation that made it attractive. But they continued to discuss whether the affinity was mainly a matter of style and language, or whether there were doctrinal similarities as well.

The saying can be regarded as simply silly. How can you say that Plato adopts the way of doing things practised by someone who lived many centuries after him? But perhaps at another level it is telling us something interesting. It is not saying that Philo was a Platonist who derived much of his thinking from his master Plato. Rather, they are two thinkers who can be compared. They have produced bodies of writings that are similar in size. In these writings they are doing their own thing, but there is a strong affinity between them.

Such a view is not wholly dissimilar to how I read Philo. He is not a philosopher in the way that Plato was, and he is also not a follower of Plato in the manner of a Plutarch or a Plotinus. The merest glance at his writings will confirm the truth of this view. Philo as a loyal Jew regards himself as a disciple of the great...
Jewish lawgiver Moses and devotes nearly all his energy to expounding the text of Mosaic scripture and uncovering the depths of the wisdom that it contains. For this purpose he adopts, to use a phrase of the French scholar Valentin Nikiprowetzky, ‘the language of reason’ so impressively developed by the Greek philosophers, prime among whom was the ‘most sweet-voiced Plato’ (Prob. 13). There is no loyalty to Plato in particular. That is reserved for Moses. But there is a deep understanding of his thought and a far-reaching appropriation of key ideas and motifs in that thought for the purpose of interpreting scripture.

3. Previous research on our subject

Let us first take a brief look at previous research on the subject. Scholarly work on Philo is exceedingly copious and the discussions on his relation to and use of Plato are plentiful. But it has to be said that the amount of systematic research done on our theme is quite limited. The dissertation of Billings is now nearly a century old. Its comparison of two doctrinal bodies of thought—his teacher was the great proponent of the unitarian Plato, Paul Shorey—is quite outdated and now perhaps most useful in its listing of the Platonic phraseology that Philo takes over. In the 60’s and 70’s of the last century a more historical approach was developed by scholars such as Boyancé, Dörrie, Theiler and Dillon, placing Philo’s reading and use of Plato in the context of the development of Middle Platonism. The first comprehensive examination of Philo’s use of a particular Platonic dialogue was my own dissertation first published in 1983, which focused on the Timaeus. The method I used was to go through the entire work and examine all the evidence in Philo relating to the use and interpretation of texts and themes from that dialogue. The resultant material, which was copious in its extent, provided the basis for a synthesis of Philo’s debt to this work. The choice of the Timaeus was by no means accidental. It is universally recognised that this dialogue was the most influential of Plato’s writings in Philo’s time. In the same year the French scholar Anita Méasson published an in depth study of Philo’s reading of the Phaedrus, and in particular its myth of the ascent of the winged soul. Because of the nature of the subject matter, more attention was paid to the Phaedo than in my work, but the research done was far from systematic or complete.

Since the 80’s Philonic research has not stood still. A significant development has been the further work done on the Philonic corpus itself and the recognition that it is crucial to take into account the kinds of commentaries and other writings that it contains. The treatises in the Allegorical Commentary, the Exposition of the Law and the Questions and Answers (these last-named are for the most part only available in an Armenian translation) have different but sometimes overlapping aims and methods, and those of the so-called philosophical treatises are different again. Attempts are also being made, by Maren Niehoff in particular, to attach chronological developments to these differences, but the results of this new direction are still far from certain.

I must now make mention of a very recent monograph, published only late last year, which, because of the nature of its main subject, contains more research on Philo’s use of the Phaedo than any previous study. The Finnish scholar Sami

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3 See Nikiprowetzky (1977), Lévy (1995). At Prob. 13 the text should read (with the majority of the mss.) κατὰ τὸν ἱερώτατον Πλάτωνα.
4 Billings (1919); for a complete index of Platonic passages cited see Geljon–Runia (1995).
7 Méasson (1986).
8 Niehoff (2011).
Yli-Karjanmaa has devoted an immensely thorough and impressive study to the question of whether Philo espoused the doctrine of reincarnation which figures prominently in the *Phaedo*, which he answers firmly in the positive. In the course of his investigations he makes numerous references to Philo’s use of themes from the dialogue and I wish to place on public record my debt to his research in writing the present paper.

I should at this point mention a distinction that Yli-Karjanmaa has made perhaps more clearly than any previous scholar. When discussing the origin and nature of the soul, he distinguishes—in his terminology—between protological and universal accounts. In the former we find descriptions of the creation and first beginnings of the cosmos and human life. In Philo’s reading, the *Timaeus* is above all a protological account of creation, as becomes clear in the treatise that uses it most, the commentary on the Mosaic creation account which is the opening treatise of the Exposition of the Law, the *De opificio mundi*. In universal accounts, it is not the origin but the present and future existence of the human being in the world and beyond it that is the point of focus, and in Philo’s treatment this most often involves the use of allegory. Another way to formulate the distinction is to say that protological accounts focus on creation, whereas universal accounts are primarily concerned with salvation. In terms of this distinction the *Phaedo* gives accounts of the soul that are quite universal in their application to human life, in contrast to the *Timaeus*, which presents an account of the origins of the soul and its place in the cosmos.

4. The method used in the present paper

How then should be proceed in tackling our topic? Ideally it might be worthwhile to adopt the same method that I used in my study on Philo and the *Timaeus*. This would mean first going through the dialogue page by page and analysing all the different kinds of use that Philo makes of its features, including language, imagery, themes, argumentation, and so on, taking into account the contexts where this usage occurred. On this basis a judgment could be made on the importance of the dialogue for his thought. But this method might prove not only laborious but also quite difficult to carry out. The *Phaedo* is not so easily divided into discrete topics and Philo’s usage is quite diffuse. More helpful in the present context might be Gert Roskam’s excellent recent article on Plutarch’s reception of the dialogue. He starts with quotations, references and reminiscences, then moves on to more general allusions and general correspondences, before ending with the dialogue as a narrative and argumentative model.

Our method, then, will be to proceed in five steps, commencing with the more direct ways of using the dialogue’s contents and moving from there to more general thematic comparisons. On this basis we will be in a position to evaluate the impact of the *Phaedo* on Philo’s writings and thought. In the limited time at our disposal it will not possible to be exhaustive in any way whatsoever, nor will it be easy to do justice to the context of all the Philonic texts that we cite, but we should bear it in mind to the extent possible. And given the central importance of Philo’s mission as exegete of Mosaic scripture outlined above, we should not overlook the exegetical foundation of so many of his texts.

5. Five kinds of reception

(a) quotations and recognisable allusions

In all his works Philo never makes any direct reference to the *Phaedo*. The closest we get is the text at *De ebrietate* 8 where we read that, as the παλαιὸς λόγος

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states, God has attached pleasure and pain to single head. The allusion to 60b9–c4 is clear, with the phrase εἰς μίαν κορυφήν συνάψας ὁ θεός conflating words from Plato's two sentences. The reference to the 'ancient account' indicates that Philo wants to make sure that the allusion is recognised, but he does not feel the need in this exegetical treatise to specify its author. It is possible that there is a reference to the same passage at Quaestiones in Genesim 4.159 where we read 'for desire for pleasure and pains are from the same root, as the poet says, (and) whatever things are divided and separated from the head are both divided at the extremities.' Here there seems to be an allusion to the phrase ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς at least, but it seems quite doubtful

that the word ποιητής can refer to Plato. The lack of any references to Plato's name or work may seem surprising, but we can compare the avowed Platonist Plutarch, who in all his writings never refers to the Phaedo by that title, only once refers to the alternative title Περὶ ψυχῆς, and only refers to Plato himself in connection with the dialogue four times.

More often Philo alludes to well-known phrases of the dialogue without drawing attention to the fact. It is up to the well-educated reader to recognise them. A subtle and hitherto unnoticed example is found in the proœmium of one of the philosophical treatises, Quod omnis probus liber sit. After citing the Pythagorean saying 'not to walk on the highways' he states that those who genuinely espouse philosophy (cf. Phd. 66b2) will 'uncover ideas (Colson in the Loeb translates this in Platonic terms as 'ideal forms') which it is not legitimate for anyone who is impure to touch' (Prob. 3). The allusion to the famous dictum at 67b that it is not permitted for the impure to touch what is pure is unmistakeable. Philo then goes on to make a reference to Plato's image of the cave in the Republic. The entire passage is a cento of Pythagorean and Platonic references which the learned reader will understand and enjoy.

A clearer example of a recognisable allusion to the dialogue is the description of philosophy as 'practising to die' or a 'practice for death' (64a6, 67e4, 81a1). The combination of the words μελετή and ἀποθνῃσκειν or θάνατος must amount to an allusion to Plato's work. We find this four times in Philo (Det. 34, Gig. 14, QG 4.173, fr. 7.3 Harris). In addition, the phrase τῶν ἀνόθως φιλοσοφησάντων at Gig. 14 must be a reminiscence of the very similar οἱ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντες at 67e4. Oddly in the third of these passages the saying is used to explain the words of Esau at Gen. 25:32, when he says that since he is going to die, what use is his birthright to him. This is the life of the fool rather than of the wise person as found in Plato. Following ancient practice Philo plays around with the learned allusion and the reader is expected to follow and appreciate what he is doing.

(b) language

It is perhaps not so widely known that Philo is an important witness to the development of the Greek language and particularly of a certain kind of terminology involving compound words. Much research was done of this phenomenon in the 19th century and about two decades ago, when investigating Philonic heritage in

12 Plato himself uses this expression at Phd. 70c5.
13 Marcus's translation from the Armenian, slightly modified
14 The phrase ἐκ μιᾶς ρίζης is very common in Greek literature, but can it be attributed to a particular poet?
16 On the last-named passage see the lengthy analysis by Yli-Karjanmaa 186–212, who demonstrates that the text is in all likelihood genuinely Philonic.
17 On the similar reinterpretation of practising to die in Somn. 1.151, where the phrase ἀποθνῄσκειν ἐπιτετηθεικότες recalls 64a6, see below §5d(3).
the Patristic period I published some research which drew attention to it and even coined the phrase *verba Philonica* for such terms which is now often used in the learned literature.\(^{18}\) There are important antecedents for this kind of terminology in Plato and a particularly fertile passage is found at *Phaedo* 68c, just after he talks about the philosopher practising to die. ‘Is this not ample evidence of such a man that any man whom see complaining when about to die is not a φιλόσοφος but a φιλοσώματος, and the same person is also a φιλοχρήματος or a φιλότιμος, either singly or both.’ A little earlier Plato had also used the term φιλομαθής for the philosopher and he repeats it four times in 82c–83e. Finally we might note the word φιλοσοφία to describe what is indulged in by persons desiring to reincarnate in animals like donkeys (81e5).

All these terms except the last recur frequently in Philo’s allegories. For example φιλοσώματος is used of Ἐρ (Gen 38:7), meaning ‘leathern’ and symbolising the body (*Leg.* 3.72, 74). It is also used of souls who descend and are bound in mortal bodies, as part of Philo’s exposition of Jacob’s ladder (Gen 28) in *Somn.* 1.138. Abraham, on the other hand, is the φιλομαθής par excellence (*Migr.* 216, *Her.* 63 etc.), symbolising the mind that is eager to learn on its journey from Chaldea to the vision of God and his powers (he is also the φιλοθεάμων, *Migr.* 76). But Philo goes further in using (and perhaps even coining) φιλο- words not found in Plato. We have characters who symbolise the mind that is φιλοπαθής, notably the Egyptian ‘riders’ who drown in the sea (*Leg.* 2.107, *Agr.* 83 etc.). The ambivalent character represented by Joseph is called φιλότυφος (*Somn.* 2.98), a hapax legomenon in extant Greek literature up to 1000 C.E. By way of contrast Philo rejoices in those intellects that are not only φιλοθεάμονες but also φιλόθεοι in their quest for God (Abraham at *Her.* 82, Moses in *Post.* 15 etc.), using on numerous occasions,\(^{19}\) a term not found in Plato with only a single pre-Philonic instance to be found in Aristotlē’s *Rhetorica* (2.17 1391b2).

Further evidence of Philo’s use of language that has its origin in the *Phaedo* is found when he uses a striking term that will immediately remind the well-educated reader of the original Platonic context. An example is the word φλυαρία meaning ‘silliness’ or ‘nonsense.’ Philo uses it only seven times, but the instance that interests us is at *Somn.* 1.139, when in expounding Jacob’s ladder in Gen 28 he describes those souls which wish to leave life in the body behind as ‘recognising the πολλὴ φλυαρία of mortal life.’ The term φλυαρία is quite common in Plato (14 instances), but we may be sure that Philo is thinking here of the usage at *Phd.* 66c3 because of the combination with the adjective and also because the context, which is full of imagery and references to the *Phaedo* and other dialogues.\(^{20}\) In the same passage Philo says the soul escapes from the body as if it was a εἱρκτή (enclosure). The word is surely inspired by Plato’s use of εἱργμός in 82e3–5, the only time he ever uses it in the singular. The relatively rare Platonic word is replaced by a very similar and more common equivalent,\(^{21}\) but given the context the origin of the usage is clear enough.

(c) imagery

Philo’s use of imagery and metaphor is a very large subject, which has never been systematically explored. Given his predilection for using images and the vast extent of his corpus, it may be impossible to do this in any thorough and exhaustive way.\(^{22}\) What is clear is that this huge collection of examples combines three sources:

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18 Runia (1992). For earlier research see especially Siegfried (1875) 31–132.
19 48 times according to the Philo Index of Borgen et al.
20 In Plato the phrase πολλὴ φλυαρία is also found at *Apol.* 19c4, but the context is quite different (Aristophanes’ depiction of Socrates).
21 In the TLG we find 32 instances of εἱργμός, 1062 of εἱρκτή.
22 For what follows I am indebted to Billings 88–103, Yli-Karjanmaa 31 and
firstly, classical literature, which from Homer onwards contains uses images widely
and creatively; secondly, the narrative sections (and to a lesser extent the legal
prescriptions) of the books of Moses, which provide images that Philo can weave into
his exegesis; and thirdly, his own observations living in Alexandria, which provided
him with a rich palette of images from the life of the city and its people.23 The Phaedo
as a work of literature is particularly rich in imagery. I will focus my discussion on
four examples, all of which are related the central theme of the relationship of the
soul to the body.

(1) The image of the prison is central to the Phaedo and cannot be missed by
any perceptive reader. Socrates’ imprisonment and imminent departure from this
life are linked to the fate of the human presence on earth (62b4 ἔν τινι φρουρᾷ) or the
soul’s presence in the body (συρρήματος 82e3, 5; δεσμωτήριον 114c1). There are at least
ten passages in Philo, all found in the Allegorical Commentary, in which he uses this
image of the intellect or the soul, often combined with the injunction to leave the
prison of the body behind and depart from it.24 There is an obvious link that Philo
can make to a biblical personage who finishes up in jail. Joseph is an ambivalent
figure in Philo. In Ebr. 111 he symbolises the intellect which is φιλοσώματος and
φιλοπαθής (two terms already discussed above) and is cast into the prison of the
passions (Gen 39:1). Philo is happy to twist the biblical narrative (Joseph in fact
actually receives divine favour in jail) so that it fits into a pattern of imagery inspired
by the Phaedo.

(2) A second image is the body as a garment or a cloak for the soul, which
Plato invokes to illustrate that it might be possible for the soul to wear out several
bodies and yet still not be immortal (87b–e). Philo is not interested in the argument
and a possible verbal allusion to the term ὑφασμα occurs only once when the human
being is called a ‘weave of body and soul’ (Ebr. 101). But the image of the soul being
clothed with a (dead) body is very common, especially in the further image of the
soul stripping or undressing and thus leaving the body behind.25 For an indirect
biblical impetus here we might note the ‘tunics of leather’ that God makes for the
first human beings in Gen 3:21, which Philo interprets as the body in a positive
sense in the only surviving passage where this text is discussed.26

(3) Another cluster of images concerns the bondage that the soul must endure
through its association with the body. The freedom that God promises the nation in
Gen 15:4 is interpreted in Her. 273–274 not only as departure from prison, but also
as a release from the bondage of the mind (i.e. the rational soul) when it descended
from heaven and was bound in the constraints of the body. Here Philo adds to the
image of the prison already discussed an allusion to release from the bonds of the
body at 67d1 and the expression ‘to be bound to the body’ introduced by Plato at
81e2 and 92a1, both in the context of the theory of reincarnation. As Yli-Karjanmaa
has noted, the latter expression is often used by Philo throughout his writings.27

(4) The final image that I wish to draw attention to is that of the ἀποδημία,

passim. There is extensive analysis of Philo’s use of imagery in the Timaeus in
Runia (1986), and in the Phaedrus in Méasson 1986.

23 A particulary striking example is Philo’ use of images from athletics; see Harris
(1976).

24 Leg. 3.21, 42; Deus 111; Ebr. 101; Migr. 9; Her. 68, 85, 109, 273; Mut. 173; Somn.
1.139.

25 See Leg. 2.22, Fug. 110 (of the high priest), QG 4.78 etc.

26 QG 1.53; cf. also 4.1. Most regrettably the part of the Allegorical Commentary
that expounded this text is lost.

27 Yli-Karjanmaa 114, referring to Leg. 2.22, Conf. 92, 106, 177, Somn. 1.138, Ios.
264, Spec. 4.188, to which can be added Leg. 3.151, Mut. 36.
the ‘journey abroad’ (61c2, 67c1). Socrates is ready to make that journey to another place ‘with good hope’ (67c1). The image links up with the pervasive imagery of ‘sojourning’ which Philo derives from the biblical accounts of Abraham and the people of Israel in the Pentateuch and for which he often uses biblical terminology wholly foreign to Plato ((πάροικος/παροικεῖν, cf. Gen 12:10, 15:13, 23:2 etc.). Commenting on Abraham’s departure to his fathers with peace in a good old age (Gen 15:15) Philo says that it is doctrinally sound to say that the good person departs rather than dies, for the highly purified soul is immortal and engaged in the ἀποδημία from here to the heavens, not subject to the dissolution and destruction of death (Her. 276). The additional reference to the theme of purity makes it probable that Philo has Plato’s passage in 67c at the back of his mind. The theme of migration or μετανάστασις pervades the entire treatment of the story of Abraham’s journey from Chaldea via Haran to the promised land.28 The ultimate goal is the vision of God.

But the image of the ‘journey abroad’ is double-edged. It can also be a journey in the other direction, towards the body and its passions. The soul can descend to earth and into the body, a bad experience from which it must escape.29 The pre-eminent symbol of a foreign land is Egypt, the land of the body and the passions with Pharaoh as its king, which Moses and the children of Israel leave behind.30

(d) other themes

Philo’s exploitation of the Phaedo is certainly not confined to allusions, terminology and images. Other themes in the dialogue have also exerted their influence. Indeed they are too numerous to be discussed in full detail. Once again we have to be selective.

(1) Philo’s allusions to the Platonic theme of philosophy as a practice for death have already been noted above. In the same context Plato describes death as the release (ἀπαλλαγή) of the soul from the body (64c4) and a little later its freeing (λύσις) and separation (χωρισμός, 67d4). Philo cites this description on four occasions.31 Resembling Plato the most is the passage in the Life of Abraham, where we read that the patriarch, after grieving a little (cf. Gen 23:2), recalled the teaching of wisdom that death is not extinction of the soul but its separation and unyoking from the body and return to whence it came, which as revealed in the Mosaic creation account is from God (Abr. 258).32

In expounding the reference to death in Gen 2:17, Philo uses Plato’s description less literally. Death, he states (Leg. 1.106), is of two kinds. For a human being it is the separation of the soul from the body, but for the soul it is the destruction of virtue and the assumption of wickedness. This latter death occurs when the soul is entombed in passions and all kinds of evil. On the next page we read (§108) that when we die (i.e. a physical death), the soul then lives its own proper life and is released (ἀπηλλαγμένης, cf. 64c5) from the evil corpse of the body to which it is tied. In the next treatise a similar statement is made (Leg. 2.77) in relation to the effect of pleasure. Death is not the separation of the soul from the body, but it occurs when the unruly (i.e. irrational) part of the soul longs for the dwellings of Egypt, that is the corporeal mass (cf. Num 21:5–6). In these two texts Philo offers a fascinating

28 According to Nikiprowetzky reference the theme of μετανάστασις is the key to Philo’s thought.
29 See for example Cher. 120, Agr. 64–65, Conf. 77–78 and other texts cited by Ylikarjanmaa 31.
30 See the monograph of Pearce (2007).
31 In addition to the texts discussed there is also an allusion at Plant. 147.
32 Note that the phrase παρὰ θεοῦ is a quote from the exegetical context, Gen 23:6. The link with the creation account is stated very loosely.
reinterpretation of Plato's classic treatment of death. Despite the proofs of the soul's immortality, it too can suffer death, but it is of a different kind, not physical but moral. We shall return to the first of these passages a little later on.

(2) The next theme is in many respects a continuation of the previous one. It is an explication of what is involved in the liberation of the soul from the body for those who genuinely practise philosophy (66b), namely a purification from the desires and the folly that beset the soul through its association with the body (66b–67b). It also requires a recognition that the senses which the body provide are more of a hindrance than a help for the soul that aspires to attain the truth (65a–e). All of these motifs are pervasive in Philo's allegory of the soul.33 The usage is largely general, however, and not drawing on specific features of the Phaedo account. Yli-Karjanmaa has perceptively suggested that the mention of souls who have not yet had the irrational component stripped away from them and still drag in to themselves the crowd of the senses (ἐφέλκέμενα, Migr. 200) is an allusion to 66a where the philosopher uses the mind alone in hunting for being and does not drag in (έφέλκων) any of the senses to accompany reason.34 We have already seen that the following treatise Quis heres appears to contain many passages which show the influence of the Phaedo. So we might note further that its emphasis on the purification of the soul which is destined for heaven from the senses and the passions might be another example.35 And we might return briefly to the passage in Ebr. 101,36 where in an exegesis of Moses going out of the city in Exod 9:29 the νοῦς εἴλικρνήστατος καὶ καθαρώτατος after being imprisoned in the city of the body and mortal life departs in freedom and leaves behind the clamour of the passions and the cries of pleasure.

(3) The destination of the soul after death is a key topic in the Phaedo, both in Socrates' discussions with his friends and in the final myth. The souls descend to Hades (69c, 70c, 108a) or to Tartarus (112a) and from there the righteous can go on to their own region and dwell with the gods (69c, 108c, 114c). The references to Hades and Tartarus in Philo are scarce but telling. Because of their prominence in the Phaedo,37 it is justified to discern the influence of that work. Hades is the abode that is allotted to the bad, who from the beginning to the end have been practising to die (Somn. 1.151), another example of Philo going his own way in using the Platonic phrase. Indeed, we read elsewhere (Congr. 57), Hades should not be thought of as the mythical place for the impious (as in the Phaedo), but rather it is the life of the immoral person.

Two not so well-known passages in the Quaestiones refer to Tartarus, both discussed at length by Yli-Karjanmaa. The former (QG 4.234), an allegorical explanation of the references to earth and heaven in Gen 27:39, describes the mind according to the Armenian translation38 as descending into an earthy body and 'being burned by the necessities and flames of desire, for these are a true Tartarus,' before spreading its wings and gaining a sight of heaven. However, the Old Latin version reads 'in the Acheron and Puriphlegethon of desires,' which must represent

33 See the summary at Billings (1919) 64–70.
34 This interpretation is strengthened by two other passages where the verb is used: Leg. 3.11, Det 27. I interpret the participle ἐφελκέμενα in the Philonic text as in the middle voice.
35 Her. 64, 184–185, 239, 276; see the valuable observations of Harl (1966) 110.
36 See above §5c(2) on the term ὑφασμα.
37 Of the ten references to Tartarus in the genuine works of Plato, seven are in this dialogue.
38 Cited in the English translation of Marcus in the LCL.
the original text. The allusion may in the first instance be to Homer *Odyssey* 10.513, but these two rivers are also prominent in the *Phaedo* myth (112e–113c). The second passage is *QE* 2.40 on God’s words to Moses in Exod 24:12a, ‘come up to me to the mountain and be there.’ Here the ‘ultimate regions of Tartarus’ are described as the destination for those in whom the desire for God is fickle and only fly upwards for a short time before being drawn downwards. In both texts the reference to Tartarus, at least partially inspired by the myth of *Phaedo*, is combined with the flight of the soul on wings drawn from the myth of the *Phaedrus* (of which there is no mention in the earlier dialogue).

(4) The two passages just discussed describe the descent of the soul into the body in terms that appear to evoke the process of metempsychosis or reincarnation. This theory, formally introduced as a παλαιὸς λόγος at 70c5, is highly prominent in the *Phaedo*, being invoked on no less than four occasions (70c–d, 73a–75e, 81d–83e, 113a). The first three are the only non-mythical passages which refer to the doctrine (also at *Tim.* 42b–c, 90e–91d, *Rep.* 618a–620b, *Phdr.* 248b–249c). The place of reincarnation in Philo’s thought is controversial. In his monograph Yli-Karjanmaa has demonstrated beyond all that Philo uses the concept and the language of metempsychosis in his allegories of the soul. He marshalls a great deal of indirect evidence, before discussing four passages where he claims that Philo speaks of the idea of reincarnation with approval (p. 212). In three of these we have seen allusions to the *Phaedo*. Certainly Philo has no place for the notion that humans reincarnate into animals, as described in 82a–c, thereby anticipating the views of later Platonists and Church fathers. Such a view is contrary to his conviction, following the Stoa, that there is an essential divide between human beings with the rational soul and lower beings which are irrational.

In fact Philo never makes an outright pronouncement for or against this doctrine, which is not biblical and is as far as we know alien to nearly all versions of Judaism. The notions of descent into the body, ascent from the body and return to the body are clearly present in Philo’s allegories and must be seen integral to his presentation of the fate of soul. How this should be interpreted and whether we should agree with Yli-Karjanmaa’s thesis that he ‘accepted’ and ‘approved’ the tenet of reincarnation requires a more detailed discussion than can be given in the present context.

39 As noted by Petit (1973) in her commentary ad loc.
40 I am paraphrasing the text, which in the present context cannot be adequately discussed; see the lengthy analysis of Yli-Karjanmaa 169–186 with additional philological comments in 260–264.
41 Yli-Karjanmaa 20–25 is right to argue against my superficial treatment of the subject in PATP, which focused on the theme as it occurs in the *Timaeus*.
42 *Somn.* 1.138–139 (§5b, 5c(1, 3), ) , *QE* 2.40 (§5c(3); fr. 7.3 Harris (§5a). For the fourth, *Cher.* 114, Yli-Karjanmaa sees Philo’s use of the term παλιγγενεσία as reflecting Plato’s usage at 70c–d, 72a and 113a and points to a whole list of passages indicating the ‘subtle but clear presence of the dialogue’ in *Cher*. I have found none of these sufficiently clear to include so far, but see the next sub-section on all things being God’s possessions.
44 Yli-Karjanmaa (2015) 246 is right to say, in commenting on Winston’s statement (42) that it is ‘essentially alien to Jewish tradition,’ that we lack evidence on what Hellenistic-Jewish authors apart from Philo thought on the subject.
45 See Yli-Karjanmaa (2015) 150, 243. I intend to devote a further paper to this subject at the meeting of the Philo of Alexandria Seminar in San Antonio in
Lastly there is in the Phaedo a cluster of motifs with a theological focus that we should not allow to go unnoticed. Early on in the discussion Socrates argues against suicide by saying that there are gods that look after us and that human beings are one of the possessions of the gods (62b7–8). Philo would heartily agree with both propositions and there are numerous passages where he expresses these views. The second of them is particularly relevant for the exegesis of the birth of the twins Cain and Abel, for not only does Adam exclaim (Gen 4:1) ‘I have acquired (ἐκτησάμην) a man through God,’ but the etymologies of the two boys’ names are also reminiscent of the theme, Cain meaning ‘possession (κτήσις)’ and Abel ‘he who refers (all things) to God.’ Integral to the two treatises De Cherubim and De sacrificiis is an allegorical dialectic between the mind which regards all things as its own possession and the one which acknowledges them and himself) as belonging to God.46

The goal of the philosophical soul which has been practising death is to depart into the divine invisible world which it resembles and be εὐδαίμων, freed from human ills and dwelling with the gods for the rest of time (81a). In the myth this εὐδαιμονία is described as communion with the divine beings and seeing the heavenly bodies as they really are (111b–c). Such eschatological ideas mesh well with Philo’s conception of the goal of human life and his depictions of the ascent of the soul, whether it joins the dances of the stars or passes beyond the confines of the universe to the intelligible realm where it strains to see God.47 The influence of the Phaedrus myth is much stronger than that of the less developed Phaedo. But when Socrates, about to go on this journey, says that ‘noble is the prize and great the hope’ (114c8), this will have resonated strongly with Philo, for whom the notion of prize or reward (ἄθλον) is a key motif in his presentation of God’s relation with Israel, whether that be the nation or the soul.48 A likely allusion to these words is found at De mutatione nominum 82 where we read: ‘What garland richer in flowers and more fitting for the victorious soul can be woven together than through it is able to see the Existent with clear vision? Surely this is the noble prize (καλὸν ἄθλον) that is set before the athletic soul, that it should be equipped with eyes to gain far-sighted knowledge of the one who is alone worthy of contemplation.’

(e) passages with clustered themes

The final kind of reception that remains to be discussed occurs when a number of themes, not just from the Phaedo but also from other Platonic and non-Platonic sources, are clustered together. We already saw two examples of how allusions to the Phaedrus myth were combined with references to Tartarus.49 Now we will briefly look at four passages, each of which has already mentioned in our discussions so far, in which this phenomenon occurs more extensively.

(1) Legum allegoriae 1.105–108. As we noted above (§5c(2)), Philo ends the first book of his allegorical commentary on the Paradise story with a striking passage on the death of the soul, in which he offers a rich reinterpretation of Plato’s classic account of death in the Phaedo. The soul can actually die while it is still attached to the body, namely by dying to the life of virtue. Philo combines this reference to our dialogue with no less than four other themes: the Pythagorean-Platonic theme of the body as a tomb (σῶμα–σῆμα, cf. Crat. 400c, Gorg. 493a); the Pythagorean-Orphic theme of the penalty-death (ὁ ἐπὶ τιμωρία θάνατος, cf. Crat. 400c, Clement November 2016.

46 See Cher. 65–130, Sacr. 2–3, 71, 97.
47 See for example Det. 87–89, Qē 2.40, Spec. 1.37–40, 3.1–2 (his own experience) etc.
48 Cf. esp. Praem. 3–56 and Contempl. 90, on which see my article (1997).
49 See above §5d(3).
Str. 3.17.1 citing Philolaus); a paraphrase of Heraclitan fragment on living and dying (ζῶμεν τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τεθνήκαμεν δὲ τὸν ἐκείνων βίον, cf. fr. 22B62 DK); and the Aristotelian theme of the body as a corpse to which the soul is tied (νεκρός, cf. Protr. fr. 10b Ross50). On the basis of later parallels Mansfeld, following Burkert, has argued that what we have here is a 'Middle-Platonist cento', i.e. a piece of early Alexandrian Platonist exegesis in which themes from mainly earlier philosophers have been woven in.51 The hypothesis of a written source that Philo drew on has been contested by Zeller with some justification,52 but the deliberate clustering of themes on the basis of Platonic doctrine can hardly be doubted, especially when other Philonic parallels are adduced.53

(2) De gigantibus 13–15. In expounding the ‘angels of God’ in Gen 6:2 according to the Septuagint text before him, Philo identifies them with the δαίμονες of philosophers, which are the souls the fly through the air. Of these some never join up with any parts of the earth, but others descend into the body as if into a river. Of this group some can rise to the surface and fly upwards. These are ‘the souls of those who have been genuinely devoted to philosophy and from beginning to end have practised dying to the life with bodies and participate in the incorporeal and immortal life in the presence of Him that is uncreated and immortal’ (§14). But the others have focused on things that are related to ‘the corpse that we are born with, the body’ (§15). Aside from the mention of the body-corpse, a weak allusion to the Aristotelian theme cited above, all the references here are to Platonic texts, namely the Timaeus (43a), the Phaedrus myth (cf. 249d) and the Phaedo (67e etc.). We should note that this passage shows significant parallels with three other Philonic texts,54 one of which we will discuss next.

(3) Somn. 1.138–139. This text also discusses the incorporeal souls which inhabit the air, this time in connection with Jacob’s ladder (Gen 28:12). Philo writes as follows:

Of these souls some which are closest to the earth and lovers of the body (φιλοσώματοι) descend to be bound to mortal bodies, while others ascend, after having been separated again in accordance with the numbers and times determined by nature. (§139) Of these last (souls) some, longing for the familiar and customary ways of mortal life, take a return course back again. But others, condemning that life as much nonsense, have called the body a prison and a tomb and, escaping as if from an enclosure or a grave and having been lifted upwards with light wings towards the ether, take up their abode in the higher regions forever.

We have already seen that there are five clear allusions to the Phaedo in this brief passage (lover of the body, being bound to the body, much nonsense, body as a prison and as an enclosure). In addition the description of the process of reincarnation in §139 clearly shows the influence of 81c–82b (note especially 81e1–2 ἐπιθυμίᾳ πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσι εἰς σῶμα), although the key term παλινδρομέω is post-Platonic55. This text is Yli-Karjanmaa’s chief witness for Philo’s espousal of the doctrine of reincarnation, and it certainly cannot be denied that it is present in

50 See also the expansion of this theme when discussing the death of Er at Leg. 3.69–72
51 Mansfeld (1985); Burkert (1975).
53 See—aside from Leg. 3.69–74—also Somn. 1.139, QG 1.70, 4.152, Spec. 4.188.
55 Yli-Karjanmaa 251–254, following Mansfeld, argues that it is a terminus technicus for reincarnation.
this depiction of the fate of certain souls. We note that here, when the ascent of the souls is described, there are even clearer references to the *Phaedrus* myth (κούφοις πτεροῖς cf. 248c1, μετεωροπολοῦσι cf. 246c1). It seems to me very likely that this and the previous text, together with the two others, reflect a systematising of Plato’s psychology in a cosmological context that occurred prior to Philo, whether in early Middle Platonism or even earlier.56 Whether it goes back to a single written source cannot be proven.

(4) *Quis heres* 267–276. The final passage differs from the first three and other passages might have been selected in its place. We have already cited it with reference to the themes of the bondage of the body, its role as prison or enclosure and the migration from here to heaven (§5c(3–4)). Philo is giving exegesis of Gen 15:3, where it is said that Abraham’s descendants will be sojourners as if in a foreign land, referring to the four hundred years that the people of Israel would live in Egypt after Joseph—Egypt as we saw being his main allegorical symbol for the body.57 In fact the entire passage can be seen as an allegorical adapation of the main themes of the *Phaedo* and especially the passage 64c–69e in which the soul must escape the incessant demands of the body and the accompanying passions such as desire and fear. Even Philo’s strong emphasis on the liberating and redemptive role of God is anticipated in the Platonic dialogue when Socrates says that we should keep ourselves pure from the body’s influence ‘until God himself releases us’ (67a6). We note too that part of the equipment (ἀποσκευή, cf. the LXX text) that the mind takes with it in its journey back to its fatherland (i.e. heaven) are the virtues of self-mastery and perseverance (§274), variations on the virtues of courage and self-control that Plato emphasises (68c–d). As we already saw,58 the entire treatise is perfused with the influence of Plato’s account, notably also the passage at *Her.* 68–74.59

6. Some conclusions on Philo’s reception on the *Phaedo*

(1) In his excellent analysis of Plutarch’s reception of the *Phaedo*, Geert Roskam reaches the following conclusion: 60

The above discussion has shown that the *Phaedo* exerted a significant influence on Plutarch’s thinking and writing. In a few cases, this influence appears from explicit verbatim quotations, though usually it is much less tangible. However, the most explicit and clearest references do not necessary imply the deepest and most fundamental influence. We saw that the Platonic dialogue is actually used in the most different contexts and for the most different purposes, and that it was a source of inspiration for philosophical arguments and doctrines, specific phrases, narratological composition, argumentative strategies, and so on.

Roskam’s remarks provide an excellent point of comparison for our own conclusions in relation to Philo’s usage. The first half applies perfectly to Philo. We saw that Philo (in contrast to Plutarch) never names the dialogue and that explicit quotations are quite rare in his works. Recognisable allusions are more common, yet even they do not by any means exhaustively represent the fundamental influence of the work. However, the second half of the conclusion do not apply at all exactly. Philo’s interest in the dialogue focuses on a quite narrowly defined set of themes. He is not interested in much of its narrative structure and certainly not in its

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56 As noted by Yli-Karjanmaa 133 citing Xenocrates fr. 236–237 Isnardi Parente. On the combination with the *Phaedrus*, see Méasson (1986) 268–300. There are also parallels in Plutarch’s demonology; see Dillon (1996) 216–219.
57 See above n. 30.
58 See above §5d(2).
59 This is not to excluse the influence of other dialogues such as the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus*; see the splendid synthesis of Harl (1966) 103–129.
60 Roskam (2015) 133.
philosophical arguments and argumentative strategies.

(2) The importance of the *Phaedo* for Philo lies in its presentation of the relation between the body and the soul, the nature of the philosophical life, and what this means for the future of the soul, particularly in and after death. It provides him with powerful images which pervade his allegorical writings. Life in the body on earth is a journey for the soul, a process of migration through learning and virtue. God liberates the soul from its confinement in the body so that it can ascend to the heavens and even reach the ultimate bliss of contemplation of Himself. The *Phaedo* also offers the language of reincarnation which Philo uses to indicate the placement of the soul in the body (though not its creation as such).

(3) Because of this narrow focus, the parts of the Philonic corpus in which the influence of the *Phaedo* occurs is largely confined to the Allegorical Commentary, throughout its full length but especially in the sections on the Paradise story and on Abraham, and also in the allegorical passages in the *Quaestiones*. Outside these writings its influence is much less marked. Because of the way that Philo uses the *Phaedo*, the extent of its influence is virtually impossible to quantify. As a result of the narrow focus, it is clearly less than that of the *Timaeus*. But it is certainly comparable to that of the *Phaedrus*, which also focuses almost exclusively on the fate of the soul. Recalling Yli-Karjanmaa’s distinction between protological and universal accounts that we mentioned at the outset, we could say that for the latter the *Phaedo* has led the way in determining the philosophical language that Philo chooses for the life and journey of the soul once it has been created and resides in the material realm.

(4) What then can we regard as particularly Philonic in his reading of the Platonic text. I would wish to bring forward above all his method of appropriation. The *Phaedo* for Philo is not in the first instance a literary text, nor does it really function as a philosophical text. It is a text that can assist in gaining access to ancient wisdom through its use in the exegesis of scripture. In a sense Philo’s use of the work can be compared to Plato’s own espousal of the παλαιὸς λόγος of Pythagoreans (70c), though there is nothing in Plato comparable to the complexities of Philo’s allegorical system. Furthermore Philo’s Jewish theocentrism is a notable point of differentiation. The *Phaedo* is certainly a deeply religious text, and as we saw, it speaks of divine liberation. But Philo’s identification of the biblical Deity with intelligible being as the ultimate goal of contemplation introduces a decisive new element.

7. What can students of Platonism learn from Philo

We return, finally, to a question posed at the outset. Is there anything that can be learnt about the interpretation of the *Phaedo* in Philo’s own time? Given his quite idiosyncratic use of the Platonic legacy, we might be tempted to reply: not a great deal. But that would be mistaken on at least two accounts.

Firstly, we have seen that there are clear indications that a number of the *Phaedo*’s main themes have been incorporated in a systematising complex of doctrine that draws not only on other key dialogues, but also on Presocratic and other traditions. Although Philo certainly knew the Platonic corpus and the anterior philosophical tradition well enough to make connections between doctrines and themes, it is highly probable, given the parallels between quite separate passages, that he is drawing on features of Platonic interpretation that had developed, whether at Alexandria or elsewhere, in the period before he wrote his treatises.

Secondly, there are Philo’s extended allegories of the history and life of the

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61 These passages are often difficult to read with precision, since the original Greek is obscured by the Armenian translation. Yli-Karjanmaa has done excellent work on these texts.
soul (or intellect). These give rise to some intriguing conundrums. Although we may be certain that Jewish allegory drew inspiration from Greek models, to what extent is this the case for the Platonising history of the soul as we find it in Philo? There are various indications in Philo and elsewhere that by his time the story of Odysseus’ wanderings had been interpreted in this way. After Philo’s time allegorical interpretations of the history of the soul or intellect become a feature of later Platonism, notably in Numenius and the Neoplatonists who knew his works, Plotinus and Porphyry. So perhaps, as occurs more often, Philo may give a glimpse into the future. The figure of Numenius is particularly intriguing, however, because we know that he was interested in the sacred writings of the Jews. Was he also acquainted with Philo? If so, then Philo’s allegories might have exerted some influence on the Platonist tradition. Scholars agree that the evidence for Numenius’ acquaintance with Philo’s thought is equivocal. Harold Tarrant has just written an excellent article on his allegorical interpretation of the *Phaedo*, in which he notes fragments that speak of pleasure as a φρουρά (prison, 62b)) and of the migration of souls into animal bodies (81e–82b). The former theme can be linked to Philonic ideas, the latter cannot. It is time to bring my paper to a close. Possible links between the traditions of Philonic and Platonist allegory will have to be the subject of further research.

Resumen

En una publicación reciente sobre la recepción del *Fedón* de Platón en la Antigüedad no se presta atención alguna a Filón. Sin embargo, es muy interesante la utilización y el conocimiento de este diálogo por el alejandrino y además puede ser una fuente de información acerca de la interpretación que de él se realizaba en su época. Filón no es un filósofo al estilo de Platón y tampoco un seguidor de Platón al modo en que lo fue Plutarco, pero en su exégesis de las Escrituras mosaicas tiene la capacidad de hacer uso de la filosofía como un ‘lenguaje de la razón’ con el fin de de descubrir las profundidades de la sabiduría del texto.

El número de investigaciones sistemáticas sobre nuestro tema es limitado. Mucha mayor atención se ha otorgado al uso del *Timeo* por Filón (Runia) y al mito del *Fedro* (Méasson). No obstante, un estudio reciente de Yli-Karjanmaa sobre si Filón expuso la doctrina de la reencarnación hace numerosas referencias a la utilización del *Fedón* por el sabio judío. La distinción que se efectúa entre las explicaciones de orden protológico por un lado y universal por otro es sumamente útil, el *Timeo* aporta material para exponer las primeras y el *Fedón* exclusivamente sobre las segundas.

El método aplicado en el presente trabajo cuenta con cinco pasos, comenzando por modos directos de análisis de los contenidos del diálogo y siguiendo por temas de comparación más generales. El núcleo de la exposición consta de estos cinco apartados. (1) Filón nunca hace referencias directas al *Fedón* sino solo cita algunos breves fragmentos y alude a frases bien conocidas, tales como ‘cuidarse de estar muertos’ (64a6 etc.). (2) El lenguaje de Platón ha influido sobre Filón, en especial el empleo de adjetivos compuestos (e.g. φιλοσώματος, φιλομαθής, etc.), que el alejandrino amplía a un mayor número de casos. (3) Filón recoge del diálogo una abundante cosecha de imágenes. Cuatro ejemplos se examinan en detalle, cada

63 Fr. 1abc Des Places = Eusebius PE 9.7.1, Origen c.Cels. 1.15, 4.51.
64 See now the judicious article by Sterling (2015), who pushes the evidence as far as it will go.
65 Tarrant (2015), esp. 144–150.
uno de ellos en relación con el tema central del vínculo del alma con el cuerpo: (a) la imagen del cuerpo como una prisión; (b) la imagen del cuerpo como un ropaje del alma; (c) la esclavitud que el alma debe sobrellevar debido a estar unida al cuerpo; y (d) el viaje al extranjero (ἀποδημία) hacia otro lugar (67c), que se corresponde con el tema bíblico de la migración o ‘residencia’, tema central de la interpretación alegórica de la vida de los patriarcas y el destino de Israel. (4) Otros temas generales del diálogo son también importantes para Filón. Solo puede optarse por una selección. (a) Filón adopta la posición de Platón de que la muerte es para el alma una liberación del cuerpo, pero incorpora la idea con creatividad, en pasajes que describen la muerte del alma mientras permanece todavía en el cuerpo. (b) Muchos textos filónicos desarrollan el punto de vista del Fedón sobre lo que implica la liberación del alma, e.g. el rechazo de los sentidos y el alejamiento de las pasiones, tanto como la pureza del intelecto. (c) El destino del alma después de la muerte también le proporciona a Filón valioso material exegetico, e.g. en las referencias al Tártaro. (d) Varios pasajes describen el descenso del alma al cuerpo en términos de metempsicosis o reencarnación. No es conveniente interpretar estos lugares de manera dogmática, puesto que Filón nunca se pronuncia a favor o en contra de esta doctrina (la reencarnación en cuerpos de animales es por cierto inaceptable). (e) Filón demuestra además su aprecio por diversos motivos teológicos del Fedón, que incluyen el tratamiento de la εὐδαιμονία como una comunión con lo divino. (5) Finalmente, otra particularidad de la recepción se produce cuando una cantidad de temas, no solamente del Fedón sino provenientes también de otros diálogos platónicos y de fuentes no-platónicas, se presentan imbricados. Los cuatro pasajes analizados son Leg. 1.105–108, Gig. 13–15, Somn. 1.138–139 and Her. 267–276. Los tres primeros son los que con mayor probabilidad reflejan una sistematización de la sicología platónica en contexto cosmológico. El último pasaje demuestra cómo Filón puede ubicar juntos distintos temas del Fedón en un solo lugar textual, todos referidos a la liberación y migración desde lo corporal.

Se puede concluir en que la utilización del Fedón por Filón es amplia pero circunscripta, se focaliza casi por completo en la alegoría del alma. Por esta razón se sitúa especialmente en el Comentario alegórico y las Quaestiones. Filón no está interesado en la parte narrativa del diálogo ni en las estrategias de la argumentación. El Fedón le aporta imágenes poderosas y temas de la relación del alma con el cuerpo y el mundo material, que el alejandrino puede utilizar en sus exegesis de las Escrituras. También nos puede dar algunos datos sobre la interpretación del diálogo en su propia época. En primer lugar, nos enseña que sus ideas se fueron incorporando a un cuerpo de doctrina que inspiró otros diálogos y tradiciones filosóficas. En segundo lugar, sus alegorías sobre la trayectoria del alma signó la tradición alegórica del Neoplatonismo. Puede haber sido a través de Numenio, pero esto no es por cierto incuestionable.

(translated from the English by Marta Alesso)

Bibliographical references


Socrate e le lacrime dei *philoi*: emozioni e catarsi nel *Fedone*

De Sanctis, Dino

1) Una cornice complessa

Il racconto sulla morte di Socrate che Platone offre nel *Fedone* quale ultima tappa del benefico affresco biografico sull’ἀνήρ ἄριστος dopo l’*Eutifrone*, l’*Apologia* e il *Critone*, è affidato alla voce accorta di un narratore sapiente, testimone diretto dell’evento.

Sin dalla cornice, la strategia narrativa che domina il dialogo tematizza con forza il motivo dell’autopsia di Fedone, la visione diretta di uno spettacolo eccezionale, resa possibile grazie alla presenza del narratore nel carcere di Atene. Echecrate di Fliunte, infatti, domanda a Fedone se abbia incontrato Socrate il giorno nel quale bevve la cicuta, αὐτός, ὦ Φαίδων, παρεγένου Σωκράτει ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἣ τὸ φάρμακον ἔπιεν ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ, o se ne abbia sentito parlare da qualcun altro, ἢ ἄλλου τοῦ ἥκουσας (*Testo 1*). La risposta affermativa dell’interlocutore, αὐτός, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες, conferma implicitamente, con altrettanta forza, che le parole di Fedone saranno pronunciate nel segno della verità. L’αὐτός che apre il dialogo, in maniera così icastica e perentoria, per tutto ciò, da subito si contrappone a una eventuale vulgata avvertita come estranea, senza autorità, a una versione che non può essere comprovata. L’αὐτός che apre il dialogo è la spia inequivocabile del fatto che la fiction sulla morte di Socrate, sin dalle prime battute, per il fruitore interno quanto per quello esterno si propone come un racconto del quale occorre fidarsi senza remore. Autorità speciale a questo *incipit* conferisce, del resto, anche la tradizione poetica che qui risuona come un’eredità alla quale Platone non rinuncia per dipingere il suo Socrate morente, pur nel riformularne i presupposti. Un significativo caso di autopsia, posta sullo stesso piano della ἄκον, il sentito dire, emerge, infatti, per la prima volta dall’*Odisea*, quando, per elogiare la perfezione con la quale Demodoco, l’aedo dei Feaci, ha raccontato l’inganno del cavallo, fatale causa della caduta di Troia, Odisseo che di tale caduta è stato principale protagonista, sottolinea che il canto dell’aedo è stato sviluppato come se Demodoco avesse presenziato all’evento di persona o ne avesse sentito parlare da un altro, ὡς τέ που ἢ αὐτός παρεών ἢ ἄλλου ἁκούσας (VIII 491) (*Testo 1*). Delle due possibilità, entrambe valide per l’aedo dei Feaci, essere presente o sentire la parola altrui, Platone evidentemente sceglie la prima come più conforme e autorevole per il suo Fedone. L’αὐτός che apre il dialogo, l’αὐτός del narratore-spettatore, decisa e voluta σφραγίς, in questo modo, finisce per garantire al dialogo il più profondo e sostanziale livello di verità.

Non a caso, nel giro di poche parole, prima che la διήγησις di Fedone abbia inizio, Echecrate sottolinea che la sua richiesta dipende dal fatto che da ormai molto tempo da Atene all’argiva Fliunte non sia più giunto nessuno capace di offrire notizie dettagliate sull’ultimo giorno di Socrate: poche informazioni si concentrano solo intorno al letale φάρμακον. Echecrate, così, denuncia la mancanza di una σαφήνεια sulla morte di Socrate - forse non sulle sue modalità quanto sul suo significato - tanto da pretendere, ora, da Fedone un racconto chiaro, sviluppato nel modo più chiaro possibile, σαφέστατα, un racconto generoso di particolari che vadano al di là del processo conosciuto grazie a un anonimo τις nel quale certo non è difficile riconoscere la voce e il volto di Platone riflessi nelle pagine dell’*Apologia*. Nella risposta, Fedone riprende il motivo del σαφές ma subito, dopo il racconto sulla nave di Delo, parentesi cronologica che richiama il *Critone*, interreca il σαφές al
problema della ἀκρίβεια, l’esattezza, affermando di nuovo che ricordare Socrate, τὸ μεμνῆσαι Σωκράτους, attività impegnativa e complessa, è un fatto ἥδιστον, offre cioè la forma più compiuta di dolcezza sia nel caso in cui Fedone a parlarne, καὶ ἄντων λέγοντα, sia nel caso in cui Fedone senta a riguardo il racconto di altri, καὶ ἄλλου ακούοντα (58d6-5). Al termine del veloce scambio di domande e di risposte, Echecrate ammette che Fedone troverà in lui e nei suoi anonimi amici un gruppo solidaire di ascoltatori, una sorta di uditorio selezionato e privilegiato ad un tempo, per il quale evidentemente ascoltare il racconto sulla morte di Socrate, condotto nella maniera più perfetta possibile, genererà il più profondo livello di gioia, quel tipo di gioia piena e profonda che già auspica per sé il narratore, accingendosi al suo διηγήσασθαι.

Tra le cornici dei dialoghi di Platone, dunque, quella del Fedone rivela immediatamente la sua complessità a partire da un impegnativo αὐτός incipitario. Sia nelle intenzioni del narratore sia nella richiesta di chi lo ascolta, il racconto è presentato come il resoconto personale e veritiero di un evento che innanzitutto deve essere compreso in vista del suo valore eccezionale. La morte di Socrate offre la possibilità di delineare uno spettacolo straordinario, agito e raccontato ad un tempo, già nella cornice che rivela affinità di fondo, forse non casuali, con l’inizio “a scatole cinesi” del Simposio. Le molte domande di Echecrate (59a-c) - gli atti di Socrate, l’identità degli amici presenti, le parole finali del φιλοσόφος - rivolte a un Fedone desideroso di parlare pongono da subito sulla scena un Socrate particolare, certo il Socrate dell’ultimo giorno, ma anche il Socrate che, circondato dal coro dei suoi amici, si mostra benevolo nel riflettere e nel discutere, nonché attivo nella sua speciale natura di nuovo eroe protrettico che va incontro alla morte.

2) Lo spettacolo di cose mirabili

E’ possibile che il racconto sulla morte di Socrate nel Fedone sia concepito come lo spettacolo di una nuova πρᾶξις tragica, compiuta da un uomo che agisce e parla, per usare, come vedremo, i termini che definiscono la tragedia nella Poetica di Aristotele (6, 1449b 24-29)? E’ possibile cioè che il Fedone si presenti come uno spettacolo osservato di persona dai φίλοι e narrato da Fedone a chi è stato assente e quindi all’umanità intera con un fine paradigmatico? E’ possibile infine che Platone concepisca il suo Fedone quale tragedia protrettica, volta alla purificazione dei παθήματα, pur incardinata nel codice del dialogo? Per rispondere a tali domande è da dire che, come spesso succede nella produzione di Platone, i motivi che abbiamo individuato nell’incipit, luci a volte fioche, a volte lampanti di una scrupolosa regìa, non sono accessori abbellimenti ma testimoniano in direzione di una lettura, per così dire, drammatica del Fedone. Del resto, sono particolari che sorreggono un’architettura narrativa elaborata, avvolta da una tela fitta di programmatiche anticipazioni e ricca di indicazioni drammaturgiche che sembrano essere vere e proprie didascalie d’autore. Iniziamo, dunque, a individuare la trama di questa tela.

Come abbiamo detto, il racconto di Fedone si presenta quale dettagliato resoconto di uno spettacolo eccezionale, perché spettacolo unico per Atene e in fondo anche per il mondo al di fuori di Atene. La fama di quanto è accaduto a Socrate, il κλέος dell’evento, del resto, ha varcato i confini dell’Attica e suscita non poco interesse, come indica il desiderio di Echecrate. Tale resoconto, però, finisce per andare al di là della semplice cronaca e assume, a poco a poco, una prospettiva particolare, volta a richiamare non tanto la modalità della morte, relegata nelle pagini finali, in un attimo veloce con al centro il pietoso gesto di Critone che chiude per sempre gli occhi di Socrate, quanto le parole e gli atti che accompagnano lo scorrere intenso e sublime delle ultime ore del φιλοσόφος. Il racconto di Fedone, in
quest’ottica, sembra coincidere con il racconto di un δρᾶμα, un insieme di azioni e di parole. Non è un caso, ad esempio, che tra le prime domande di Echecrate nella cornice, Echecrate si mostri innanzitutto interessato ai λεχθέντα καὶ πραχθέντα di Socrate (58c7). Un Socrate che parla e agisce, dunque, si profila al lettore sulla κλίνη del carcere e un Socrate che parla e agisce è al centro dell’indagine. A partire da questo momento, non pochi saranno gli elementi che richiamano la dimensione teatrale nel Fedone, come spesso la critica ha sottolineato con acutezza. Da subito, ad esempio, lo ricordo solo incidentalmente, pregnante valore drammatico assume il coro di amici intorno a Socrate: sono voci attonite, solidali e vicine all’ἀνήρ, destinate a essere salvate come i δὶς ἑπτά ateniesi salvati da Teseo, l’eroe nel quale Platone suggerisce di scorgere, tramite una sorta di interpretazione figurale ante litteram, l’antecedente di Socrate σωτήρ. E sempre in rapporto all’atmosfera drammatica che pervade il dialogo, è da ricordare che dinanzi a Echecrate, Fedone sottolinea che l’ultimo giorno di Socrate ha garantito a chi è stato presente all’evento lo spettacolo di cose mirabili, di impatto straordinario, una serie di θαυμάσια provati nell’animo di Fedone e condivisi da tutti (58e159b1) (Testo 2). Osserviamo nel dettaglio questa sezione.

Il modo in cui Socrate si prepara alla morte è di per sé singolare, come ricorda Fedone, visto che il condannato non rivela timore o ritrosia ma si presenta ai φίλοι in una condizione di nobile e intrepida serenità, quale modello perfetto di εὐδαίμων sia nel τρόπος sia nei λόγοι (58e4). Ne deriva una reazione particolare da parte di chi assiste alla scena. Non nasce ἔλεος, immediata e comprensibile pietà, come sarebbe naturale dinanzi al πένθος, né si sviluppa ἡδονή, consueta gioia già provata nelle precedenti discussioni che aprono una finestra sugli incontri, ormai passati, lungo i portici e i ginnasi di Atene. Fedone nota che l’atteggiamento di Socrate, nel suo ultimo giorno di vita, ha creato un ἄτοπον πάθος in chi lo ha assistito, una sensazione insolita, difficile da definire con esattezza, ma fondamentale per comprendere la prospettiva paradigmatica che regola il dialogo. Osservare le ultime ore di Socrate, infatti, genera nell’animo degli amici riuniti nel carcere un’insolita commistione di piacere e di dolore, una ἀήθης κρᾶσις, che codifica e fissa i confini di questo ἄτοπον πάθος e accomuna sul piano emotivo il gruppo di uomini raccolto intorno a Socrate. La stranezza del sentimento ricordato da Fedone e dagli amici si pone in netto contrasto rispetto alla serenità di Socrate. Non a caso, deriva da questo gioco di opposizioni caratteriali un saldo intreccio di δάκρυα e γέλως, lacrime e risa, che connota lo stato d’animo di tutti i φίλοι. Da questo momento nel Fedone Platone tende con particolare insistenza a segnalare le reazioni dei suoi protagonisti come se lacrime e risa diventassero le principali direttrici narrative nella trama generale del racconto e ne segnassero gli snodi decisivi. Tale prospettiva non deve destare meraviglia. Anche attraverso lo sviluppo di queste reazioni e la loro progressiva purificazione dinanzi alla morte di Socrate, è possibile seguire il percorso che rende il Fedone una tragedia nuova.

Innanzitutto nel Fedone è dato spazio al categorico rifiuto della reazione smodata, permeata di sterile pianto, di dolore scomposto e plateale, di lutto eccessivo, in vista di una precisa misura delle emozioni. Non è immotivato, ad esempio, che da subito sia fatta menzione della reazione di Apollodoro che piange copiosamente, dandogli rispetto agli altri φίλοι (59b1-2). Apollodoro, tuttavia, può restare al cospetto di Socrate, come se rappresentasse il livello meno perfetto - ma perfettibile - della corretta reazione emotiva da adottare dinanzi allo spettacolo. Il comportamento da rifiutare con ferma decisione, invece, vede schiava Santippe, congedata dal carcere, mentre, tra lamenti e lacrime, lacera vesti, urla e ripete le solite cose che dicono le donne. La domanda che Fedone rivolve a Echecrate, - γιγνώσκεις γάρ (tu sai come è fatta, non è vero?), già formulata per il pianto di Apollodoro
(59b1), - οἴσθα γάρ ποι τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τὸν τρόπον αὐτοῦ (conosci, vero? l'uomo e il suo modo di comportarsi), in realtà sembra essere diretta al lettore del Fedone, con un livello di consapevole autorialità di Platone che strizza l'occhio, per così dire, al suo destinatario. E’ questo il primo momento nel quale Platone ci introduce di persona nella ricezione del suo δρᾶμα speciale attraverso un’esclusione. Nel particolareggiato ritratto sulle scomposte reazioni emotive di Santippe che viene allontanata dal carcere, interessata alla disperazione vana più che al λόγος salutare e salvifico, è possibile cogliere la codificazione letteraria di una teoria sulla quale Platone torna a riflettere anche nella Repubblica (395d5-e3), quando appare categorico il rifiuto della μίμησις di donne che urlano, strepitano, inorgogliscono contro uomini e dei, appaiono punte dalle vaghezze dell'amore o sono colte dalle doglie e si lasciano irretire nella morsa del dolore e del lutto. Tale è il dettagliato campionario di profili e comportamenti umani di intenso e fallace patetismo richiamato nella Repubblica da Platone, un campionario che la tragedia, soprattutto la tragedia di Euripide con l'amante Fedra, la vanagloriosa Niobe e la disperata Medea, ha ufficializzato sulla scena di Atene. Nel realizzare il nuovo δρᾶμα nel segno di Socrate, invece, nel Fedone Platone suggerisce la necessità di stabilire una fruizione matura del difficile spettacolo, una fruizione che esula da comportamenti sfrenati e inconciliabili con la natura esemplare del suo protagonista. Santippe che il lettore conosce, perché forse ha già visto sulla scena tragica il suo modo di comportarsi riflesso nella natura agitata di patetiche eroine, finisce per rappresentare il livello negativo, da rifiutare nella ricezione auspicabile proposta in filigrana nel dialogo, visto che rischia di invalidare il beneficio che dal δρᾶμα deriva. Il categorico ἀπαγέτω τις αὐτῆν οἴκαδε (60a7) che Socrate ingiunge a Critone ristabilisce nel carcere la possibilità di una ricezione salutare e positiva, mentre esclude per sempre dai θαυμάσια, lo spettacolo meraviglioso e straordinario, lo sguardo esagitato e in verità immaturo di Santippe.

3) Lacrime e catarsi

Al di là del pianto di Santippe, anche gli amici di Socrate da subito, come abbiamo detto, sono colti dalle lacrime ma si ha l’impressine che questi δάκρυα assumano nel dialogo via via una sfumatura diversa rispetto a quella che abbiamo osservato all’inizio, quando il pianto dei φίλοι nasce dalla supposizione che Socrate, andando incontro alla morte, stia soffrendo. I δάκρυα della sera, quando tramonta il sole ad Atene, sono di natura opposta a quelli che solcano il viso dei φίλοι al mattino, quando si stende sulla città un’alba luttuosa. Giunto ormai il momento fatale di bere la cicuta, infatti, i discepoli cercano di trattenere le lacrime ma alla fine non riescono a opporsi ad un’emozione tanto forte. Matura e più consapevole, però, rispetto alla prima scena è ora la prospettiva dei δάκρυα: i φίλοι capiscono che Socrate, morendo, li lascerà orfani per il resto della vita, senza un padre, senza una guida, a meno che non continuino a perseverare con coraggio sulla strada luminosa della φιλοσοφία (116a4-8) (Testo 3). Bevuta la cicuta, del resto, mentre Apollodoro è ancora in preda alle lacrime, secondo un’accuratissima Ringkomposition, Fedone che ha cercato di nascondere il suo pianto, non riesce a trattenere la sua commozione. Si tratta del momento decisivo e improvviso della comprensione: ora Fedone capisce finalmente di dover piangere solo per se stesso e per la sua sventurata τύχη e non per un destino che in verità Socrate ha accettato da subito (Testo 3). La parola di Socrate, tramite un rimprovero necessario rivolto ai suoi amici θαυμάσιοι, uomini dallo strano comportamento, ristabilisce il corretto ordine emotivo da seguire, nel segno di una riflessiva vergogna che al termine prende il coro di amici intorno al
Socrate ammonisce i suoi φίλοι, spiegando la necessità di raggiungere la ἡσυχία e mantenere un comportamento καρτερό (117d-e). Le lacrime finali del Fedone dunque si pongono nel dialogo quale testimonianza concreta di una consapevolezza dell’errore che, all’inizio del dialogo, i φίλοι hanno commesso nel piangere l’imminente morte del φιλόσοφος, come ha rivelato soprattutto un eccessivo Apollodoro.

Del resto, una prova decisiva del nuovo pianto che si fa strada nel dialogo è garantita già durante la scena del messo mandato dagli Undici (116b8-d7) (Testo 4). Si tratta di un uomo che non da molto tempo è accanto a Socrate, un uomo definito da Socrate ottimo amico, capace di piangere γενναίως, un uomo che non può rimproverare nulla a Socrate, vista la natura eccezionale del condannato. Un uomo, dunque, che non riesce a trattenere le lacrime, pensando alla morte di colui che ai suoi occhi appare come il più gentile, il più mite e il migliore tra chi ha dimorato in quelle celle. Non è forse errato pensare che questo messo in fondo rappresenti la prospettiva del lettore, di chi, pur da poco venuto a contatto con Socrate, ne ha compreso la decisiva importanza grazie alle sue parole e al dialogo continuo con lui. Non è un caso, dunque, che il congedo del messo degli Undici sia sviluppato ancora nel segno di un pianto dirotto che, a differenza di quello di Santippe, Socrate, alla fine della sua vita, accetta e osserva con serenità (116c1-d3). Il commiato che Socrate rivolge al messo, il sommesso χαῖρε, sembra essere il congedo che Platone fa rivolgere da parte di Socrate al lettore del Fedone che sinora ha frequentato Socrate e ha intrattenuto con lui un benefico διαλέγεσθαι, imparandone la necessaria utilità.

Si ha l’impressione che tramite la reazione dei φίλοι di Socrate negli ultimi attimi della sua vita, Platone indichi suggerire al lettore una corretta visione del reale, modellata sull’uomo esemplare per eccellenza. Socrate riesce a guidare verso l’άγαθον l’umanità, purificandola, con la sua nobile serenità e con le sue parole gioevoli. Del resto, nel Fedone, mentre Socrate è chiamato a seguire il destino assegnatogli, come direbbe un ἀνὴρ τραγικός (115a3-6), il campo semantico della κάθαρσις è sintomatico e decisivo più che in ogni altro dialogo, come se Platone avesse inteso di segnalare la specifica centralità. La grande lezione che Aristotele offre nella Poetica nel momento in cui definisce la tragedia quale mimesi di un’azione nobile che arriva alla catarsi dei παθήματα attraverso ἔλεος e φόβος (1449b24-28) ha, in questo modo, le sue premesse nella vicenda universale della morte di Socrate. Non sorprende che nel Fedone, anche il processo di catarsi sia teorizzato in prospettiva paradigmatica e protrettica. Socrate innanzitutto spiega che il processo di separazione dell’anima dal corpo - che culminerà con la morte - altro non è se non una purificazione, una κάθαρσις per l’appunto, dalla dissennatezza del corpo, la ἀκολασία, al fine di conquistare la verità. Ma non solo. Nello sviluppare questo ragionamento, Socrate arriva a rifiutare anche lo scambio dei piaceri con i piaceri, dei timori con i timori, dei dolori con i dolori per raggiungere la vera virtù. La moneta corretta per uno scambio corretto è la φρόνησις, tramite la quale si ottiene il coraggio, ἀνδρεία, la temperanza, σωφροσύνη, e la giustizia, δικαιοσύνη, sistema etico inteso come supremo strumento in grado di portare a compimento la purificazione, κάθαρσις, dai falsi piaceri, dai timori e dai dolori (69b-c). In questo modo è possibile comprendere, nel finale del dialogo (118a15-17) (Testo 5), il profilo esemplare di Socrate ἄριστος, eroe φρονιμώτατος e δικαιότατος, il compagno migliore del quale Fedone, i suoi amici e l’umanità tutta hanno potuto avere un’esperienza sostanziale in quanto esperienza intellettuale in chiave etica, ἀνδρός, ὡς ἡμεῖς φαὶμεν ἄν, τῶν τότε ὑπειράθημεν ἀρίστου. Apprendere e praticare la φρόνησις e la δίκη di Socrate, ἄριστος ἄν, purifica l’uomo che è davvero vicino al φιλόσοφος e per questo è destinato a beneficiare per sempre di una guida che mai lo lascerà orfano (118a15-17).
1. Trilogies in Plato’s Dialogues

A small portion of Plato’s works can be viewed as forming groups, such as the Timaeus and the Critias, or the Sophist and the Statesman, which were to form two trilogies with a third work that was never written, the Hermocrates and the Philosphus, respectively. Within the early dialogues, the Crito, set in Socrates’ prison, can be viewed as a continuation of the Apology, and was probably written after it. In terms of its content, the Phaedo is a continuation of the Crito, but in contrast with all the works mentioned above, it was composed at least ten years after the Apology and the Crito, when Plato came back from his first journey to Sicily (c. 388), at a different stage of his literary and doctrinal career. Indeed, the Phaedo belongs to his mature period, in which his style, images and ideas are much more complex than in the first dialogues. Due to this chronological hiatus, Plato strove to connect the Phaedo with these early works by introducing characters, scenes and themes tackled in them.

Regarding the characters, Crito is cited as the first of Socrates’ friends in the Apology (33d; cf. 38b), is the main character (after Socrates) in the homonymous dialogue, and in the Phaedo he is the closest person to Socrates at his death and makes arrangements for his corpse (118a).

πάντως δὲ πάρεισιν αὐτῶν πολλοὶ ἑνταυθῶι οὗς ἐγὼ ὁρῶ, πρῶτον μὲν Κρίτων ὁ οὗτοσί, ἐμὸς ἡλικιώτης καὶ δημότης, Κριτόβουλος τοῦδε πατήρ, ἔπειτα Λυσανίας ὁ Σφήττιος, Ἀισχύνου τοῦδε πατήρ, ἔτι δ’ Ἀντιφῶν ὁ Κηφισιεὺς οὗτοσί, Ἐπιγένους πατήρ, ἄλλοι τοῖνοι οὗτοι ἄν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ διατριβῇ γεγόνασιν, Νικόστρατος Θεοζώτιδου, ἀδελφὸς Θεοδότου – καὶ οὐ γὰρ Θεόδωτος τετελεύτηκεν, ὡστε οὐκ ἂν ἐκεῖνος γε αὐτοῦ καταδεηθείη – καὶ Παράλιος ὁδʼ, ὁ Δημιοῦδοκοί, οὗ ἦν Θεάγις ἀδελφός ὁδʼ Ἀδείμαντος, ὁ Ἀρίστωνος, οὗ ἀδελφὸς οὗτοι Πλάτων, καὶ Αἰαντόδωρος, οὗ Ἀπολλόδωρος ὁδ´ ἀδελφός, (Ap. 33d-34a)

{ΕΥ.} Ἐτυχον δὲ, ὦ Φαίδων, τίνες παραγενόμενοι;
{ΦΑΙΔ.} Οὕτως τε δὴ ὁ Ἀπολλόδωρος τῶν ἐπιχωρίων παρῆν καὶ Κριτόβουλος καὶ ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔτι Ἐρμογένης καὶ Ἐπιγένης καὶ Αἰσχύνης καὶ Ἀντισθένης· ἦν δὲ καὶ Κτήσιππος ὁ Παιανίευς καὶ Μενέξενος καὶ άλλοι τινὲς τῶν ἐπιχωρίων. Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἤρθενε. {ΕΥ.} Ξένοι δὲ τίνες παρῆσαν;
{ΦΑΙΔ.} Ναὶ, Σιμμίας τέ γε ὁ Θηβαῖος καὶ Κέβης καὶ Φαιδώνδης καὶ Μεγαρόθεν Εὐκλείδης τε καὶ Τερψίων.
{ΕΥ.} Τί δὲ; Ἀρίστιππος καὶ Κλεόμβροτος παρεγένοντο; {ΦΑΙΔ.} Οὐ δήτα· ἐν Αἰγίνῃ γὰρ ἐλέγοντο εἶναι. (Phaed. 59b)

Significantly, these are also the only passages in Plato’s works, together with Ap. 38b1, in which he names himself, which seems a deliberate resource to connect these works.

We will deal with three scenes in Phaedo that re-elaborate previous passages.

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1 Πλάτων δὲ ὁδ´, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ Κρίτων καὶ Κριτόβουλος καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος κελεύουσι με τριάκοντα μνῆμασθαι, αὕτω δ’ ἐγγυόμεθα.
from the Apology and the Crito:
- Socrates' dreams in Ap. 33c, Crit. 44ab and Phaed. 60e;
- escaping the body (Phaed. 61c-62c) and escaping the prison (Crito);
- the eschatological myth in the Phaedo (106c-114c) as an expansion of Ap. 40e-41e.

2. Socrates’ dreams
In the three works considered here, Socrates receives divine messages by means of dreams, whose obscure meaning he tries to unravel through conjectures.

In Phaed. 60e Socrates speaks about frequent dreams in which he is compelled to compose and practise music:

\[\text{πολλάκις μοι φοιτῶν τὸ αὐτὸ ἐνύπνιον ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι βίῳ, ἄλλοτρ ἐν ἀλλή ὡς φαινόμενον, τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ λέγον, "Ὦ Σῶκρατες," ἔφη, "μουσικὴν ποιεί καὶ ἔργαζον."}\]

He had interpreted these dreams as an exhortation to philosophy, as the most sublime music, but in his last hours fears he may be wrong and takes them literally, so he composes poetry in honour of Apollo and puts Aesop’s fables into verse. In addition, this exhortation to eschew logic and give way to artistry (for this is the ample meaning of μουσική, any activity inspired by the Muses) serves as an incentive for Socrates to crown his demanding philosophical inquiries on the soul’s immortality with an exercise of poetic imagination such as the ambitious eschatological myth, whose subject, the post mortem destiny of souls, is beyond the reach of reason.

This scene echoes allusions to Socrates’ dreams in the Apology and the Crito. In Ap. 33c Socrates mentions oracles, dreams and signs in which the divinity encourages him to examine who is wise and who is not:

\[\text{Ἀλλὰ διὰ τί δὴ ποτε μετήμενοι χαίρουσί τινες πολῶν (33c) χρόνων διατίρμοντες; ἀκηκόατε, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναίοι, πᾶσαν ὑμῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐγὼ εἶπον· ὅτι ἀκούοντες χαίρουσιν ἐξεταζομένοις τοῖς ὀἰομένοις μὲν εἶναι σοφοῖς, οὐσὶ δὲ ὧν ἐστὶ γὰρ ὁμοίως ἂνθρώπων. Εἰς δὲ τούτῳ, ὡς ἐν τοῖς οἰομένοις, οὖν προστέταξε πράτειν καὶ ἐκ μαντείων καὶ ἐξ ἐνυπνίων καὶ παντὶ τρόπῳ ὧν ποτε καὶ ἀλλήθεια μοίρα ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὅπιον προσέταξε πράτειν.}\]

Since these oracles and dreams prescribe an intellectual activity, testing the real wisdom of some individuals, the dream alluded to in the Phaedo reverses this pattern somewhat, for they instruct the dreamer to practice an artistic activity, closer to myths than to logos.

Even more interesting is Socrates’ dream in Crit. 44ab, in which a beautiful woman in white robes announces to him, quoting Iliad 9.363: “To the pleasant land of Phthia on the third day thou may come”.

\[\text{ΣΩ.} \text{ Ὡς τοίνυν τῆς ἐπιούσης ἡμέρας οἶμαι αὐτὸ ἥξειν ἀλλὰ τῆς ἑτέρας. τεκμαίρομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἐνυπνίων ἐκ πρότερον ταύτῃ τῆς νυκτός καὶ κινδυνεύεις ἐν καιρῷ τινι οὐκ ἐγείρας καὶ κινδυνεύεις ἐν καιρῷ τινι οὐκ ἐγείρας.}\]

\[\text{ΚΡ.} \text{ Ἡν δὲ δὴ τὸ ἐνυπνίον; } \text{ΣΩ.} \text{ Ἐδόκει τίς μοι γυνὴ προσελθοῦσα καλὴ καὶ εὔειδὴς, λευκὰ ἰμάτια ἔχουσα, καλέσαι με καὶ εἰπεῖν· "Ὦ Σῶκρατες, ἶματι κεὶ κριτάτω Φθίνῃ ἐρίζωλον ἰκοίο."}\]

2 Another theme that appears in the three works is the bail Criton wants to pay to ensure that Socrates will not escape: Ap. 38b 6-9, Crit. 44e1-45c4 and Phaed. 115d5-e2.
4 Roochnik 2001, 257: “Without μῦθος, philosophy would present itself in the misleading guise of hyperwakefulness, of pure or systematic rationality… to pursue the goal of pure rationality is to partake not in a secure and rationally grounded project, but in the dream of sheer wakefulness.”

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As in the dream reported in the *Phaedo*, the sentence is preceded by the vocative “Socrates”. For him, the verse means that he will not die for another three days, the time the Athenian boat will need to arrive to travel to Delos and back. Since this verse is pronounced by Achilles in the *Iliad* and Phthia is his fatherland, in the dream this destination represents death, through which Socrates will reach his real home.

Kramer (1988, 194) astutely observed that 47 lines after the quotation, Achilles reveals that his mother has told him that two fates are available to him: to stay in Troy, lose his life and attain an imperishable glory, or to flee the war and return to his homeland (9.410-16). The quotation introduces a mythical precedent of the situation of Socrates in the *Crito*: he can escape to Thessaly and save his life (as Crito proposes to him) or stay in prison and thus be executed and earn immortal fame. He observes that in Ap. 28bd Socrates recalls and paraphrases a similar passage of the *Iliad* (18.96-104) in which Thetis foretells Achilles that he will soon die in battle if he decides to avenge Patroclus, and her son prefers death to living as a coward. Socrates presents himself as a new Achilles that chooses to pursue virtue and honor at the price of death. Considering this parallel, for Kramer the dream message can be taken as a real possibility for Socrates to be in Phthia in three days. In 45c Crito tells him that, should he wish to go to Thessaly, he has friends there who can protect him.

In my opinion, the dream advises Socrates not to escape to Thessaly (the apparent meaning), but to remain in prison and face his execution, alluded to by Phthia, which recalls φθίσις, ‘extinction’ and φθίω, ‘to perish’, as Lambinus suggested (followed by Adam 1891, 27). Just as Phthia was the homeland of Achilles, the realm of death is the true homeland of Socrates. In fact, according to D. L. 2.5.35, Socrates interpreted the dream in the sense that he would die in three days. Although in the *Crito* the death of Socrates is not discussed, the poetic line serves to connect the dialogue with the *Apology*: in both works the philosopher takes a courageous decision (to tell the truth and not to abandon the prison) that implies his death.

3. Escaping the body and escaping the prison

In *Phaed*. 61c-62c, just after the allusion to his dreams, Socrates speaks to Cebes about suicide: any philosopher would wish to die, but it is not licit to commit violence against oneself. Socrates mentions the tenet taught in the mysteries that we are in a kind of prison (the body), from which we are not permitted to escape: ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν ἀπορρήτω, λέγομεν περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος, ὡς ἐν τινι φρουρα ἔσμεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οὐ δεῖ δὴ ἑαυτὸν ἐκ ταύτης λύειν οὐδ› ἀποδιδράσκειν, μέγας τέ τίς μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ ῥᾴδιος διδεῖν· οὐ μέντοι ἀλλὰ τόδε γέ μοι δοκεῖ, ὡ Ἐβδης, εὐ λέγεσθαι, τὸ θεοὺς εἶναι ἡμῶν τοὺς ἐπιμελουμένους καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν τῶν κτημάτων τοῖς θεοῖς εἶναι.

The mysteries (ἀπόρρητα, rites that cannot be revealed) referred to are Orphic, which taught that, when alive, men are in a prison or, even worse, in a tomb, as expressed in the slogan “σῶμα-σῆμα”: “the body, a tomb”, mentioned by Plato in *Cra.* 400c 1-9 and *Grg.* 493a 1-38. Since we are paying a penalty by inhabiting our bodies (the ‘Titanic guilt’ that is common to all men), to commit suicide would amount

5 On this dream, see Kramer 1988. The theme of the boat’s return is also treated in *Phaed.* 58ac and 59e.
6 Burnet 1924, 177-178: “The words are spoken by Achilles, who means that he can get ‘home’ in three days, and that is what Socrates understands the dream to mean”.
8 See Bernabé 1995 and 2011.
to escaping from prison before finishing the sentence. Although for Socrates the teachings of the mysteries are usually absurd, he finds this particular tenet useful, and quotes them as a religious authority supporting his view.

What we have here is probably the transference of an idea tackled in the Crito: the main debate in this dialogue is whether it is legitimate to flee from prison, which Socrates denies. Drawing a parallel, in the Phaedo Socrates also considers it illicit to abandon the prison of the body, since our lives belong to the gods (62b). What was a particular option for Socrates is elevated to a general problem that concerns every man, whether one is entitled to liberate his own soul. In both cases the conclusion is that to escape is unfair.

4. The eschatological myth in the Phaedo as an expansion of Ap. 40e-41e

In the final part of his speech in Ap. 40e-41d Socrates expounds his beliefs regarding the afterlife. Many of his conceptions are reworked and expanded in the eschatological myth at the end of the Phaedo (106c-114c).9

Socrates mentions two competing conceptions of death (40cd), that it is like being nothing and having no perception (οἷον μηδὲν εἶναι μηδὲ αἴσθησιν μηδεμίαν μηδενὸς ἔχει τὸν τεθνεῶτα), or that it is like a voyage of the soul to another place (μεταβολή τις τυγχάνει οὖσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον).10 The latter seems to imply that perception is preserved, which would allow Socrates to speak with famous figures from the past. In the Phaedo, only the second option is considered, in very similar terms:

- 61e: καὶ γὰρ ἴσως καὶ μάλιστα πρέπει μέλλοντα ἀποδημεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς ἁλίσκουσας τῆς ἀπόδημας τῆς ἐκεί.
- 67c: ἤ γε ἢ ἀπόδημα ἤ νῦν μοι προστεταγμένη
- 117c: ἀλλ' εὑρήσει οὕτως γε ποιμνο ἡ μετοίκησιν τὴν ἐνθένδε ἀποδημεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνακοίμησις.

In Ap. 41ab he confesses to hoping to meet fair judges and eminent men from the Greek past in Hades and to converse with them:

εἰ δ' αὖ οἷον ἀποδημήσας ἐστιν ὁ θάνατος ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον, καὶ ἀληθῆ ἐστιν τὰ λογίαν, ὡς ἄρα ἐκεί εἰς πάντας οἱ τεθνεῶτες, τί μείζον ἄγαθον τούτου εἶναι, ὡς ἄνδρες δικασταὶ; εἰ γάρ τις ἀφικόμενος εἰς Αἴδου, (41a) ἀπαλλαγεῖς τούτων τῶν φασκόντων δικαστῶν εἶναι, εὐρήσει τοὺς ἡ ἀληθῶς δικαστάς, οὐτε καὶ λέγονται ἐκεῖ δικάζειν, Μίνως τε καὶ Ραδάμανθυς καὶ Αἰακὸς καὶ Τριπτόλεμος καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῶν ἡμῖθέων δίκαιοι ἐγένοντο ἐν τῷ ἑαυτῶν βίῳ, ἀρα φαύλη ἂν εἴη ἡ ἀπόδημια; ἢ αὖ Ὁρφεῖ συγγενέσθαι καὶ Μουσαίων καὶ Ἡσίόδου καὶ Ὁμήρου ἐπὶ πόσῳ ἂν τοις δέξατο· ἢ ὡς μέν γὰρ παλλάκις ἠθέλω τεθνέναι εἰ ταύτῃ· ἀποδημήσας τῷ ἅγεστῷ τῇ Θάλαμῳ καὶ Λάιαντι τῷ Ἐλαμίνου καὶ εἰ τῇ ἄλλῃ τῶν παλαιῶν διὰ κρίσιν ἄδικον τέθνηκε, ἀντιπαραβάλλοντι τὰ ἐμαυτοῦ πάθη πρὸς τὰ ἐκείνων.

Something similar can be read in Phaed. 63b, where he admits that after dying he is convinced to meet wise and good gods and better men than those on earth, and for this reason he feels no anger at dying:

ἐγὼ γὰρ, ἐφη, ὃ Σιμμία τε καὶ Κέρης, εἰ μὲν μὴ ἤσυχως μὴν πρῶτος μὲν παρὰ θεοὺς ἄλλους σοφοὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθούς, ἐπείτα καὶ παρὰ αὐτῶν ἀνθρώπους τετελευτηκότας ἀμείνους τῶν ἐνθάδε, ἰδίους ἂν οὐκ ἀγανακτῶν τῷ Θανάτῳ.


10 Cf. also 40e: εἰ δ' αὖ οἷον ἀποδημήσας ἐστιν ὁ θάνατος ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον.
Next he affirms feeling hopeful about death (ὥστε διὰ ταῦτα οὖν ὁμοίως ἀγανακτῶ, ἀλλ’ εὔελπίς εἰμί εἰναί τι τοῖς τετελευτηκόσι καί, ὧσπερ γε καὶ πάλαι λέγεται, πολὺ ἄμεινον τοῖς ἁγαθοῖς ἢ τοῖς κακοῖς, 63c), in the same way as at the end of the Apology (40c: Ἐννοήσωμεν δὲ καὶ τήδε ὡς πολλῇ ἐλπίς ἐστίν ἁγαθόν αὐτό εἶναι, sc. τὸ τεθνάναι)11, and which he advises to the judges in the final message of his speech, a true compendium of his principles (41cd: Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑμᾶς χρῆ, ὥσπερ δικασταί, εὐελπίδας εἶναι πρὸς τὸν θάνατον, καὶ ἐν τῷ τούτῳ διανοεῖσθαι ἀληθές, ὦτι οὐκ ἐστίν ἄνδρυ ἁγαθῷ κακῶν οὐδὲν ὧντε ἔως ὤστε τελευτήσαντι). The reason for his confidence is that he is convinced that the good man will suffer no evil after death. Since he was unable to prove this belief in the Apology, he dedicates a lot of space in the Phaedo to expounding an eschatological myth to show that there is a divine justice after death according to which fair men will be rewarded in Hades. There is, however a significant difference, since in Ap. 40e-41e Socrates mentions several mythical denizens of Hades, but in the myth expounded in the Phaedo no hero nor god is named, no doubt to bestow a scientific vein to the passage.

5. Apology-Crito-Phaedo as a Trilogy

Plato’s efforts to link the Phaedo thematically with the Apology and the Crito through the inclusion and expansion of key elements results in the formation of a kind of trilogy on condemnation, imprisonment and death, embodied in the persona of Socrates. In a way, the Phaedo functions as a rehabilitation of Socrates before public opinion. Thus, Socrates’ arguments in the dialogue can be viewed, not so much as a continuation of the unsuccessful speech that prompted his execution, but as a rewriting of it, from a much more ambitious and philosophical perspective, for it is directed towards a select and more qualified audience than an Athenian popular jury, in the form of his disciples, used to hearing Socrates and other philosophers such as Philolaus, in the case of Cebes and Simmias. When the latter object to Socrates’ idea that we are possessions of the gods and thus we cannot commit suicide (62c-63a), it seems like an accusation, since Socrates interprets their words as demanding a tribunal-style defense, and expresses his desire to be more convincing for them than for the judges, in an evident allusion to the Apology:

Δίκαια, ἔφη, λέγετε· οἶμαι γὰρ ὑμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι χρῆ με πρὸς ταῦτα ἀπολογήσασθαι ὥσπερ ἐν δικαστήριῳ.
Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ἔφη ὁ Σιμμίας.
Φέρε δῆ, ἦ δ’ ὄς, πειραθῶ πιθανῶτερον πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀπολογήσασθαι ἢ πρὸς τοὺς δικαστὰς. (63b)

Simmias thinks that the exposition of Socrates’ ideas is simultaneously his defence (ἀπολογία, 63d), and Socrates calls Simmias and Cebes “judges” in 64d, just before explaining why a philosopher must be confident regarding death. On finishing his intervention he hopes to have been more persuasive than before his judges:

ταῦτα οὖν ἔγω, ἔφη, ὁ Σιμμία τε καὶ Κέβης, ἀπολογοῦμαι, ὡς εἰκότως ὑμᾶς τε ἀπολείπαν καὶ τοὺς ἐνθάδε δεσπότας οὐχ ἕξοδον οὐδ’ ἀγανακτῶ, ἡγούμενος κακεὶ οὐδὲν ἢττον ἢ ἐνθάδε δεσπότας τε ἁγαθοῖς ἐντεύξεσθαι καὶ ἑταίρους—εἴ τι οὖν ὑμῖν πιθανῶτέρος εἰμι ἐν τῇ ἀπολογίᾳ ἢ τοῖς Αθηναίων δικασταί, εὖ ἂν ἔχοι. (69de)

This then, Simmias and Cebes, is the defence I offer to show that it is reasonable for me not to be grieved or troubled at leaving you and the rulers I have here, because I believe that there, no less than here, I shall find good rulers and friends. If

11 Rowe 100 compares both passages: “If we put these two passages together, as I myself think it clear that Plato intended us to do, the effect is to make the Phaedo take up, and develop, the rhetoric of the Apology passage.”
now I am more successful in convincing you by my defence than I was in convincing my Athenian judges, it is well."

The words point to the last part of the Apology, where Socrates expresses his hopes to meet more just people in Hades than those who have judged him, and considers the height of happiness as having the opportunity to dialogue with illustrious poets and heroes of the past (40e-41c).

At the end of the Phaedo, a kind of new Apology, Plato even pronounces a verdict, this time a just one: Socrates, far from being an enemy of the city, was the best, the most sensible and fairest of his contemporaries:

"Ὡς η ἐκείνη, ὦ Ἐξέχρατες, τοῦ ἐταίρου ἡμῖν ἐγένετο, ἄνδρός, ὡς ἡμεῖς φαίμεν ἄν, τῶν τότε ἐν ἐρείπηθεν ἄριστον καὶ ἄλλας φρονιμωτάτου καὶ δικαιοτάτου. (118a)

His last words recalling his debt to Asclepius (118a: Ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα· ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε) probably function to portrait him for posterity as a pious man who dedicates his last thought to thanking a god for a past favour, thus refuting Meletus' accusation of introducing new divinities and not acknowledging the gods of the city (24cd), which led to his death.

6. A Tragic Trilogy?

This trilogy could be compared to a tragic trilogy by Aeschylus, in which the same character suffers various calamities before eventually being liberated. In fact, scholars have recognized significant structural or thematic elements of the tragedy in some of Plato's works, including the Apology and the Phaedo12.

In the final part of the Phaedo, there are at least three references to tragedy, two of them to Aeschylus:

1. In the beginning of the myth on the afterlife, Socrates alludes to a passage from an Aeschylean tragedy to refute it:

 έστι δὲ ἄρα ἡ πορεία οὐχ ὡς ὁ Αἰσχύλου Τήλεφος λέγει· ἐκεῖνος μὲν γὰρ ἁπλῆν οἷμόν φησιν εἰς Ἁιδους φέρειν (fr. 239 Radt), ἡ δὲ ἀπλὴ ἀπότελε σεὶς καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσθητε (107a4-108a4).

Aeschylus probably expressed the traditional view that the gates of Hades are always open13: all one has to do to get there is die. Plato distances himself from this mythical and naïve conception offering a more scientific and complex account of the underworld, with so many nooks and paths that the souls need a daimon as a guide.

2. Once Socrates finishes the description of his myth, he pronounces a sentence that seems to initiate the final dramatic scene:

 ἐμὲ δὲ νῦν ἢδη καλεῖ, φαίη ἂν ἀνὴρ τραγικός, ἡ εἱμαρμένη, καὶ σχεδόν τί μοι ὥρα τραπέσθαι πρὸς τὸ λουτρόν· δοκεῖ γὰρ δὴ βέλτιον εἶναι λουσάμενον πιεῖν τὸ φάρμακον. (115a)

He may be suggesting that his end is similar to a tragedy, and that, by consequence, he has to speak as if he were a tragic actor14. The expression has been

12 Coulter 1933 has seen in the Apology the structure of a tragedy and Darchia 2008 analyzes the interrelation between the Phaedo and the tragedy. Harman 1986 deals with the Republic as tragedy. On the connection of the Symposium with tragedy and comedy, see Clay 1975. Kuhn 1941 and 1942 offers a magnificent study on Plato and the tragedy, a Patterson 1982 studies the influence of comedy and tragedy in Plato’s style.


14 Perhaps imitating this end, which foreshadows some of the crucial concerns of the stoics, Zenon
compared to *Alcestis* 254-255, where Alcestis imagines that the ferryman of the dead calls her: ἔχων χέρ' ἐπὶ κοντῷ Χάρων / μ' ἥδη καλεῖ· Τί μὲλεῖς?15

3. A bit further (117b), just before drinking the cup with the hemlock, Socrates ironically asks the person that has brought the poison if it is licit to do a libation with it for a god. In order to make the irony clear, he adopts an artificially grave expression: he eyed him like a bull, as was his costume (ὥσπερ εἰώθη ταυρηδὸν ὑποβλέψας πρὸς τὸν ἀνθρώπον)?¹⁶. What is significant is that Plato has taken this expression from Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, where Aeschylus looks at his rival Euripides this way before the literary contest between them (Ἐξέλεψε γούν ταυρηδὸν ἄγκυψας κάτω, 804). Socrates is imitating the severe gesture of the old master of tragedy following the exaggerated portrait of Aristophanes, thus making a comic brushstroke in the picture of his tragic last moments.

The end of Socrates’ trilogy appears mournful, as the main character dies, but according to a deeper interpretation, it is actually a liberation, since Socrates forever abandons the prison of the body. It follows a schema similar to that of the Prometheus trilogy attributed to Aeschylus, in which the *Prometheus Bound* becomes *Prometheus Unbound* thanks to Zeus’ mercy.

If we had to look for a satyr play to complete the “tragic” trilogy of *Apology-Crito-Phaedo*, we might consider the *Symposium*, where the wine arouses Dionysian associations, there are comic elements (such as Aristophanes’ hiccup and the myth he tells) and Socrates is described as a silenus and a satyr by Alcibiades (215ac)?¹⁷:

φημὶ γὰρ δὴ ὁμοίωσαν αὐτὸν εἶναι τοῖς σιληνοῖς τοῖς τοῖς ἐν τοῖς ἔρμομυλοις καθημένοις, οὐσίων ἐργάζονται οἱ δημιουργοὶ σύριγγας ἢ αὐλοὺς ἔχοντας, οἱ διχάδε διοιχθέντες φαίνονται ἐνδοθεῖν ἀγάλματα ἔχοντες θεῶν. καὶ φημὶ αὐτῷ ἐοικέναι αὐτὸν τῷ σατύρῳ τῷ Μαρσύᾳ. ὅτι μὲν οὖν τὸ γε εἶδος ὅμοιος εἶ τούτοις, ὦ Σωκράτει, οὐδ› αὐτὸς ἄν που ἀμφισβητήσαις.

This is, of course, no more than an attractive possibility, since the *Symposium* need not to be read in reference to the other three works. However, its setting in the celebration of Agathon’s victory in the tragic contest at the City Dionysia, the presence of Aristophanes as a distinguished guest and speaker, and Socrates’ puzzling statement at the end of the work that “writing comedy required the same qualities in an author as writing tragedy, and the true tragic poet was a comic poet also” (223d)?¹⁸, in a likely allusion to the platonic dialogues, invite us to read this literary genre as a new kind of drama and to recognize in it tragic, comic and satyr elements which were familiar to the attendees of those spectacles.

Resumen

Una pequeña porción de las obras de Platón pueden considerarse continuación de otras, como el *Timeo* y el *Critias*, o el *Sofista* y el *Político*, que iban a formar dos trilogías con una tercera obra que nunca se escribió, el *Hermócrates* y el *Filósofo*, respectivamente. Dentro de los diálogos tempranos, el *Critón*, ambientado en la prisión de Sócrates, puede tomarse como continuación de la *Apología*. En cuanto a su contenido, el *Fedón* es una continuación del *Critón*, pero en contraste con las dos obras mencionadas, fue compuesto al menos diez años después de ellas. Debido a este hiato cronológico, Platón se esforzó en conectar el *Fedón* con estas dos obras introduciendo personajes, escenas y temas tratados en ellas. Así, Critón aparece en of Citium, according to D. L. 7.28, pronounced a verse from the *Niobe* of the tragic poet Timotheus before choking himself: ἔρχομαι· τί μ’ αὔεις; “I come! Why are you calling me?”.

15 Suggestion of Wilamowitz, quoted by Sansone 1996, 147, who follows him.
16 Cf. 86d: Διαμιζόσας οὖν ὁ Σωκράτης, ἄσπερ τὰ πολλὰ εἶδε, καὶ μειδιάς, Δίκαια μέντοι, ἐφη…
17 Sheffield 2001 has analysed features of the satyric drama in Alcibiades’ speech.
18 On this idea, see Clay 1975, Patterson 1982 and Racket 2013.
las tres obras, y varios discípulos de Sócrates se mencionan en las listas de los que asistieron al juicio y a la prisión, en la Apología (33d-34a) y en el Fedón (59b). Trataremos de tres escenas:

1. Los sueños de Sócrates. En Phaed. 60e Sócrates menciona los sueños frecuentes que le exhortan a componer música, escena que se hace eco de alusiones a los sueños del filósofo en Ap. 33c y en Crit. 44ab.

2. Escapar del cuerpo y escapar de la prisión. En Phaed. 61c-62c, Sócrates dice a Cebes que cualquier filósofo desearía morir, pero no es lícito hacerse violencia a uno mismo, de acuerdo con la enseñanza de los misterios de que el cuerpo es una especie de prisión de la que no se debe escapar. Se trata quizás de la transferencia de una idea tratada en el Critón, si es legítimo o no escaparse de la prisión, lo que Sócrates niega.

3. El mito escatológico del Fedón (106c-114c) es en parte un desarrollo de las referencias de Sócrates a la otra vida al final de la Apología (40e-41e), donde dice que espera encontrar mejores hombres en el Hades que los que ha conocido en vida.

Los esfuerzos de Platón para conectar temáticamente el Fedón con la Apología y el Critón mediante la expansión de elementos clave propician la formación de una especie de trilogía sobre la condena, la prisión y la muerte, encarnadas en la persona de Sócrates. En cierta manera, el Fedón funciona como una rehabilitación de Sócrates ante la opinión pública. Así, los argumentos de Sócrates en el diálogo pueden verse, no tanto como una continuación del discurso fallido de Sócrates que dio pie a su ejecución, sino como una reescritura de éste desde una perspectiva mucho más ambiciosa y filosófica, ya que está dirigida a una audiencia mucho más selecta y cualificada que un jurado popular ateniense. Al final de la obra, Platón pronuncia incluso un veredicto para su nueva Apología: Sócrates, lejos de ser enemigo de la ciudad, fue el mejor, el más sensato y justo de sus contemporáneos.

Esta trilogía puede compararse a una trilogía trágica de Esquilo, en la que el mismo personaje sufre varias calamidades antes de ser finalmente liberado, como el Prometeo encadenado, que pasa a ser Prometeo liberado. El final de la trilogía de Sócrates parece luctuoso, pues el personaje principal muere, pero en una interpretación más profunda, se trata de una liberación, ya que Sócrates abandona para siempre la prisión del cuerpo. Si hubiera que buscar un drama satírico para completar la trilogía, podríamos pensar en el Banquete, donde Sócrates es descrito como un sileno y un sátiro por Alcibíades (215ac).

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Sufficient Reason in the *Phaedo*

Sattler, Barbara

1. Introduction:

Socrates “biography” in the *Phaedo* has been seen as prefiguring the distinction between necessary and sufficient causes and reasons in the *Timaeus* and as a forerunner to Aristotle's distinction of different causes. In this paper I want to show that a view to the discussion of Plato's predecessors on the topic of reasons demonstrates another, equally impressive achievement of the *Phaedo*: it shows that the *Phaedo* is the first attempt (at least the first surviving one) to give an account of what can count as a sufficient reason.

In order to make my claim clear, it will be helpful to distinguish four different points that Plato makes in the *Phaedo*: first, he introduces teleological causes and reasons and contrasts them with the mechanistic causes and reasons of his predecessors, that is, he distinguishes causes that explain why it is best for something to be the way it is from the material causes that (help to) bring about some kind of change or process, no matter whether good or bad (97c-99b). Second, Plato distinguishes between what we can understand as a precursor to the distinction between necessary and sufficient causes and reasons when he distinguishes between the real *aitia* and that without which the *aitia* would not be an *aitia* (98e-99b) – sinews and bones are necessary for Socrates to be sitting in prison, but the reason explaining why he uses his sinews and bones for sitting in prison rather than for escaping to Megara is that he deems it better and more just to serve his sentence. For Socrates the first two distinctions seem to overlap – mechanistic reasons are necessary, teleological are sufficient. Third, he introduces Forms as reasons or *causes* in his second voyage (100b-101a). Third, he introduces Forms as reasons or causes in his second voyage (100b-101a). And finally, Plato discusses the question what makes a real reason a real reason, what we can understand as the question what makes a sufficient reason a sufficient reason (100b-101c). While these four points are interrelated, I will concentrate on the last point and show that Plato is the first thinker to give us positive criteria for what can count as a sufficient reason.

2. Terminological prelude

Before we start looking at the Presocratic understanding of sufficient reasons, I should first briefly note a few terminological problems we are dealing with in the *Phaedo*:

(1) Among a couple of different terms to express causes and reasons (for

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1 What below will be discussed as Plato's first and second criterion has been understood as necessary and sufficient conditions respectively, for example by Bostock pp. 137-138.
2 A notion we find fully spelt out with Leibniz (reference).
3 We see that Plato operates with a very narrowly focused notion of teleological *aitia* here.
4 Cf. also Hankinson p. 87.
5 I will not be able to discuss here whether the fact that this is Socrates so-called second voyage (so not the first one would chose for direct sailing) means that this is not Plato's full story on causation or whether the actual content is in fact the same (so Hankinson).
6 E.g., Plato in fact only looks at specific sufficient causes in view, namely teleological ones.
example, *dia* plus accusative or dative), Plato also uses both *to aition* and *hê aitia*. From a linguistic point of view, *to aition* is a substantivation of the adjective *aitios*, and refers to the thing responsible, while the substantive *hê aitia* refers to responsibility. Michael Frede (1980) tried to show that *to aition* characterizes the one responsible and can be understood as cause, while *hê aitia* characterizes the state of affairs and can be understood as causal account. Both Dorothea Frede and David Sedley have, however, claimed that while this is a general tendency, Plato does not strictly distinguish these two terms in this way but uses both sometime to refer equally to reasons and causes; and for our purposes I will also take them both as referring to reasons or causes.

(2) *To aition* and *hê aitia* can be translated as causes as well as explanations or reasons; as whatever answers a why-question. That means that in principle they can be understood in a logical as well as in a physical sense, and some peculiarities of the Platonic text seem to result from the fact that, in the examples given, logical and physical reasons and causes are not always clearly distinguished. For the purposes of this paper I will not pay too much attention to the examples, but will look at the criteria Plato gives independently of his in part tricky examples.

(3) We should bear in mind that the terms *to aition* and *hê aitia* derive originally from the sphere of jurisdiction and especially of trials: *aitian echein* means to carry responsibility, to be accused of a crime. In this context the *aitios* looked for is the culprit, the person who committed a crime, not so much a process or state of affairs that caused a certain outcome. And we are also not looking for a group of people who all could have done in – so we are not looking for different possible causes. This background suggests, as Sedley has pointed out most prominently, that *to aition* is thought of as a thing in Plato, the thing responsible, while the way how an effect is brought about is secondary.

(4) Plato starts out his investigation with causes and reasons for coming to be and passing away (95e-96a) but then generalizes his investigation to causes and reasons for acquiring or having a property in general, so for becoming something as well as being something.

(5) Finally, I will not be able to go into a discussion of the distinction between *aitia* and *archê* here and for the time being will just assume with Aristotle that all *aitia* are *archê* (origins), but not vice versa.

3. Presocratic background:
The main proponents employing some notion of a sufficient reason before Plato – Anaximander, Parmenides, and the atomists – all point out the lack of sufficient

8 Cf. Bostock p. 135. Sedley p. 122 has argued against understanding Platonic caus es primarily as epistemological, as explanations, and instead wants to understand them as an ontological category. By contrast, Hankinson p. 85-86 has pointed out that the problem with translating *to aition* as “cause” is that the notion of a cause conveys a not necessarily appropriate idea of activity and events, while in Plato it can cover also sufficient and teleological explanations.
10 Cf. also Frede p. 111 and especially Sedley (1998).
11 As we find it with some modern notion of sufficient reasons, cf. below.
12 (1998), especially pp. 114-115: “any information as to how that thing brings about the effect relegated to a strictly secondary status”.
13 D. Frede p. 110 thinks that „Der Versuch einer ‘Ursachenreduktion’ ist also der eigentliche Grund für die Paradoxa.”
reasons. But they do not give positive criteria for what can count as sufficient reason.

Philosophy in the West seems to have started, among other things, by giving archè and aitia for what there is\(^\text{15}\) (if we follow Aristotle's account of the history of philosophy and leave aside for the time being a discussion of its accuracy): Thales allegedly asked whether we can find one basic archè or aition that can explain the plurality of phenomena and suggests water as this basic aition.\(^\text{16}\) But Thales did not investigate whether this reason or cause was sufficient for an explanation of the phenomena. Without the idea of a sufficient reason around, it seems easier to point out first that some reason given is not sufficient to cause or explain something, than to come up with what constitutes a sufficient reason. And this is exactly where Anaximander enters the stage: Anaximander is usually credited as the first thinker to use something like a principle of sufficient reason:\(^\text{17}\) according to a testimony from Aristotle, Anaximander argues that the earth is in equipoise for there is no more reason (mallon outhen) for it to move one way rather than another. The background premise is that the earth is seen as situated at the centre of the cosmos and as equally (ὁμοίως) related to the extremes and the other heavenly bodies.\(^\text{18}\) While people before Anaximander seem to have asked what prevents the earth from falling, and Thales answers this question by assuming that the earth is floating on water like a piece of wood is, Anaximander turns the order of explanation around: Anaximander points out that the earth would fall only if there were a sufficient reason or cause for it to fall. Because there is no such reason for earth to fall, given its position in the universe,\(^\text{19}\) it stays still. The principle of sufficient reason is employed here in a negative way – there is no sufficient reason for motion, so motion does not occur (Socrates' demand in 97e that he wanted not just to be told that the earth is in the middle of the universe, but be given an explanation why it is better for it to do so, may not only refer to Anaxagoras, but also to Anaximander, whose positing of the earth in the centre frees us from an explanation of why it does not fall but not from an explanation why it is better for the earth to be there and not to fall).

While the testimony from Anaximander just discussed is often seen as the locus classicus of the principle of sufficient reason, Anaximander also seems to have pointed out that Thales' suggestion to posit water as the underlying principle that explains all phenomena is not sufficient. For Anaximander’s assumption of the apeiron as the basic principle appears to react to the problem that water is one specific element, and thus does not seem qualified to have everything come out of it: water is itself cold and wet, so it is unclear how its opposite, what is dry and warm, fire, can be derived from it. Accordingly, instead of one of the four elements being assumed as the basic stuff out of which all the others come into being, we need something that is none of the four elements so that all can come from it equally.\(^\text{20}\)

Parmenides employs the lack of a sufficient reason for one highly influential argument: he argues that there is no sufficient reason for what-is to come into being from what-is-not at any particular time (sooner or later), which yet it would have

\(^{15}\) Cf. for example, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 981a28-30, 981b 28, 982b 2, 983a 26f., 984a3, 984a 17 ff., 985a11.

\(^{16}\) DK 11 A 12, Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 983b6ff.

\(^{17}\) Reference.


\(^{19}\) Cf. also Couprie in *Apeiron* for ist a reconstruction of Anaximander’s cosmology.

\(^{20}\) At least this is what Aristotle’s testimony suggests, see Aristotle’s *Physics* 204b22 ff., fr. 105 in KRS.
to if it came into being at all. In addition, Parmenides' poem is also often thought to point out that there is no sufficient reason for Being to come into being from Being, from what is. Both alternatives – coming into being from Being (what is) and coming into being from non-Being (what is not) – are therefore shown to be impossible. While here the principle of sufficient reason is used with regard to the occurrence (or the lack thereof) of processes, Parmenides also uses the principle of sufficient reason for a state of being in his move from homogeneity to indivisibility.21

With the atomists, finally, the principle of sufficient reason in its negative version, as the *ou mallon* principle, becomes the dominant philosophical principle.22 It can be understood as claiming that there is no sufficient reason for an object *x* or for a state of affairs *s* or for assuming *x* or *s*, thus *x* or *s* does not exist or obtain or it is not reasonable to assume *x* or *s*. The *ou mallon* principle is centrally employed when arguing for the basic features of the atoms – at least when it comes to the infinity of shapes (there is no more reason for an atom to have this shape rather than that shape), and perhaps also for the variety of sizes.23 The *ou mallon* principle also leads the atomists to the assumption of infinitely many worlds. This principle is most often employed by the atomists to point out that as there are no sufficient reasons for assuming one shape or places, etc. over another shape or place, all shapes, places, etc. must be assumed.24

4. Plato's account of sufficient reasons

We see that pointing out a lack of sufficient reason is a central argumentative move with Anaximander, Parmenides, and the atomists. But it is only with Plato's *Phaedo* that we find an investigation of what does count as a sufficient reason, even if his criteria are also negative criteria – they formulate what a sufficient reason is not. Plato explicitly distinguishes that without which the *aition* would not be an *aition* from the *aition* that does indeed explain something (and that in this sense we can call a sufficient cause or reason, or, with Plato, the real cause or reason):

τοιαῦτα αἰτίωμενος, ἀμελήσας τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας λέγειν, ὥτι, ἐπειδῆ Αθηναῖοις ἐδοξε βέλτιον εἶναι ἐμοῦ καταψηφίσασθαι, διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ ἐμοὶ βέλτιον αὐτοῖσιν ἀφάντητος καθήθησαι, καὶ δικαίωτερον παραμένοντα ὑπέχειν τὴν δίκην ἢν ἐν καλύσεως:

21 In fragment 8, line 22ff.
22 Makin p. 49 even claims that basic atomic theory is generated by repeated application of indifference reasoning – though Makin uses it more often in his reconstruction of Democritus' position than our fragments do. However, Makin is certainly right that Democritus seems to have used indifference reasoning systematically.
23 The doxographers do not agree on whether there are in principle all kinds of sizes of atoms (it just so happens that there is none of the size we could perceive in our world), or whether the size of an atom is always beyond what is perceptible for us.
24 Gregory, “Leucippus and Democritus on Like to Like and *ou mallon*”, in: *Apeiron* (manuscript p. 16) claims that the atomists' use of *ou mallon* for places and times is not identical to their use for size and shape, since for “shapes and sizes we get all shapes and sizes of atoms, but we do not get vortices forming at all places and at all times.”
For by the dog, I think these sinews and bones could long ago have been in Megara or among the Boeotians, taken there by my belief as to the best course, if I had not thought it more right and honourable to endure whatever the penalty the city ordered rather than escape and run away. To call those things *aitia* is too absurd. If someone said that without bones and sinews and all such things I should not be able to do what I decided, he would be right, but surely to say that they are causes of what I do, and not that I have chosen the best course, even though I act with my mind, is to speak very lazy and carelessly. Imagine not being able to distinguish the real *aition* from that without which the *aition* would not be able to act as a *aition*. It is what the majority appear to do, like people groping in the dark; they call it a *aition*, thus giving it a name that does not belong to it (98e-99b, translation by Grube).

The *Phaedo* gives us three criteria for such a sufficient *aition*:25

1. Two different causes cannot have the same effect.

As an example Socrates claims that addition and division cannot both be the cause for coming to be two. We can easily object to this criterion – after all, a street can be wet because of rain or because a street cleaning machine has driven by. But we can understand why Plato, in a first attempt to give criteria, may see this as a good criterion: if we want to identify the cause or reason in an individual case, a sufficient reason should give us the one thing (or state of affairs) that leads to the effect; if we have two equally good stories, we have not yet successfully identified the real cause (even if at another time a different cause may be at work). Furthermore, if we think about the causes in our example on a more general level (which is one of the moves we see in Plato when introducing Forms as causes),26 we may see the same cause at work in both cases – it is the pouring of liquid that makes the street wet; or less calories that make you slim, whether you take up less calories because you eat less, or because you burn some by doing sports does not matter.27

25 When we talk about sufficient causes or conditions nowadays, we usually use one of two different ideas: either we understand sufficient conditions as conditions that always have to obtain for an effect E to come about, but that also require necessary conditions, which in themselves do not bring about E. Or we understand by a sufficient condition a condition that does not always have to obtain for E to come about (different sufficient conditions could bring E about), but when it obtains, nothing more is needed to bring E about. Sedley (1998) p. 121 has the latter in mind when he claims that Platonic causes cannot be straightforwardly identified with either necessary or sufficient conditions, but he does not consider that the first understanding is also often used. Bostock p. 139 claims that for Plato in the part of the *Phaedo* we are looking at causes have to be necessary and sufficient conditions for their effects.

26 Bostock p. 139-140 understand Plato as complaining that the explanations usually offered are not general enough, but Bostock himself does not look at a general enough level here.

27 We see that it is the “thing” in question – the pouring of liquid, less calories –
2. The same cause cannot have opposite\textsuperscript{28} effects.

The example Socrates gives is that someone cannot be larger and smaller by a head. This criterion is what the physical causes criticized by Socrates violate: Socrates' bones and sinews can be the cause for him sitting in prison as well as for him running away. But the violation of this criterion by the physical causes just shows that with physical causes we have not yet given a sufficient reason for why Socrates stays in prison, we do not yet know why he has not run away.

The first and the second criterion attempt to establish something like a one-to-one assignment of causes and effects, ruling out one-to-many assignments, as in the second criterion, as well as many-to-one assignments as in the first criterion. The third criterion, by contrast, looks at the connection in content that is meant to hold between cause and effect.

3. A cause cannot be the opposite of the effect it has.

The example Socrates uses to illustrate this criterion is that something cannot be larger by a head and thus by something small (101b1-2). This criterion takes up the Presocratic principle that like causes like and puts it into a systematic context. The model for this criterion seems to be that a cause can only cause some F if it possesses F itself;\textsuperscript{29} something hot, like a hotplate, can make something else hot, but it cannot make it cold. Bostock and others have criticised this criterion by pointing out that, for example, a fever or an illness causes me to be ill without itself being ill, or a stone can break a window without itself breaking. These counterexamples, while prima facie convincing, seem, however, to suffer from two problems:

First, whether they are indeed counterexamples depends on the descriptions we give of these causes: If we describe an illness\textsuperscript{30} as based on the presence of viruses or bacteria, for example, than obviously the illness can cause me to possess also viruses and bacteria, and so transmits what it possesses in accordance with the like to like principle. And if we take a stone essentially to possess hardness, than this hardness is also what will be transmitted from the stone to the window – given that the window is fragile this hardness leads to breaking, but the hardness can lead to different effects depending on what it is that it transfers its hardness to and how this thing interacts with the hardness (it may have no effect, for example, on something that is itself hard). So we see that these examples are not necessarily counterexamples to the like to like transmission assumed by Plato. Furthermore, the breaking of the glass and me becoming ill are also not opposites to the stone and the fever, so they do not go against the main criterion that a cause cannot be opposite to what it causes.

Secondly, Plato does not seem to be interested in all kinds of causation and reasons, and it is not clear that the examples given by Bostock do fulfil the other conditions given by Plato and thus qualify as \textit{aitia} he is indeed interested in.\textsuperscript{31} that is important, as we should expect given the original context of \textit{aitiation} that we saw in the terminological prelude, not the way how it is brought about (though we also see that the notion of thing can also cover a state of affairs here).

\textsuperscript{28} I cannot discuss here what exactly we have to understand by opposites, whether Plato indicates mere incompatibility, contraries, or contradictories.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. also Bostock.
\textsuperscript{30} Fever seems to me a bad example to begin with, since it is nothing other than a reaction of the body, so actually an effect, rather than a cause.
\textsuperscript{31} On p. 155 Bostock does indeed entertain the idea that Plato may think these cases are causes that are not sufficiently general, and can be discovered only by the senses.
Accordingly, if there were good counterexamples, they would not necessarily show the criterion to be wrong, but only that there are cases of causation not covered by it. This criterion seems to work for at least some kinds of causes, like heating (and it is the one Plato needs for the final proof of the immortality of the soul).

This criterion seems, however, to contradict the earlier argument that all opposites come from their opposites, in the so-called argument from opposites. This worry is explicitly taken up in Phaedo 104b and the difference between both pointed out: in the earlier argument it was argued that if something changes what undergoes the change first possesses one property F and then takes on an opposing property non-F. By contrast, in the current discussion the focus is on the opposite itself, some F, that cannot itself have the opposing effect (nor take on being) not-F. This argument seems to suggest that the aitia Plato has in mind are constitutive aitia, so aitia that are somehow also “part” of the effect they have.

If we come back now to Plato’s predecessor, we can not only appreciate Plato’s effort in formulating for the first time an account of a sufficient reason. But we can also see how Plato takes up certain points of their argumentation to derive his positive criteria: for example, Anaximander’s objection to water as a sufficient aition for all the phenomena is based on the idea that water as something itself cold and wet cannot give rise to what is hot and dry, to fire. Plato now turns this objection into his third criterion “a cause cannot be the opposite of the effect it has”. And Anaximander’s idea that we need something that is neither of the four elements so that all four can equally be derived from it, also seems to have influenced Plato’s account of the receptacle, which is described as something neutral like a perfume base, something possessing no characteristics itself so that all elements can come into being in it.

Furthermore, the one-to-one relationship between cause and effect we see aimed at in the first and second criterion also seems to be presupposed by the atomistic principle that there is no more reason to assume F than not-F, since this principle must be based on the idea that it cannot be the same reason being responsible for F and not-F. Like Parmenides, also Plato considers sufficient reasons not only for occurrences but also for states of being. Parmenides’ argument against generation, finally, will be taken up in a positive way in Plato’s account of the “creation” of the world in the Timaeus, where Plato seems to solve the Parmenidean problem that generation can neither occur from what is nor from what is not.

While Plato’s predecessors merely pointed out a lack of sufficient reason, Plato gives criteria for what can count as a sufficient reason. Interestingly all these criteria are formulated in negative ways: causes cannot be opposite to the effects they have, etc. They make it clear under which circumstances we are not yet dealing with sufficient reasons. They do not give us positive criteria, but a brief look at contemporary debates of causality in philosophy show us that this is still a hotly disputed terrain. Plato’s criteria can in any case be seen as a further step to understanding sufficient aitia.

Abstrakt auf Deutsch

32 This understanding of something underlying the change prepares for Aristotle’s notion of a substratum of a change, cf. also Broadie, Physics I, 9, forthcoming.
33 We may at first glance think that Anaximander thus does give us a positive account, but the primary way his basic archê is characterized is by not having a peras, it is un-limited or in-determinate.
34 Cf. my Natural Philosophy in Ancient Greece, chapter 2.


Für Anaximander, Parmenides und die Atomisten ist der Hinweis auf das Fehlen eines zureichenden Grundes zentral für ihre Argumentation. Aber erst mit Platons „Phaidon“ erhalten wir eine erste Untersuchung, was einen Grund zureichend macht. Platon unterscheidet explizit zwischen dem ohne dem der Grund kein Grund wäre, und dem Grund der tatsächlich etwas hinreichend erklärt, und den wir somit einen zureichenden Grund nennen können. Im „Phaidon“ finden wir drei Kriterien für einen zureichenden Grund:


Ein Blick auf die Vorsokratiker lässt uns nicht nur den ersten Versuch
wertschätzen, Kriterien für zureichende Gründe zu formulieren, sondern zeigt uns auch, inwieweit Platon dabei gewisse Argumentationspunkte seiner Vorgänger aufnimmt: so findet sich etwa Anaximanders Einwand, dass Wasser nicht ein zureichender Grund für die Entstehung aller Elemente sein kann, bei Plato verallgemeinert als das Kriterium, dass ein Grund nicht das Gegenteil seines Effektes sein kann. Und das atomistische *ou mallon* Prinzip setzt implizit voraus, dass derselbe Grund nicht für gegenteilige Wirkungen verantwortlich sein kann, was sich in Platons Kriterium, dass derselbe Grund nicht gegenteilige Effekte haben kann, explizit formuliert findet. Parmenides Argument findet sich schließlich integriert in Platons Erklärung der Weltschöpfung im „Timaios“. (688 Worte)
Introduction

Diogenes Laertios tells a story according to which Aristotle was the only one of Plato’s pupils who sat through an entire reading of the *Phaedo* by Plato himself.\(^1\) This anecdote is surely fictional, but we find some support for the claim that Aristotle was a thorough and sceptic reader of the *Phaedo*. The other claim, though, that the *Phaedo* did not enjoy its later popularity right from the start seems to have received little attention.\(^2\)

It is assumed that there are many readers of the *Phaedo* in the two to three generations after Plato since traces of the *Phaedo* are supposed in fragments and testimonies of early Hellenistic philosophers. While this could well be true, I will try to show that it is more likely for at least some philosophers who are said to have been influenced by the *Phaedo* to have taken up ideas on which the *Phaedo* elaborates, but which do not necessarily belong to the dialogue. Many thoughts in the *Phaedo*, as Socrates states several times,\(^3\) are not exclusive to the work, but were product of a cultural “embeddedness”. That is to say, that the dialogue took up ideas that were popular and floated around in Athens in many ways during the time of writing. Some of these can be called Orphic or Pythagorean, as Socrates does himself, or Dorothea Frede has suggested.\(^4\) These ideas were surely processed and transformed, but were in essence not originally Plato’s.

My aim in the following minutes is twofold. At first, I intend to outline briefly what readers who arguably have read the *Phaedo* thought were the most prominent points. This analysis will of course be tainted by the small amount of fragments we have, but might give some insight nonetheless. Secondly, I would like to argue that neither the Stoic Aristo of Chios, nor Clearchus of Soloi, nor Heraclides of Pontus have been strongly influenced by the *Phaedo*. That is neither of them has taken up any *Phaedonic* idea that could not also be explained through a broader, more general point of discussion of their time – their own cultural context or embeddedness.

Who was influenced by the *Phaedo*

Concerning the first point, it seems very likely that Aristotle, Strato of Lampsacus from Aristotle’s school, as well as the Stoic Chrysippus have read the

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1 Diog. Laert. 3,37: “τούτον μόνον (sc. Αριστοτέλη) παρακμείναι Πλάτωνι Φαβλωρινός πού φησιν ἀναγινώσκοντι τὸν Περὶ ψυχῆς, τούς δὲ ἄλλους ἀναστήναι πάντας.”


3 Cf. *Phd.* 61d-e on Philolaos maintaining the idea that “philosophy is learning to die” and 67d on κάθαρσις as the purification of the soul from bodily things which is found in an old logos (πάλαι ἐν τῷ λόγῳ). Cf. also *Crat.* 400c, where Socrates links the σώμα-σῆμα image as well as the body being freed from fetters to Orphism.

Phaedo. According to Bonitz we find seven allusions to the Phaedo in Aristotle's works.\(^5\) Only one of these allusions is concerned with the theory of soul, but contains no argument or discussion of a Phaedonic idea.\(^6\) It clarifies that it is only the intellect which might be capable of separating itself from the body. One is inclined to read this as a statement of compatibility of the Phaedonic theory of soul with the rather different views on soul in Plato's other works. Other allusions Aristotle makes to the Phaedo only discuss passages which would strike modern readers as odd, because, as Sylvain Delcomminette says, “il semble que le centre de gravité du Phédon se soit déplacé de l’âme à des questions de philosophie naturelle.”\(^7\) Aristotle criticizes Plato, for example, in his Meteorologica for scientifically absurd statements in the myth of the afterlife\(^8\) – he takes it quite literally. This is, of course, not the whole picture. Delcomminette points out that the puzzle, whether or not the Aristotelian Eudemus was influenced by the Phaedo, remains.\(^9\) Additionally, Aristotle's critique of the soul-harmonia theory in his De anima is certainly a development of Plato's critique in the Phaedo. So while it cannot be said how much and how exactly Aristotle has been influenced by the theory of soul presented in the Phaedo, it is at least probable to the point of certainty that Aristotle knew its theory of soul, but only discussed passages he wanted to criticise.

One of Aristotle's successors in the scholarchat of the Peripatos, Strato of Lampsacus, put forth a list of "aporiai" which directly target the reasoning in the Phaedo.\(^10\) Strato picks up weak spots in Socrates' arguments for immortality of soul and aims at them individually. Against the argument from opposites, for example, Strato maintains that charcoal comes from wood but no wood from charcoal or asks against the argument from recollection why no-one has ever learned anything without demonstration or why no-one has ever become a pipe or lyre-player without practice.\(^11\) Leaving aside intricate problems of transmission, context, and purpose of these "aporiai" Strato proves himself to be a very careful reader of the Phaedo.\(^12\) He might also have instigated a tradition of discussing the arguments, if the two fragments on papyri\(^13\) – on which we find an abridged form of Plato's arguments against the soul as harmonia – belong to a contemporary or near contemporary of

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9 Delcomminette, S.: “Aristote et le Phédon”, 18-19. Movia and Verde argue, that the theory of soul of the Eudemus is not compatible with Plato's because it presupposes an early concept of the soul as form, which is later developed in the De anima (Movia), or because the idea of separability of body and soul does not contain typical Platonic traces (Verde). Cf. Movia, G.: Anima e Intelletto, Padova, 1968, 102 and cf. Verde, F. (tbp) “Clearchus' two Concepts of Sleep”.
11 Strato, fr. 76 and 77A.
13 PHeid G inv. 28 and PGræcMon 21.
Strato, as David Sedley speculates.14

The case of Chrysippus is not as clear cut, as Francesca Alesse shows.15 Aulus Gellius attributes to Chrysippus the view that in this world the good cannot exist without the evil, the just not without the unjust and all things alike – one not without its contrary as they are bound together. Chrysippus, as it seems, specifically quotes or paraphrases Plato to add authority to his argument: “alterum enim ex altero, sicuti Plato ait, verticibus inter se contrariis deligatum est; si tuleris unum, abstuleris utrumque”.16 The context, in which Chrysippus uses this argument, is quite different from the *Phaedo*, though. He is countering Epicurean arguments against providence, while the paraphrase stems from Socrates’ amazement, after being freed from chains, that a human does not feel pain and pleasure at the same time, but that these two sensations follow each other as if they were bound together. The different context not only changes the scope of the argument, but makes it a complete new argument altogether. While Plato is not trying to prove anything substantial – we find the passage in the introduction – Chrysippus not only quotes it as a supposedly sound argument, but adds “si tuleris unum, abstuleris utrumque”, which Socrates does not say. In reworking and elaborating on the argument Chrysippus might pick up thoughts Plato later adds in the *Phaedo* or elsewhere and maybe, as Alesse argues, Chrysippus chose to paraphrase a sentence from the introduction instead of the other passages because they would run contrary to his beliefs of the materiality of soul and the nature of ideas. But in the end, all we see is that Chrysippus surely refers to the *Phaedo* and has probably read it or parts of it, while his reference shows no engagement with *Phaedonic* thoughts and a rather creative use.

There are other instances of scattered allusions to the dialogue that hint at a lecture, but in general it can be concluded that the evidence for the use of the *Phaedo* is scarce and – one would not expect it to be otherwise – appears to have been selectively, that is each author picks a passage from the *Phaedo* and comments, transforms, or uses it to suit a certain point in his own argument. We find the fullest account in Strato who appears to be in alignment with most modern readers of the *Phaedo*, who take the dialogue to be mainly about the immortality of soul.

Who was probably not influenced by the *Phaedo*

Aristo of Chios

It has further been suggested that Aristo of Chios, Heraclides of Pontus and Clearchus of Soloi have read the *Phaedo* based on the similar use of imagery found in the dialogue and these authors respectively. In the *Phaedo* we find Plato’s comparison that it is not virtuous to refrain from one pleasure just to get a different, greater pleasure later. It would be equal to trading one coin for another.17 You need, Plato says, the right coin – φρόνησις – to decide between right and wrong pleasures.

Francesca Alesse now argues that Aristo refers to the *Phaedo* when he says that virtue is unifold, but can have different forms it presents itself in.18 So one time, according to Aristo, virtue appears as courage, another time as justice and so on. It is the same with a drachma: when you use it to pay a captain “travel fees”, or a landlord “rent”, or a teacher “salary”, you use the same drachma, but its name differs

16 Gell. VII, 1, 1 = SVF II, 1169.
17 Phd. 69a: “ὡσπερ νομίσματα, ἀλλ’ ἣ ἐκεῖνο μόνον τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθόν, ἀντὶ οὗ δεῖ πάντα ταῦτα καταλλάττεσθαι, φρόνησις”.
according to context. Plato, too, compares the φρόνησις to a coin, but was probably not his source. Aristo says the φρόνησις itself stays one and the same, where Plato says that φρόνησις is a means to be traded for the right pleasures. Aristo wants to say that φρόνησις is the only virtue, Plato wants to say that φρόνησις is a necessary tool for virtue. So the tertia comparationum differ. So neither the wording nor the scope of the argument suggest the Phaedo as source for Aristo. And while it is true that Plato hints at the possibility that φρόνησις is also the unique virtue you solely need to have all virtues, Alesse's careful article points out that the comparison between virtue and money could as well have been transmitted to Aristo through other works than the Phaedo. For example, one is reminded most prominently of Apollo's assignment to Diogenes of Sinope to change the political currency (τὸ πολιτικὸν νόμισμα): Diogenes, then, misinterpreted the assignment and literally adulterated the Athenian coinage. Since this image, which might even go back to the Phaedo, has gone through different forms and elaborations by the time of Aristo it is not safe to assume that he has used the Phaedo.

Heraclides of Pontus and Clearchus of Soloi

Heraclides of Pontus was member of the Academy for many years and even led the school while Plato was in Sicily. It has also been argued that he conveyed Platonic doctrines to Clearchus, because both tried to support their views on the soul with an afterlife myth – just as Socrates did in the Phaedo.

According to Heraclides a certain Empedotimus stayed behind on a hunt at noon, when Pluto and Persephone appeared to him in an epiphany. He, then, was seized by the light that surrounded the gods, and finally saw in visions the truth about souls. What seems remarkable is that Pluto and Persephone, the gods of the underworld, appear in light and do not live below the surface. Since Heraclides assigns the place of the souls' afterlife around the Milky Way, Pluto and Persephone

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19 Clem. Al. strom. 1,97,2 = SVF I, 376: “εἰ γοῦν σκοποίμεν, μία κατά δύναμιν ἐστιν ἢ ἄρετα, ταύτην δὲ συμβέβηκεν τούτωσι μὲν τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐγγενομένην λέγεσθαι φρόνησιν, ἐν τούτωσι δὲ σωφροσύνην, ἐν τούτωσι δὲ ἀνδρείαν ἢ δικαιοσύνην. […] τούτων φαμεν τὸν τρόπον μιᾶς καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς δραχμῆς τῷ μὲν ναυκλήρῳ δοθείσης λέγεσθαι ναῦλον, τῷ δὲ τελώνῃ τέλος καὶ ἐνοίκιον μὲν τῷ σταθμούχῳ, μισθὸν δὲ τῷ διδασκάλῳ καὶ τῷ πιπράσκοντι ἀρραβώνα. […]”


21 See Diog. Laer. 6, 20-21: “ἔνιοι δ’ ἐπιμελητὴν γενόμενον ἀναπεισθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν τεχνιτῶν καὶ ἐλθόντα εἰς Δελφοὺς ἢ εἰς τὸ Δήλον ἐν τῇ πατρίδι Ἀπόλλωνος πυνθάνεσθαι εἰ ταύτα πράξα παρεξ ἀναπειθῆται· τοῦ δὲ συγχωρήσαντος τὸ πολιτικὸν νόμισμα, οὐ συνείς, τὸ κέρμα ἐκιβδήλευσε καὶ φωραθείς, ὡς μέν τινες, ἐφυγαδεύθη, ὡς δὲ τινες, ἑκὼν ὑπεξῆλθε φοβηθείς.”


most probably reside there as well. This leads to an idea of a “heavenly Hades”. Traces of this idea can already be found in the afterlife myth in the Phaedo, where souls reside according to their lifestyle in different places, of which one is an “aetherly”.

But Heraclides is now mentioned in an interpolation of ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων διήκουσε [sc. Ηρακλείδης] καὶ τὰ Πλάτωνος ἐξηλώκει in Sotion’s Successions quoted in Diogenes Laertius and also juxtaposed in the doxographies with Pythagoreans on astronomy. Further, Heraclides appears to have been unplatonic (οὐ Πλάτωνος ὡν ἀκουστής), as Proclus says, in astronomical questions.

In his myth the eschatology of souls is intimately connected with astronomy and one might assume that the theory of soul itself might differ from Plato’s since he calls the souls light-like matter according to the doxographies. Although he has been a student in the Academy he appears to have distanced himself from Plato and, since Pluto and Persephone are mentioned in his myth, used imagery of the afterlife that less typical for the Phaedo than it is for so-called Orphism.

Similarly, we find in Clearchus, a mid 4th to early 3rd century Peripatetic, the myth of a certain Cleonymus. Cleonymus was an Athenian with a lively interest in philosophy (φιληκόοος ἀνὴρ τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγων), who grieved so deeply over the death of a friend that he himself lost all his power to live (ἀθυμήσας) and apparently died (ἐλιποψυχήσεν). As his mother went to bid him farewell he awoke and told her and the others at the funeral what he had seen and heard without his body (χωρὶς ἦν τοῦ σώματος καὶ οἶα ἴδοι καὶ ἀκούσειεν): According to Cleonymus’ report, he was lifted into the air (ἀρθεῖσαν ὑπὲρ γῆς) after his soul was freed from his body as from fetters (ἐκ δεσμῶν) so that he could see the world from above until he reached a place sacred to Hestia (εἴς τινα χῶρον ἱερὸν τῆς Ἑστίας), which was

27 Schütrumpf, E. et al.: Heraclides, fr. 1: “Ἀθήνησι δὲ παρέβαλε πρῶτον μὲν Σπευσίππῳ· ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων διήκουσε καὶ τὰ Πλάτωνος ἐξηλώκει· καὶ ὕστερον ἤκουσεν Ἀριστοτέλους, ὡς φησί Σωτίων ἐν Διαδοχαῖς.” Schwartz (1909) 481 assumed that ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν Πυθαγορείων διήκουσε καὶ τὰ Πλάτωνος ἐξηλώκει· was a later insertion. Gottschalk, Heraclides, 3 and Dillon, J.: The Heirs of Plato, Oxford, 2003, 205 follow him. In either case, it is obvious that Heraclides was at least in some respects considered to be influenced by Pythagoreans although no doctrinal cut is made between Plato and the Pythagoreans. Cf. Wehrli: Klearchos, passim, esp. 102 and 112-114, and Dillon, Heirs, 204-206.
29 Schütrumpf, E. et al.: Heraclides, fr. 66. Stork, van Ophuijsen and Prince ad loc. point out that the word ἀκουστής says more than forsaking Plato on a specific topic. Proclus apparently did not think of Heraclides as a student of Plato at all. Cf. as well Plutarch In Reply to Colotes 14, 1115A (= Schütrumpf, E. et al.: Heraclides, fr. 79): Ἡρακλείδου δὲ τὸν Ζωροφάστην, τὸ Περὶ τῶν ἐν Ἁθηναίοις τὸ Περὶ τῶν φυσικῶν ἀπορουμένων [...] ἐν οἷς πρὸς τὰ κυριώτατα καὶ μέγιστα τῶν φυσικῶν ὑπεναντιοῦσιν τῷ Πλάτωνι καὶ μαχόμενοι διατελοῦσι; Heraclides is mentioned here on a list of Peripatetics on which also Xenocrates appears. But as Heraclides was, according to the majority of fragments, a student of Plato, Proclus’ and Plutarch’s remarks are most plausibly explained by a deviance from Platonic philosophy in certain important aspects like cosmology and ontology.
31 Gottschalk: Heraclides, 144 argues that the place sacred to Hestia does not have to be in the sky, but ἀρθεῖσαν ὑπὲρ γῆς does not seem to refer to a journey
guarded by divine or daimonic powers in vague shapes of women (ὅν περιέπειν δαμονίας δύναμείς ἐν γυναικών μορφαῖς ἀπεριηγήτοις). There he met the Syracusan Lysias. What they saw up there was the chastisement and sentencing (κρίσεις) of the arriving souls under the supervision of the Eumenides (τὰς τουτῶν ἐπισκόπους Εὐμενίδας). Later Cleonymus and Lysias were sent back again and on their way they promised to visit each other. When Lysias came to Athens shortly thereafter Cleonymus recognised him from far away.

Just as in the case of Heraclides, the place sacred to Hestia in Clearchus' myth, the judgement of the souls under the supervision of the Eumenides and death as the liberation of the soul from fetters are also familiar from so-called Orphic or Pythagorean circles. We find, for example, the Eumenides as overseers in the Derveni papyrus, Socrates says in the the *Phaedo* as well as in the *Cratylus* that the image of the soul’s liberation is of Orphic origin and Clearchus himself attributes the view that life on earth is a punishment to the Pythagorean Euxitheus. These similarities suggest that neither Heraclides nor Clearchus have to have read the *Phaedo* for their imagery, but might as well have taken up the ideas that are also found and transformed in the *Phaedo* from cultural discussions in the 4th century BC. In short, it appears more likely that there is a common source, understood most broadly, for the *Phaedo*, Heraclides and Clearchus than a dependency between them.

**Conclusion**

Although a definition of what Orphic or Pythagorean means exactly is missing, the imagery of sources considered to be Orphic-Pythagorean show sufficient resemblances to Heraclides and Clearchus. Neither does this imply that Heraclides and Clearchus were Orphics or Pythagoreans and that other Orphic or Pythagorean thoughts could be attributed to them, nor does it exclude the possibility that they have read the *Phaedo* and used one thought or the other without discernible traces. Since the *Phaedo* itself is a work, which was heavily influenced by Orphic or Pythagorean thoughts, it is best, I think, not to see the *Phaedo* as a source for Clearchus, Heraclides, and Ariston, but to recognise the *Phaedo* as a work, which was culturally embedded in Orphic or Pythagorean discussions. We, then, have to estimate these discussions in the 4th century higher, while admitting that the *Phaedo*, in the first generations after its publication, was not as influential as it was about to become in later centuries. With Cicero at latest the *Phaedo* was understood, as we do today, as a seminal work for body-soul dualism and for Plato’s thinking, but in the 4th and early 3rd century the anti-platonic anecdote “Aristotle was the only one who sat through an entire reading of the *Phaedo*” appears to bear at least some truth.

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32 Contrary to Plato there is no hint that κρίσις has to be understood as part of a juridical process with a careful evaluation of both sides, but rather invoke the image of a direct sentence by someone who knows what misdeeds have been done.

33 The title of overseers for the Erinys (Δίκης ἐπίκουροι) is based on a reconstruction shared in all editions of the Derveni papyrus in col. IV, 9. As special souls the Eumenides are mentioned in col. VI, 9. Initiates have to devote their preliminary sacrifices to them. That these sacrifices have to be understood as appeasement becomes clear from the parallel to the magi who are supposed to devote their preliminary sacrifices to avenging daimones.

34 Cf. note 3.

Plato’s *Phaedo* offers an inspirational account of Socrates’ final hours. On the day that Socrates must drink the poison hemlock, his companions gather, “as was their custom” at the courthouse before heading to the prison. This last day of philosophical conversation involves many arguments about the nature of the soul and stories of the fate of the soul after death. As they pass the time of this last day together, Socrates responds to several challenging objections raised by Simmias and Cebes with respect to Socrates’ apparently unwavering belief in the immortality of the soul. Even in the face of his own death, by and large, Socrates seems unafraid of the fate that awaits him. His countenance in the face of death is an example to many of what it means “to die well.”  

In addition to being one of Plato’s most emotionally resonate dialogues, the *Phaedo* is also one of his most intricately crafted narrative works. It begins with a conversation between Echecrates and Phaedo. Phaedo is visiting Echecrates and the others in the town of Phlius. Echecrates laments that they have heard little from Athens lately. We then learn of the events of Socrates’ death through Phaedo’s evocative recounting of them to this group of eager Pythagorean listeners. In this way, the *Phaedo* is not that different from Plato’s other narrative masterpieces like the *Symposium* and the *Parmenides* where we learn of Socrates activities through the eyes of others. Unlike these other non-Socratically narrated dialogues, Plato writes the dialogue in such a way that the temporality of the narrative frame interjects into the dramatic events of the narrative at regular intervals. He also makes an explicit return to the temporality of the narrative frame at the end of the dialogue when Phaedo remarks, “he was the wisest and best man who ever lived.”

In previous work I have considered the nuances of how this extended narrative frame influences our understanding of the philosophical arguments in the text. I think one can helpfully read *Phaedo*’s narrative frame in concert with the other non-Socratically narrated dialogues namely the *Symposium*, *Theaetetus*, and *Parmenides*. Here, I take a slightly different approach to the narrative complexity of the *Phaedo*. I focus on how the character Socrates functions as a narrator within the narrated events of this dialogue.

My paper unfolds in the following manner. First, I explain what I take to be Socrates’ narrative art most broadly. Second, I analyze the account of the *Phaedo* in light of our current understanding of Socrates’ narrative artistic method. Third, I argue that this autobiography offers us a narrative conception of the immortality of the soul that replaces the Homeric understanding of *kleos*. Finally, I suggest that the narrative conception of immortality offers a model of philosophical community that offers a remedy to the difficult state of affairs that Socrates’ students find themselves in in the wake of his death.
This lack of attention is unfortunate because these carefully crafted narrative remarks add to the richness and profundity of the Platonic texts on many levels. These narrative elements are fascinating dimensions of Plato's artistic dialogic craft. Careful attention to these narrative features bears important philosophical fruit. The portrait of Socrates that emerges in these narrated dialogues challenges a philosophically dominant interpretation of Socrates and Plato as intellectualists. The narrative portrait of Socrates also broadens our understanding of what it means to practice philosophy in a Socratic manner.

This claim might seem surprising given the opening of the *Theaetetus* where Euclides tells Terpsion how he created his own version of the conversation between Socrates, Theodorus, and Theaetetus. Euclides and Terpsion then listen to a slave read Euclides' written account. Euclides makes clear that he deliberately removed Socrates' narrative voice (*Theaetetus*, 143c). Careful attention to Socrates' narrative commentary reveals that it involves much more than this sort of mundane reporting of who said what. As a narrator, Socrates focuses on his own thought process, his own emotional states, the emotional states of others, and on the social dynamics of the situation in which he finds himself. Taken together, these aspects of Socrates' narrative commentary suggest that the emotions play an important role bringing people to the philosophical life and in the ongoing practice of the self-reflective philosophical life itself. In brief, Socrates' narrative remarks engage the auditor in the details of Socrates' report. More importantly, they stimulate a process of philosophical thinking by drawing the auditors' attention to important moments in the argument and the dramatic action. Since I (Schultz, 2013) presented a detailed analysis of how this narrative process works, here I will limit myself to explaining six basic aspects of Socrates' narrative style.

First, Socrates' narrative commentary often discloses Socrates' inner states of mind. They are particularly revealing about how he often interweaves emotional experience into his mental processes. Second, they illustrate a profound sensitivity to the emotions of his auditors and a corresponding ability to use this awareness to facilitate a process of philosophical critical reflection in the auditor. Third, Socrates uses the social context in which he narrates, which is often emotionally fraught, to emphasize the value of the practice of philosophy as a therapeutic mode of self-care, a mode of philosophical inoculation against potentially harmful influences such as various forms of sophist teaching. Fourth, Socrates appears to narrate stories about himself to people he is on friendly terms with. Fifth, often Socrates' narrative commentary diminishes as the dialogue progresses. There seems to be some implicit expectation on Socrates' part that the auditor will begin to engage in philosophical reflection about the story that Socrates has just told him. If the auditor finds the inner resources to meet Socrates' expectations, the auditor himself becomes more philosophical in the process. Finally, in the act of narrating his own philosophical experience, Socrates tells stories about himself. Viewed in this way, the narrative dialogue itself becomes an autobiographical act.

II: The *Phaedo* in Light of Socratic Narrative Practices

On Socrates' last day, as Phaedo tells the story, those present discuss several arguments for the immortality of the soul; all are philosophically problematic. They discuss a promising view, the harmony model, at length (*Phd*. 86–95a). However, just before Socrates offers his autobiographical account, the harmony model is abandoned as well. Socrates tells Simmias "my good friend, it is quite wrong for us to say that the soul is a harmony, and in saying so we would disagree both with the
divine poet Homer and with ourselves” (Phd. 95a). Socrates distills the essence of Simmias’s and Cebes’s concern about the fate of the soul (95b–e). That the soul has endured many incarnations does not suffice: “It makes no difference whether it enters a body once or many times as far as the fate of each of us is concerned” (Phd. 95d). If we cannot prove the soul immortal, there is good reason to fear death. He challenges Cebes. “This I think is what you maintain Cebes: I deliberately repeat it often, in order that no point may escape us, and that you may add or subtract something if you wish” (Phd. 94d). Cebes affirms that he wishes to add or subtract nothing.

At this juncture, Phaedo’s narrative voice breaks in. He recounts the moment, “Socrates paused for a long time, deep in thought” (Phd. 95a). After this long silence, Socrates continues, “This is no unimportant problem that you raise, Cebes, for it requires a thorough investigation of the cause of generation and destruction” (Phd. 96a). At this aporetic impasse, Socrates offers his autobiographical account, “I will, if you wish, give you an account of my experiences in these matters” (Phd. 96a).

Socrates begins, “When I was a young man, I was wonderfully keen on that wisdom which they call natural science, for I thought it splendid to know the causes of everything, why it comes to be, why it perishes, and why it exists at all” (Phd. 96a). Socrates presents himself as being concerned with generation and destruction of all things, the soul included. As he tells this story, Socrates emphasizes his thought process. For example, he remarks, “I was often changing my mind in the investigation” (96b) and reports, “that is what I thought then” (Phd. 96d) and affirms, “I thought my opinion was satisfactory” (Phd. 96d). It is clear that questioning lies at the heart of the Socratic enterprise. Socrates relates the next stage of his journey: “Then again, as I investigated how these things perish and what happens to things in the sky and on the earth, finally I became convinced that I have no natural aptitude at all for that kind of investigation, and of this I will give you sufficient proof” (Phd. 96b). As he did in the Symposium, Socrates does not shy away from describing his lack of aptitude as a student.

Socrates emphasizes the depth of his ignorance, “this investigation made me quite blind to those things which I and others thought that I clearly knew before, so that I unlearned what I thought I knew before, about many other things and specifically about how men grew” (Phd. 96c). Socrates then asks Cebes, “Do you not think it was reasonable?” (Phd. 96d). Socrates draws Cebes into the story with these questions. I suggest that he does so because he wants Cebes to feel his confidence and then the despair of aporia that follows, and finally, the solace in the solution that Socrates adopts. Socrates’ strategy seems to work. Cebes asks him his current thoughts on such matters (Phd. 96e). Socrates responds, “That I am far, by Zeus, from believing that I know the cause of any of those things.” He discusses his rejection of units of measure, addition, and subtraction and emphasizes: “nor can I any longer be persuaded about division. Being the cause of becoming two” (Phd. 97b). Socrates summarizes the effect of his engagement with natural philosophy: “I do not any longer persuade myself that I know why a unit or anything else comes to be, or perishes or exists by the old method of investigation and I do not accept it” (Phd. 97b).

Socrates now describes how he developed “a confused method of my own” (Phd. 97b). He begins, “One day I heard someone reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, and saying that it is Mind that directs and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with this cause and it seems to be good, in a way, that Mind should be the cause of everything” (Phd. 97c). Socrates uses emotional language to describe his response to Anaxagoras: He is delighted and “glad to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher about the cause of things after my own heart” (Phd. 97e).
In addition to characterizing his thought process in highly emotional terms here, Socrates also presents himself in a hypothetical teacher-student relationship with Anaxagoras, much like he does with Diotima and the oracle. He presents himself as an eager learner. Socrates conveys his expectations, “He would tell me, first whether the earth is flat or round and then he would explain why it is so saying which is better, and that it was better to be so. . . . If he showed me those things I should be prepared never to desire any other kind of cause” (Phd. 98a). Simply put, Socrates assumed that Anaxagoras had a teleological dimension to his teaching.

I never thought that Anaxagoras, who said that those things were directed by Mind, would bring in any other cause for them than that it was best for them to be as they are. Once he had given the best for each as the cause for each and the general cause of all, I thought he would go on to explain the common good for all, and I would not have exchanged my hopes for a fortune. I eagerly acquired his books and read them as quickly as I could in order to know the best and the worst as soon possible. (Phd. 98c)

Several things are striking about this passage. First, Socrates describes his own involvement in the learning process. He does not merely listen to someone else reading. He reads himself. In fact, he eagerly acquires the books as quickly as possible. Again, Socrates includes descriptions of his emotional states. In this way, he underscores the affective dimensions of the learning process. He—like Augustine centuries later—is on fire to know. Second, he offers an emotional accounting of his learning process. He eagerly acquires the books and reads them quickly. He expresses his despair when Anaxagoras's book disappoints him: “This wonderful hope was dashed as I went on reading and saw that the man made no use of Mind nor gave it any responsibility for the management of things” (Phd. 98c). Third, Socrates reveals what he came to believe. He explains that Anaxagoras was no different than any of the natural philosophers. Socrates suggests that this lack of interest in ethical grounding that is the cause of so much disagreement of causes and principles (Phd. 99c). He summarizes what is lacking in their approach, “they do not believe that the truly good and ‘binding’ binds and holds them together” (Phd. 99c). Unlike the teacher he ostensibly found in Diotima, Anaxagoras offers Socrates no vision of the beautiful itself, noting that it is the ultimate aim of all previous efforts.

Socrates eloquently articulates his desire for the teacher he imagined Anaxagoras to be: “I would gladly become the disciple of any man who taught the workings of that kind of cause” (Phd. 99d). However, no such teacher exists. At this juncture, he asks Cebes if he would like to know what Socrates did in the absence of just such a teacher. The parallels of their position are abundantly apparent. Socrates could not find the teacher that he desired. Cebes worries how he will exist without the teacher he has found. Socrates offers Cebes his own solution, “Since I was deprived [of such a teacher] and could neither discover it myself nor learn it from another, do you wish me to give you an explanation of how, as a second best, I busied myself with the search for the cause, Cebes?” (Phd. 99d).

Cebes eagerly responds, “I would wish it above all else” (99d). Socrates complies.

When I had wearied of the investigation of things, I thought that I must be careful to avoid the experience of those who watch an eclipse of the sun, for some of them ruin their eyes unless they watch its reflection in water or some such material. A similar thought crossed my mind, and I feared that my soul would be altogether blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with each of my senses. (Phd. 99e)

Socrates evocatively describes his emotional state. For example, he feels “deprived” and “weary” of investigating. He “fears” his soul would be blinded. Even
more importantly, Socrates describes the philosophical process he developed as a result of his fear. First, he explains, “I thought I must take refuge in discussions and investigate the truth of things by means of words” (Phd. 99e). He elaborates further, “I started in this manner; taking as my hypothesis in each case the theory that seemed to me the most compelling, I would consider as true, about cause and everything else whatever agreed with this, and as untrue whatever did not so agree” (Phd. 100a). Socrates describes how he becomes his own teacher. He becomes his own trusted guide. He holds his own life up for analysis. He offers this story of pedagogical transformation to teach others. He recognizes that his avid pupil, Cebes, has no idea what he is talking about. Much like his Diotima addressed him long ago, Socrates turns to Cebes and says, “But I want to put my meaning more clearly, for I do not think that you understand me now” (Phd. 100b). Cebes affirms that he does not. Socrates explains again.

This is what I mean. It is nothing new, but what I have never stopped talking about, both elsewhere and in the earlier part of our conversation. I am going to try to show you the kind of cause with which I have concerned myself. I turn back to those oft-mentioned things and proceed from them. I assume the existence of a beautiful, itself by itself, of a Good and a Great, and all the rest. If you grant me these and agree that they exist, I hope to show you the cause as a result, and to find the soul to be immortal. (Phd. 100b)

Socrates describes his self-motivated inquiry. He charts his own course. He does not wait for others to give him the answers he seeks. He asks something of Cebes in return for the story that he tells. Socrates wants Cebes to invest more fully in the philosophical process. Cebes must stop waiting for proof to be given to him. Cebes qualifies his response: “Take it that I grant you this, and hasten to your conclusion” (Phd. 100c). He still sees this process as something that belongs to Socrates. He has not taken the process to be his own. Socrates’ own account more or less ends here: the next pages of the dialogue are Socrates’ interrogation with Cebes about what he really believes with respect to the forms. Socrates implicitly asks Cebes to take ownership of his beliefs.

III: On the Nature of a Narrative Immortality: Kleos Reconsidered.

The 2004 movie Troy opens with a stirring rendition of Odysseus’ expression of the human desire for immortality.

Men are haunted by the vastness of eternity.
And so we ask ourselves,
Will our actions echo across the centuries?
Will strangers hear our names long after we’re gone and wonder who we were, how bravely we fought, how fiercely we loved?

Despite its many faults, the movie nicely captures the Homeric sense of kleos, a narrative immorality in which human actions, more specifically heroic deeds of our fleeting individual experiences will be remembered and glorified forever in words. As an aside, that this opening to Troy struck such a contemporary chord speaks to the kleos of the idea of kleos itself. Even in our fastpaced world of tweets and status updates, there remains some longing of the lasting sense of narrative presence. But back to the Greeks. In “The Homeric Narrator and his own Kleos,” Irene de Jong makes the compelling case argues that the Homeric poet (him or herself) also aspires to a similar glory and perhaps even attains one.

Jacob Howland and many others have argued that Plato is involved in a
sustained attempt to rewrite the Homeric epics with a new philosophical purpose, a new philosophical hero.20 If so, it would not be surprising to see elements of both heroic and narrative kleos in the dialogues. Indeed, one could quite easily regard Plato as creating just such an immortality for his teacher. The dialogues have created a narrative kleos for Socrates though the immortalization of his words and deeds. But Socrates' own stories, at least the way that they are told in Plato's words are stories of a different sort. Socrates does not tell the story of Anaxagoras to preserve the works of Anaxagoras for posterity, nor does he tell the story to carve out a space personal glory about the development of his own method. Rather he narrates this story, and many other autobiographical accounts (for instances his encounters with Diotima and his testing of the oracle) for the care of the community of people that he loves. As Phaedo's own account draws to a close, we see Socrates presenting his own narrative struggles to "develop a confused method of his own" as a model for those surrounding him on this final day. They must find their own way a model for crafting and discovering their own philosophical narratives rather than using their philosophical energy to enshrine his immortality.

In my view, Socrates' autobiographical account meets with limited success.21 He does not persuade them completely. Socrates concludes, “Therefore the soul, Cebe, is most certainly deathless and indestructible and our souls will really dwell in the underworld.” Cebe does not quite say that he believes it, but rather, “I have nothing more to say against that Socrates, nor can I doubt your arguments” (Phd. 107a). Cebe suggests that Simmias might have still more to say, which suggests that he too is not completely convinced (Phd. 107b). Simmias admits he has “private misgivings” (Phd. 107c).

Socrates encourages them to analyze the arguments “adequately” and if the conclusion is “clear,” they should “look no further” (Phd. 107b). In my view, Socrates is suggesting that they not demand more precision than the subject matter allows. Rather, they should cultivate their own resources for the journey ahead and not let the desire for proof undermine the value of belief. After the autobiographical account, Socrates tells another story about the guides and the journey to the regions of the earth (Phd. 109a–115a). Perhaps his autobiographical account is meant to guide them to a place where they can accept this mythic explanation of what awaits them at the end. The autobiography begins where the arguments end. Perhaps a new model of understanding the immortality of soul can be found there.

IV: What Might Doing Likewise Entail?

Socrates' autobiographical narrative speaks to their immediate challenge: to learn how to live and philosophize without their beloved guide. Socrates tells them how he became prepared to philosophize on his own so that they might have a model of how to philosophize on their own. Phaedo imitates, and thereby initiates, the process of philosophizing on his own by telling his story as a means of caring for the Philians and helping the Philians care for one another. The Pythagorean context has very much to do with legacy.22 Surely Plato would have been aware of the different groups of Pythagoreans, the split after Pythagoras's death. The Philians are there as a group caring for each other. Surely the followers of Socrates are expected to go forth and do likewise.

I only have time to offer a preliminary sketch of what a post–Socratic philosophical community might involve. Each of these accounts offers tantalizing hints that I will explore in future work. From the Apology, it seems clear that Socrates wishes to persuade his fellow citizens to become less concerned with what they have and more concerned with becoming “as good and as wise as possible” (Ap. 36c). Similarly they must learn “not to care for the city's possessions more than for the city
itself, and to care for other things in the same way” (Ap. 36d). How will they do that? By embracing the vision that Socrates offers via Diotima in the Symposium. Diotima says that when philosophers “look upon beauty’s visible presentment . . . [they] will be quickened with the true, and not the seeming, virtue” (Symp. 210a–212b). When they come to abide in true virtue, they will be transformed. They will become different than they are. As Pierre Hadot says, “the real problem (for Socrates) is therefore not the problem of knowing this or that, but of being in this way or that way.”23 The same problem confronts the students of Socrates in the absence of Socrates.

The same problem confronts us today. As we seek to become such people, we should take Socrates’ cautions about misology and misanthropy to heart (Phd. 89d). As Socrates explains the dangers of hatred of argument, he links the continuation of the practice of philosophy with their continued existence and with his death. He tells them, “we must take courage and be eager to attain soundness, you and the others for the sake of your whole life still to come, and I for the sake of death itself” (Phd. 91d). Socrates admits, “I am in danger at this moment of not having a philosophical attitude about this” (91b), and he asks their help in continuing the argument forward (Phd. 91b–d). Later, Socrates also tells them that they must comfort each other. They must use these arguments as incantations to quell the disquiet in their souls (Phd. 114d).

Differently put, they must learn to see the practice of philosophy as a means by which they can support one another. They are not yet good at providing this care to each other. Phaedo tells Echecrates, “So we stayed, talking among ourselves questioning what had been said and then again talking of the great misfortune that had befallen us. We all felt as if we had lost a father and would be orphaned for the rest of our lives” (Phd. 116b). However, all is not lost. At least, they are talking together and questioning each other. Though they may not fully realize the benefits of their communal engagement, they are, nonetheless, in community with each other. The lamenting continues; Apollodorus, Phaedo, Crito, everyone present breaks down in tears (Phd. 117d). Socrates exhorts them to change their behavior. Phaedo reports that “his words made us ashamed and we checked our tears” (Phd. 118a). However, the fact that Phaedo tells the story to the Philians conveys a sense of hopefulness that he might meet Socrates’ philosophical expectations. He does not just tell the story of Socrates but he tells a story of himself and Socrates. He makes Socrates’ story his own. In doing so, he abides in true virtue by caring for the legacy of Socrates. We must continue this practice as we craft our own philosophical narratives and share them with our students. Precisely how we do that is, of course, another logos.

(Endnotes)

2 Apollodorus concludes the Symposium in a similar manner reporting on Socrates' actions. However, there is no sustained return of the narrative frame temporality in any other dialogue other than the Socratically narrated Euthydemus.


4 This is the subject of Socratic Epics: Telling Tales of Socrates. Currently in progress.

5 There are several instances of Socratic narration within the non Socratically narrated dialogues. In addition to the famous Anaxagoras account, Socrates' account of his encounters with Diotima and his encounters with the Oracle at Delphi are two of the most obvious examples. See “Socrates on Socrates: Looking Backward to Bring Philosophy Forward.” Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 30 (2015):123-141 for a comparison of these three accounts.


7 Zuckert (2009 discusses the narrated dialogues. Though Zuckert offers several insightful observations about the information we glean from Socrates narrative remarks, they are not the overall focus of her wide-ranging investigation of the portrait of philosophy in the dialogues.

8 I do not mean to imply that the narrative features have gone unnoticed. That is clearly not the case. To my knowledge, they are not the primary focus of an engagement with Plato and there has not been a comprehensive systematic study of how these narrative comments function. Numerous careful treatments of the narrative frames and commentary appear in the extended studies of individual dialogues. For example, On the Phaedo, see Dorter 1982. On the Protagoras, see Coby1987 and Berger 1984 and Ebert 2003. On the Parmenides, see Miller, 1991). On the Symposium, see Nussbaum 1986, Halperin 1992, Bloom 1993); On the Lysis, see Geier 2002 and Gonzalez 1995 and 2003. On the Euthydemus, see Chance 1992 and X on the Charmides see Benardete 1986 and Hyland 1981.

9 Scholars frequently point to the Anonymous Commentary on the Theaetetus as evidence that there was an earlier version of the Theaetetus. The AC offers little in the way of support of whether or not that earlier version had a Socratic narrative commentary or not. But it is clear that there was some earlier version of the dialogue.

10 To elaborate briefly on what I mean by mental processes. Sometimes,
Socrates reports his thought process. Sometimes, he reports his emotional states. Sometimes he uses emotional language to describe his thought process. These are three aspects of his narrative style. I am not arguing that he always links thoughts and emotions in his narrative remarks. The reporting of thought process is important because it gives us access to Socrates’ inner state of mind on the cognitive level. The reporting of emotions is important because it reveals Socrates often regards his emotions in a positive light. That he does not completely separate his rational process from his emotional process from is significant for reconsidering the strict division of parts of the soul in the *Republic* and the intellectualist view of Socrates more broadly.

11 Socrates seems to be offering a competing mode of long speech in crafting these narratives.

12 Socrates also tells stories about himself in other non Socratically narrated dialogues. See Schultz (2015, 123-141).

13 Socrates associates Homer with the harmony model (*Rep*. 94d). Socrates seems intent on placing the Pythagoreans in the overall Greek pedagogical context rather than insisting that they offer a radically different way of life as he seems to suggest at *Rep*. 600a.

14 The number imagery reinforces the Pythagorean dimensions of the conversation.


17 The narrative context is interesting. Socrates learns that Anaxagoras is the author from the person reading the book. Socrates preserves this detail about the transmission of knowledge through oral recitation of the written word. The transmission of oral culture links us back to the beginning of this dialogue with the numerous references to the residents of Phlius who are listening to Phaedo’s account (*Phd*. 58a).


21 Socrates’ inability to persuade his interlocutors fully occurs in almost every dialogue. The presentation of Socrates’ pedagogical failure may be a rhetorical necessity to stimulate the reader of the dialogue to think beyond the failures of the interlocutor. At the same time, that Plato so consistently portrays Socrates as failing, at least on some level in his attempts to bring others to philosophical understanding, suggests to me that Plato is, at least on some level, critical of Socrates’ pedagogical practices. I make some preliminary suggestions about the nature of this critique in Looking beyond the Elenchus, *Southwest Philosophy Review* 14 (1998): 157–168.


1. Introduction

In the *Phaedo* the visible-invisible isotopy is one of the pillars of the demonstration that the soul that existed before birth will also exist after death. Moreover, Socrates makes an etymological connection on two different occasions between Hades (Ἅιδης) and the invisible (τὸ ἀιδές). In contrast, in the *Cratylus*, this same etymological connection is decisively rejected. In this dialogue, Socrates offers two different etymologies for the name of Hades: according to the first, Ἅιδης is thought to derive from “the invisible” (τὸ ἀιδές), while according to the second, it is considered to derive from “knowledge” (τὸ εἰδέναι). Socrates criticizes the first and advocates the second.

Scholars have interpreted this divergence between the two dialogues in various ways. Some have considered Platonic etymologies a meaningless game; others have tried to resolve the discrepancy by referring to the evolution of Platonic thought, whereby Plato first accepts some of Pythagoras’ etymologies only to later reject them.

While these positions tend to search for coherence in Platonic thought, I believe that what we have to interpret instead is the coherence of the contexts in which etymologies are inserted. Through a strict enunciative analysis of the discursive context in which etymologies appear, I will elucidate the meaning of the divergence between the different etymological associations appearing in these dialogues. The results of this analysis will throw new light on the isotopy of the visible-invisible in the *Phaedo* and on the cultural context with which the *Phaedo* engages.

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1 T. Baxter, *The Cratylus. Plato’s Critique of Naming*, Leiden-New York-Cologne: 104 for the etymology Hades-knowledge: “This etymology strikes one as far-fetched and highly ironic, and it is hard to believe that anyone could profess it seriously. Plato however does have a serious point to make, which emerges when one recollects a passage in the *Phaedo*, namely, 80d5-7”.

2 V. Goldschmidt, *Essai sur le Cratyle. Contribution à l’histoire de la pensée de Platon*, Paris, 1940: 124: “Cette conception orphique et pythagoricienne est présentée dans le *Cratyle* sous une affabulation sophistique; il y a peu de chance que Platon l’ait déjà fait sienne à l’époque où il composait ce dialogue [...] bien ironique est l’explication que Platon propose définitivement: le nom dériverait de εἰδέναι”; F. Ademollo, *The Cratylus of Plato. A commentary*, Cambridge, 2011: 194-195: “It is fairly clear that our passage does not anticipate the *Phaedo*, but rather presupposes it (and indeed criticizes and improves on it, as far as the etymology of Ἅιδης is concerned)”.

Let's start with a reading of the argument in *Cratylus*:

Socrates: As for Pluto, he was given that name because it accords with his being the source of wealth (τοῦ <πλούτου>), since wealth comes up from below the ground. It seems to me that most people call him by the name 'Pluto', because they are afraid of what they can't see (τὸ <ἀιδὲς>), and they assume that his other name, 'Hades', associates him with that.

Hermogenes: And what do you think yourself, Socrates?

Socrates: I think people have lots of mistaken opinions about the power of this god and are unduly afraid of him. They are afraid because once we are dead we remain in his realm forever. They are terrified because the soul goes there stripped of the body. But I think that all these things, together with the name and office of the god, point in the same direction. (Pl. Cra. 403a-b. Trad. Reeve)

According to Socrates, the first etymology reflects the views of the majority of people (οἱ πολλοί) who interpret Hades as “the invisible” (τὸ ἀιδές), fearing this god and his name. But why should the invisible be fearful? An analysis of the Greek literary corpus shows that the association between death and the invisible is attested elsewhere in Greek texts. For example, in the *Iliad* we find the Ἅιδος κυνῆ “the cap of Hades” that makes the person who wears it invisible. Already in Hesiod’s texts, Hades is often accompanied by the epithet “black” and is opposed to the brightness of life: in the *Works and the Days* the men of the Bronze Age have to quit “the brilliant light of the sun” and are obliged to go towards a “terrible” and “black” death, where Hades is “cold” and his house is “humid”. In Greek theatre, characters who must die often associate Hades with the lack of light: Aphrodite says about Hippolytus, who is soon to die, that “he does not know that the gates of the Underworld stand open for him and that today’s light is the last he shall ever look upon”. Alcestis feels at once the closeness of Hades and a “dark night” creeping over her eyes. It should be pointed out that “black”, in the cited passages, is equivalent to “lacking light”, as explained by the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On Colours*, where black is defined as the absence of light or as the colour that is not seen. The etymological connection

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4 Hom. II.844-845: αὐτὰρ Αθήνη / δῶν’ Ἀιδὸς κυνῆν, μὴ μιν ἴδοι ὄβριμος Ἀρης.
7 Eur. Alc. 268-269: πλησίον Ἀιδας, σκοτια / δ’ ἐπ’ ὄσσσιν νῦξ ἐφέρετε.
8 Ps.-Arist. Color. 791a: τὸ μὴ δρόμομεν ἐστὶ τῇ φύσει μέλαν; 791b: τὸ σκότος οὐ
between Hades and the invisible is also made by the chorus of the *Ajax*, who refers to "the terrible Hades that makes invisible". The adjective ἀϊδηλος simultaneously means "that makes unseen" and "destructive". Hades "makes unseen" in the sense that he robs the living of the ability to see the person now dead and at the same time he "destroys", decreeing the end of life. Such is the terrible symbolic universe evoked by the etymology Hades/"invisible", where "black", "destruction" and "invisible" cooperate and build the fearsome semantic network delivered by the association between Hades and the invisible. In the text of *Cratylus*, the verb φοβεῖσθαι, "to be afraid", is repeated four times: men are afraid of the very name of Hades, which evokes the terrible "invisible", preferring to name the god with his second name, Pluto, which refers instead to something positive, the wealth (πλούτος) that flows up from the earth.

Therefore, in the *Cratylus*, Socrates proposes a different etymology, based on a different account of Hades. First, he explains why souls always stay close to Hades, without being able to return to the earth, which is the first fear of men about death. Souls are bound to Hades by the most powerful connection (δεσμός) that exists, stronger than necessity (ἀνάγκη). This δεσμός is the desire (ἐπιθυμία) that comes from the souls themselves: the desire to become better through the beneficial presence of another person. According to Socrates' explanation, Hades is not the god who instils fear; on the contrary, he is the god who transmits knowledge through speech. That is why according to the second etymology of the *Cratylus*, Hades comes from "knowledge" (τὸ εἰδέναι). The speeches addressed by Hades to the souls are so beautiful and so powerful that the souls are not retained in the underworld by a blind and incomprehensible necessity imposed by an evil god, but by their own desire to stay with him in order to become better. A new picture emerges from this second etymology of Hades: instead of a black and terrible place, characterized by the privation of light and sight, and of a god who destroys and makes invisible, the god Hades becomes a perfect image of knowledge, beneficial to those around him. The traditional image of Hades is thus reversed: a new etymology puts forward a new story about Hades and the afterlife, which seeks to replace the traditional account and evokes the same positive semantic web as the etymology of Pluto: the god who gives wealth is also the god who gives knowledge. Socrates summarizes his argument as follows:

Καὶ τὸ γε ὄνομα ὁ "Ἀιδής," ὦ Ἐρμόγενε, πολλοῦ δεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄιδοῦς ἐπωνομάσθαι, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντα τὰ καλὰ ἐπωνομάσθαι, ἀπὸ τούτου ὑπὸ τοῦ νομοθέτου "Ἀιδής" ἐκλήθη.

It's much more likely then, Hermogenes, that Hades derives his name not from what cannot be seen (ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄιδοῦς), but from the fact that he knows (ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντα τὰ καλὰ ἐπωνομάσθαι), and that that is why the rule-setter called him 'Hades'. (Pl. Cra. 404b. Trad. Reeve)

Two competing etymologies, which deliver, respectively, a negative vision of the god Hades and a positive depiction of him as a source of knowledge, correspond to two competing discourses about what Hades is. Therefore, etymology stands out as one of the instruments Plato deploys to persuade his audience of the validity of a new discourse on Hades and the underworld, intended to replace traditional accounts about death.

χρώμα ἀλλὰ στέρησίς ἐστι φωτός.
9 Soph. Aj. 608 : τὸν ἀπότροπον ἀϊδηλον Ἅιδαν.
10 Pl. Cra. 403c-404b.
3. The *Pheado*

We shall now proceed to the analysis of the etymology in *Pheado*. The story told by the second and “positive” etymology proposed in the *Cratylus*, namely the fact that one should not be afraid of death because the kingdom of Hades is in fact the place where the soul can receive knowledge from a benevolent divine figure, is developed and argued dialectically in the *Phaedo*. Let us analyse the two passages where the etymology Hades-invisible, rejected in the *Cratylus*, is accepted in the *Phaedo*:

*Ἕδε ψυχή ἄρα, τὸ ἀιδές, τὸ εἰς τοιούτον τόπον ἔτερον οἰχόμενον γενναῖον καὶ καθαρὸν καὶ ἀιδή, εἰς Ἅιδου ὡς ἄλθως, παρά τὸν ἄγαθον καὶ φρόνιμον θεόν, οἱ, ἄν θεός θέλῃ, αὐτικά καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ ψυχῇ ἵτεον, αὕτη δὲ δὴ ἡ ἑμίς ἡ τοιαύτη καὶ οὕτω περικυκλῳ ἀπαλλαττομένη τού σώματος εὐθὺς διαπεφύσηται καὶ ἀπόλωλεν, ἡς φασίν οἱ πολλοί ἄνθρωποι;*

Will the soul, the invisible part which makes its way to a region of the same kind, noble and pure and invisible, to Hades in fact, to the good and wise god whither, god willing, my soul must soon be going—will the soul, being of this kind and nature, be scattered and destroyed on leaving the body, as the majority of men say? (Pl. Phd. 80d-e. Trad. Grube)

*Ἐμβριθές δὲ γε, ὦ φίλε, τοῦτο οἴεσθαι χρή εἶναι καὶ βαρύ καὶ γεώδες καὶ ὁρατόν· ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχή βαρύνεταί τε καὶ ἕλκεται πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὁρατόν τόπον φόβῳ τοῦ Ἅιδου ή τοῖς Αἰδου, ὡσπέρ λέγεται, περὶ τὰ μνήματα τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένη, περὶ δὴ καὶ ἄφθῃ ἄτα ψυχῶν σκιοειδες φαντάσματα, οία παρέχονται αἰ τοιαῦτα ψυχαί εἴδωλα, αἱ μὴ καθαρῶς ἀπολυθεῖσαι ἀλλὰ τοῦ ὁρατοῦ μετέχουσαι, διὸ καὶ ὁρῶνται.*

We must believe, my friend, that this bodily element is heavy, ponderous, earthy and visible. Through it, such a soul has become heavy and is dragged back to the visible region in fear of the unseen and of Hades. It wanders, as we are told, around graves and monuments, where shadowy phantoms, images that such souls produce, have been seen, souls that have not been freed and purified but share in the visible, and are therefore seen. (Pl. Phd. 81c-d. Trad. Grube)

These etymologies fit in the general demonstration of the persistence of the soul after death, in which Socrates claims that beings can be classified in two categories, the visible (τὸ μὲν ὁρατόν) and the invisible (τὸ δὲ ἀιδές) – the body belonging to the former, the soul to the latter. However, we don't need to refer to the overall argument. As I will hopefully show, an analysis of the micro-contexts in which the etymologies for “Hades” appear in the *Phaedo* suffices to assess Plato's discursive strategies in the use of this tool.

In the first passage (80c-d), the body is considered as the visible part, and the soul is identified with the invisible part (τὸ ἀιδές); at the moment of death, the soul goes to a place akin to it: an invisible place (εἰς Ἅιδου), called Hades for the very reason that men cannot see it. At the same time, the lifeless body, the still visible part of the dead man (τὸ ὁρατόν), remains in the realm of the visible (ἐν ὁρατῶ κείμενον). In this context Hades – in the sense of the “underworld” – is depicted not only as “invisible”, but also as noble (γενναῖον) and pure (καθαρὸν); and the god
Hades is qualified as good (ἀγαθόν) and wise (φρόνιμον). In this passage, therefore, the word “invisible” is positively marked, unlike in Cratylus.

Let me turn to second passage (81c-d). I have underlined all the words referring to the dialectic between the visible and the invisible. This passage comes from a discussion about souls that have not purified themselves before death. In the Phaedo, these correspond to the souls of those who have not practiced philosophy, and have therefore failed to completely detach their soul from their body in their lifetime. These souls are afraid of the “invisible and of Hades” (τοῦ ἀιδοῦς τε καὶ Ἅιδου): notice that here the concept of the invisible (τὸ ἀιδές) and Hades (Ἀιδῆς) are linked by a double conjunction τε καὶ that underlines their common nature. Because of their failure to be purified from the body before death, these souls do not reach the underworld and remain visible on earth. They are seen (ὁφθη), like ghosts or images (φαντάσματα, εἴδωλα) and they are black (σκιοειδῆ), with all the negative connotations attached to this imagery that I have already pointed out. Living persons can see (ὁρῶνται) them for the very reason that they still participate in the visible (τοῦ ὁρατοῦ). This second passage, in which the etymology of Hades appears, focuses on the fact that, in order to access the invisible, the soul should not be burdened by the weight of the body at the time of death. Those who are not purified and whose souls are bound to roam on earth are visible: it is the realm of the “visible”, now, which attracts all the negative connotations that were linked to the “invisible” beforehand. More precisely, in this passage not only the traditional link between “the invisible” and Hades is accepted, unlike in the Cratylus, but it is also exploited as a persuasive tool, in a context where Socrates needs to distinguish the visible body from the invisible soul. It is clear, therefore, that an etymology needs to be understood in relation with the argumentative context in which Plato uses it. In Phaedo and Cratylus the same etymology can be accepted or rejected: that depends on the type of the argument Plato develops in the passage where the etymology appears. However both solutions aim at demonstrating the same concept: men should not be afraid of the underworld.

At the same time, the reading of the Phaedo can lead one to think that the second etymology proposed in the Cratylus - Hades deriving from τὸ εἰδέναι - is in turn ambiguous: in fact in the Phaedo there is a continuing fluctuation about the meaning of εἰδέναι.

Whenever someone, on seeing something, realizes that that which he now sees wants to be like some other reality but falls short and cannot be like that other since it is inferior, do we agree that the one who thinks this must have prior knowledge of that to which he says it is like, but deficiently so? […] We must then possess knowledge of the Equal before that time when we first saw the equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient in this. (Pl. Phd. 74d-75a Trad. Grube)
Here Socrates explains the theory of reminiscence and gives the example of the
“equal”. He maintains that we must have προειδέναι the equal: that means that we
must have “known”, but also “seen” the equal in a time before our lives. Information
acquired by the senses, i.e. the sight of equal objects, reactivates previous knowledge
of the Equal, in the process of reminiscence. The opposition between knowledge
through the body and the pure knowledge acquired by the soul is clearly established
in the following passage:

τὸ δ’ ἐσχάτον πάντων ὅτι, ἐὰν τις ἡμῖν καὶ σχολὴ γένηται ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ
τραπώμεθα πρὸς τὸ σκοπεῖν τι, ἐν ταῖς ζητήσεσιν αὖ παραπῖπτον
θόρυβον παρέχει καὶ ταραχὴν καὶ ἐκπλήττει, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καθοράν
tάληθές. ἀλλὰ τῷ ἐν ταῖς ζητήσεσιν αὐτῆς τῇ ψυχῇ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα [...] εἰ γὰρ μὴ
οἷόν τε μετὰ τοῦ σώματος μηδὲν καθαρῶς γνῶναι, δυοῖν θάτερον, ἢ οὐδαμοῦ ἔστιν
κτῆσαι τὸ εἰδέναι ἢ τελευτήσασιν τότε γὰρ αὐτὴ καθ’ αὐτῆς τῇ ψυχῇ ἔσται χωρίς
tοῦ σώματος, πρότερον δ’ οὖ.

Worst of all, if we do get some respite from it and turn to some investigation,
everywhere in our investigations the body is present and makes for confusion and
fear, so that it prevents us from seeing the truth. It really has been shown to us that,
if we are ever to have pure knowledge, we must escape from the body and observe
things in themselves with the soul by itself. [...] for if it is impossible to attain any
pure knowledge with the body, then one of two things is true: either we can never
attain knowledge or we can do so after death. Then and not before, the soul is by
itself apart from the body. (Pl. Phd. 66d-67a. Trad. Grube)

The body is the prison through which men are obliged to see the objects during
their lifetime and the senses are misleading. If the body is an obstacle for intellec tion,
real knowledge can only be attained without it. Therefore Hades becomes the place
where perfect knowledge becomes possible, because the soul can finally see and
know without the intermediation of the body.

4. Conclusions

Finally, let me draw some conclusions from the arguments I have been
building. First, these analyses illumine the role of etymology in Plato as a form
of argumentative discourse: the etymology Hades-invisible is accepted in the
Phaedo and rejected in the Cratylus because Plato deploys etymology according
to his argumentative needs. Second, the parallel reading of Phaedo and Cratylus
gives insight into the relations between Phaedo and the cultural context it engages in
dialogue with. In particular, in the Phaedo Plato reverses the beliefs of his time on two
major points. First, he presents the “invisible” as something “noble” and “beautiful”: that is a reversal of the imagery of his time. Second, he has made Socrates affirm that
the Invisible, with a capital I, that is the place Hades, is the place for excellence of the
“seen” and therefore of “knowledge”.

Résumé

Dans le Phédon, l’isotopie du visible-invisible constitue l’un des piliers de la
démonstration du fait que l’âme, qui existait avant la naissance, existera aussi après la
mort. C’est dans ce contexte que le personnage de Socrate fait à deux reprises un jeu
de mot étymologisant par lequel il relie l’Hades (Ἀδής) et l’invisible (τὸ ἀιδές). Dans
le *Cratyle*, ce même jeu étymologisant est écarté avec décision : ici, Socrate propose deux étymologies pour le nom d’Hadès. Selon la première, Ἅιδης dériverait de « ce qui ne se voit pas » (τὸ ἀιδές), selon la deuxième, il dériverait du « savoir » (εἰδέναι).

Socrate critique la première et accepte comme bonne la dernière. Le but de notre exposé est de comprendre pourquoi le même jeu étymologisant est accepté dans le *Phédon* et critiqué dans le *Cratyle*, et nous nous proposons de le faire à travers une analyse énonciative du contexte discursif des deux dialogues.

Dans la première partie de l’exposé, nous étudions les deux étymologies du *Cratyle* : si ici Socrate critique l’étymologie Hadès-invisible et propose comme bonne l’étymologie Hadès-connaissance, c’est que dans la culture grecque le concept d’Invisible fait peur car il évoque le monde terrible de la mort et du manque de lumière. Si Socrate soutient qu’Hadès ne dérive pas du mot « invisible » mais du mot « connaissance », c’est parce qu’il veut argumenter contre la peur de la mort représentée par l’effrayant Invisible et convaincre du fait que l’au-delà est le lieu où les âmes acquièrent la connaissance, dispensée par un dieu bon, Hadès.

Dans la deuxième partie, nous analysons les deux passages du *Phédon* dans lesquels Socrate propose l’étymologie Hadès-invisible. Si ici cette étymologie est en revanche acceptée, c’est parce que dans ce dialogue Socrate réhabilite, avec un renversement de l’imaginaire de son temps, l’image traditionnelle du concept d’Invisible, en en faisant quelque chose de beau et de noble. Enfin, nous analysons un deuxième renversement de l’imaginaire de son temps que Socrate accomplit dans ce dialogue, en faisant de l’Hadès, c’est-à-dire de l’Invisible, le lieu par excellence du « voir » et donc du « savoir » (εἰδέναι).

Ces analyses nous mènent à deux conclusions : d’abord, on comprend que Platon utilise l’étymologie comme moyen argumentatif qui se plie à des exigences argumentatives. Ensuite, elles jettent une lumière nouvelle sur le contexte culturel avec lequel le *Phédon* rentre en dialogue et sur la manière révolutionnaire dont Platon traite l’isotopie du visible-invisible.
The immortality of the soul is one of Plato’s favourite topics. In a series of
dialogues generally thought to span the greater part of his writing career – above all
the Apology, Gorgias, Meno, Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus and Timaeus – he reverts
to it repeatedly, clocking up no fewer than seven formal proofs of it. At the centre
of all this stands his ethically pivotal conviction that the soul outlives its present
incarnation, to be duly rewarded or punished. The realization that the soul’s
progressions and regressions are most properly evaluated and understood over an
indefinitely long time-span, and not just within the confines of a single life, in his
eyes both makes greater moral sense of the world and clarifies how we can best play
our own part in it. It also offers the longer-term prospect of our souls’ leaving bodily
incarnation behind. Besides, that our souls are such as to survive death, go to Hades,
and perhaps return in new incarnations, was part of a religious tradition with roots
in Homer and Orphism.1 Plato would for this reason see himself less as an innovator
than as an interpreter and defender of these traditions.

In the Phaedo Socrates, awaiting execution, has the task of convincing his
interlocutors that the soul is immortal, and thus clarifying why, instead of fearing
his imminent death, he looks forward to whatever rewards await him in the afterlife.
The most astute of his interlocutors, Cebes, has expressed his concern that even a
soul capable of surviving the body’s dissolution might prove not to be altogether
immortal, but could eventually wear out and die (86e6-88b8). Socrates’ long
reply (95b5-107a1) is intended to shut off this danger by showing the soul to be
intrinsically immortal – the sort of thing that not only does not die but in its very
nature could not die. I wish to examine the final part of this reply (102a11-107a1) –
the Last Argument, as it has come to be known – in some detail.

The argument has a reputation for being both difficult and unsatisfactory. As
a result of this, a number of scholars have resorted to reading Plato and his speaker
Socrates as themselves considering it mistaken, or at any rate unreliable.2 But Plato
created this argument and put it into Socrates’ mouth precisely in order to explain
why Socrates went confidently and cheerfully to his death. It seems to me scarcely
credible that he should intend to convey the message that Socrates’ final act as a
philosophical martyr, his confident acceptance of death, was based on a faulty
argument.

In order to resist that unwelcome interpretation, however, one must attempt

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1 This paper represents work in progress, and does not yet engage adequately with the existing
secondary literature, which is fairly vast. If at present I cite disproportionately many of my own
publications, it is not because I think they are more deserving of citation, but because some of the
claims I make only briefly here have been elaborated there. Outlines of the interpretation proposed
here have previously appeared in D. Sedley, ‘Three kinds of Platonic immortality’, in D. Frede and B.
Reis (eds.), Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy (Berlin 2009), 145-61, and in D.N. Sedley (ed.) and

2 The evidence usually cited is the doubts expressed by Simmias, and Socrates’ sympathetic response
to them, at 107a8-b10. But Cebes, who is fully convinced (107a2-3), is portrayed throughout as
methodologically much more sound than Simmias, as I argue in ‘The dramatis personae of Plato’s
1-26. For Socrates’ confidence in his conclusion, see also n. 20 below.
to show that Socrates' last argument is in fact a philosophically serious and skilful defence of the soul's immortality, worthy both of him and of Plato. And any global interpretation of the dialogue is likely to be shaped by the outcome of that attempt.

I do not of course mean by this that the argument is in fact successful, and I assume a further two and a half millennia of philosophy to have taught us that even if the soul were immortal this fact would probably not admit of formal proof. But I think it is as good an argument for that conclusion as can be found in the Platonic corpus, and that its supposed incoherences have been exaggerated. It is, in short, intended to serve as the definitive proof of the soul's total immunity to death.

Socrates is not plausibly understood as himself being convinced by this argument for the first time only as he finishes expounding it. Rather, he is repeating for the benefit of Cebes an argument he has worked out for himself previously, at least in outline, thanks especially to his profound and hard-won understanding of causality. What is being explained is his accommodating attitude to death, not just at the moment when he drinks the hemlock, but throughout the preceding period of his trial and imprisonment.

Let me, then, start with a minimalist sketch of the argument, prefacing a warning that the precise way in which I shall divide its work between two stages is unorthodox:

A. Introduction of a new metaphysical class, essential bearers (102a11-105d2)

Fire is essentially hot, and imports heat to whatever it occupies. Analogously, snow is an essential bearer of cold, three of oddness, fever of sickness, and soul of life. On the approach of the opposite property, cold, fire can either retreat or perish. What it cannot do is stay and admit coldness, i.e. become a cold fire. The same applies, mutatis mutandis, to the other essential bearers, soul included.

B. Applications

Stage 1: the soul's immortality (105d3-e10). Since soul is essentially alive, and imports life to whatever it occupies, on the approach of the opposite property, death, it cannot stay and admit death. Being thus incapable of becoming dead, soul is immortal: QED.

Stage 2: the soul's departure (105e11-107a1). Despite the close parallelism between the fire case and the soul case, there is one significant difference. Approached by the property it cannot admit, fire has the twin options of retreating and perishing; in soul's case, however, the option of perishing is excluded, since for a soul to perish is the same thing as for it to admit death, precisely the property that it cannot admit. Therefore on the approach of death the soul is reduced to the remaining option, that of retreating; and it does so, we are to suppose, by leaving the body and going to Hades.

Two points need to be stressed at this stage. The first is that the soul's going to Hades when death comes has been central to Socrates' contentions from the start, so that stage 2 of the argument, as I have construed it here, is no trivial afterthought. The dialogue's very first argument for immortality, the so-called Cyclical Argument (69e5-72d10), was likewise a defence of the Hades mythology. According to certain religious traditions, Socrates there pointed out, the soul cycles between discarnate existence in Hades and incarnate existence here. His ensuing argument was an attempt to vindicate this religious account of the soul's transformations by bringing it under a general scientific law: all change between opposites, it turned out, is correspondingly cyclical. And since making the Hades tradition scientifically respectable has been one of Socrates' leading aims all along, it should be no surprise

3 Cf. the clues to this effect at 96a1-3, 100b8-9 and 102d5.
that the Last Argument ends on a reaffirmation of Hades. Naturally, as in fact Socrates has earlier hinted, the Hades motif may need to be deliteralized so as to exclude some of the traditional trappings of the afterlife.4 But what Hades continues to represent is the soul’s successful detachment from the body, its continued discarnate existence, and in most cases its eventual return to incarnation at a level matching its acquired degree of purity or impurity. The conclusion that persuades Socrates to face death cheerfully is not simply that the soul is immortal, but that upon death it unshackles itself from its current body and embarks upon whatever progression it has earned. Hence Stage 2 of the argument, which I shall argue to consist in a demonstration that upon the approach of death the soul retreats, is absolutely pivotal to the dialogue’s conclusions. It is no accident at all that this final stage of the argument concludes with the words ‘Then, Cebes, it is definitely the case that soul is something immortal and imperishable, and that our own souls really will exist in Hades’ (106e4-6). That ending not only captures Socrates’ intended emphasis, but also directly leads into his concluding myth, in which he conjectures what the real nature of Hades must be like.

The second vital point is one I have already indirectly broached. The Last Argument, just like the Cyclical Argument, is an attempt to make a religious tradition scientifically respectable. The Cyclical Argument did this by showing that the cyclical transformations of the soul were no exception to a general scientific law of change, equally applicable to moral, mathematical and biological processes. Similarly the Last Argument aims to show that the basic laws it is applying to the soul, such as the ones about retreating or perishing, are applicable right across the board, for example to physical stuffs like fire and snow, to mathematical entities like numbers, and to biological occurrences like sickness. The reason for this strategy should be clear. If Socrates had limited himself to the analogy between fire and soul, as highlighted in the minimalist sketch I have already offered, he would have faced the natural objection that fire and soul belong to two radically different ontological realms, the one physical, the other immaterial and noetic (a distinction already emphasised by Socrates himself in the Affinity Argument at 78b4-80c1). In that case, the objection would run, no one need feel obliged to accept that fire and soul obey the same laws. Indeed, the fact that the soul is by Socrates’ own admission ontologically unique – akin to Forms rather than to sensible things, but not itself a Form either5 – would suggest that no possible analogy between the soul and anything else could be probative. It is for this reason that Socrates’ inductive argument sets out to cover as wide and heterogeneous a range of examples as possible. By doing so, he seeks to show that, like his earlier law of change, the current set of laws are of universal applicability, and do not depend on the specific ontological status of the item under consideration.6 Hence even something as ontologically sui generis as the soul must be assumed to conform to them. The wide variety of the examples over which Socrates generalises thus makes excellent strategic sense. But it is also what has generated most of the bewilderment experienced by interpreters.

Socrates has previously, in his so-called Second Voyage (99c8-102a3), argued that the safest way to identify the cause of something’s being, for example, beautiful, is to point to beauty as the cause of the cause. If instead we name, say, a thing’s shape or colour as the cause of its being beautiful, we will never get fully consistent results: the same

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4 At 63b4-c4 Socrates hesitates to endorse the Homeric picture of Hades previously affirmed by him at Apology 40e4-41c7.

5 The Affinity Argument (78b-80b) maintains that the soul is ‘more’ like the Forms than like corporeal being, which would be a considerable understatement if it were itself a Form. Cf. J. Schiller, ‘Phaedo 104-105: is the soul a Form?’, Phronesis 12 (1967), 50-8.

6 Nicholas Denyer, ‘The Phaedo’s final argument’, in D. Scott (ed.), Maiéusis (Oxford 2007), 87-96, p. 93, makes a similar point, although only with regard to the various items’ degree of corporeality.
shape or colour will in numerous cases contribute just as effectively to something's being ugly. But if we stick to saying that it is beauty that makes things beautiful, largeness that makes them large, and so on, we cannot possibly go wrong. Such formal causes are therefore utterly 'safe'. But relying on them is also 'simple-minded', in that they are close to being tautologies.

The fulcrum of the Last Argument is the proposal of a new set of items – what I shall refer to as 'essential bearers' – which combine the safeness of formal causes with the informativeness of the riskier kind of explanation exemplified by naming a thing's shape or colour as the cause of its being beautiful. Because of this informativeness they are called 'more subtle' instead of 'simple-minded' (105b5-c7). If, for example, we say that the presence of fire in something makes it hot, that is genuinely informative about how what is causing it to be hot, but still safe, in that fire, being itself essentially and inalienably hot, could never by its presence make something cold, in the way that the same shape or colour that contributes to one thing's being beautiful can contribute to another's being ugly. To say that fire makes things hot is thus safe in the same sense of 'safe' – i.e. self-guaranteeing and immune to incoherence – in which it is also safe to say that heat makes things hot.

Just as fire is an essential bearer of heat, snow is an essential bearer of cold, the number three of numerical oddness, and fever of sickness. Last and most important, soul is an essential bearer of life.

Whether the presence of one of these items is a sufficient condition of its effect's occurring, a necessary condition, or both, is not made specific. It seems clear, however, that all are in fact sufficient conditions, and that this is part of what it means to say that a certain item 'brings' this or that property to whatever it occupies. Moreover, some of them – for example, snow as bearer of cold, three as bearer of oddness – cannot possibly be necessary conditions. Your feet can be cold without standing in snow, and the number of people in this room can be odd without being either three or, for that matter, a thousand and three. Nevertheless, it may well be a necessary condition that some appropriate bearer be present: for example, if not three, then another appropriately defined number. And it does become clear from the text that Plato shared the widespread assumptions that the presence of fire is a necessary condition of a thing's being hot (105b8-c2; cf. Ti. 62a1-5), and the presence of soul likewise a necessary condition of something's being alive (105c8-10). What matters for the success of the argument, nevertheless, is that the items should be sufficient conditions. Provided only that soul's presence in it is sufficient to make something alive, soul is an essential bearer of life.

At this stage it is vital to insist also on the point that the essential bearers are particulars. Many scholars have supposed that at least some of the items in the class of essential bearers, perhaps even all, are transcendent Forms. This, it seems to me, could not possibly be right. Forms, as Socrates has emphasised earlier in the dialogue (78c1-d9), cannot perish, whereas the main point of working through the examples of essential bearers is to illustrate systematically how these items have the alternative options of retreating and perishing. The essential bearers are, precisely, not separated Forms, those safe if simple-minded remote causal principles, but

7 My impression is that at 105b8-c6 essential bearers are called necessary conditions; and that, correspondingly, at 105c8-10 soul is said to be a necessary condition of life; but that at 105d1-5 it is added that soul is also a sufficient condition of life.
8 A requirement which Plato expresses obscurely by saying that it must have a 'unit' (μονάς, 105c5), that is, a superfluous unit when divided in two.
9 Gail Fine, 'Immanence', OSAP 4 (1986), 71-97, pp. 77-8 maintains that Forms, viewed as present in particulars, can both 'retreat' and 'perish', and she explains the Form F's 'retreating' from an item as that item's ceasing to have or exemplify it; but I have not yet found in her work any explanation of what, beyond this, the Form's 'perishing' could be.
a distinct range of immanent entities capable of occupying or withdrawing from individual things and thus causing them to partake, or cease to partake, in essential properties that they themselves possess.

The reason why comparatively few interpreters have followed this obvious line\(^\text{10}\) seems to be that one of the essential bearers, the number three, which by its presence brings oddness, is once specifically referred to as ‘the form of three’ – ἡ τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα (104d5-6). But elsewhere in the passage Socrates makes it quite clear that he is talking about immanent tripleness, the specific tripleness of this or that trio of things, rather than the Form of Three, because the tripleness in question is repeatedly described as capable of ‘perishing’ (104c1-2, 105e10-106a1, 106c3). The natural solution then, as some have seen,\(^\text{11}\) is to take ἰδέα as meaning, not a transcendent Form, but a ‘character’ in a metaphysically less restricted sense. This suggestion is borne out by the fact that ἰδέα has nowhere hitherto in the \textit{Phaedo} or in any dialogue likely to predate it been used as a term for a transcendent Form. Its use in that sense is in fact unexpectedly rare in Plato,\(^\text{12}\) and might almost have gone unnoticed but for the famous pair of references to the ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, the ‘Form of the Good’, in the \textit{Republic},\(^\text{13}\) and for Aristotle’s frequent use of αἱ ἰδέαι to refer to the Platonic Forms, a precedent which has led to its often being known as ‘Plato’s theory of Ideas’.

One reason why some have doubted that any essential bearers can be particulars has been that Plato is committed to the compresence of opposites in particulars: for any predicate F that has an opposite G, whatever particular is F is also, in some way, G. If so the number three, were it to be understood as a particular, namely immanent tripleness, would have to be even as well as odd; fire would have to be cold as well as hot; and so on. And that would conflict with the assumptions underlying the argument, according to which an essential bearer cannot take on the opposite of the property it bears.

In reply it should be sufficient to observe that the compresence of opposites is a principle endorsed by Socrates in the Last Argument, but only for cases where the subject bears the relevant predicates \textit{contingently} or \textit{relatively}, in the way that Simmias bears both of the predicates large and small, despite not being essentially either one or the other (102c-d). There was never any suggestion, in the \textit{Phaedo} or elsewhere, that all properties of particulars, including essential properties, are compresent with

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\(^\text{10}\) Another motive for seeing at least some of the essential bearers as Forms may have been Socrates’ own apparent indication at 100b7-9 that the Last Argument depends on the theory of Forms. It is true that, on the account I am defending, the Forms play no direct part in it. However, the correct meaning of these lines may be rather that (a) the theory of Forms has to be granted in order to arrive at a proper understanding of causation, and (b) a proper theory of causation is needed in order to construct the Last Argument. For it is precisely by obeying the same ‘safety’ requirement as is illustrated by formal causes that the essential bearers are given a clean bill of health as causes (105b6-8).


\(^\text{12}\) Typically, an ἰδέα is a character possessed \textit{by} a Form and capable of being transmitted into particulars. A particularly clear case is \textit{Crat.} 389b3, e3, where the ἐδόκει is the transcendent Form to which the craftsman looks, the ἰδέα the character that he can then impose on his products. I regard \textit{Cratylus} as the dialogue dealing with transcendent Forms that is most likely to predate the \textit{Phaedo} (argued briefly in ‘Equal sticks and stones’, in D. Scott (ed.), \textit{Mateusis} (Oxford, 2007), 62-86, pp. 72-3). I am also assuming that the use of ἰδέα in \textit{Euthyphro} for the common property that is to serve as object of definition either predates, or at any rate does not presuppose, the separation of the Forms. So far as concerns the \textit{Phaedo} itself, cf. 104b9-10, d9, e1 for the implied immanence of ἰδέα.

\(^\text{13}\) \textit{Rep.} 505a2, 517b8. I suggest that the reason why Plato chooses ἰδέα in this case is precisely to avoid ordinary Form vocabulary when speaking of a unique entity which transcends even the transcendent Forms themselves. The only other absolutely clear case in which ἰδέα means a transcendent Form seems to me to be \textit{Rep.} 507b9. Contrast \textit{Rep.} 479a1, 486d10 and 507b5, where an ἰδέα is the character that a Form \textit{possesses}. 
their own opposites (or negations). And there is therefore no reason to be surprised that a particular case of tripleness should have oddness without the compresence of evenness, or a particular flame be hot and not also cold.14

I now return to the argument. The principles affecting all these essential bearers are fairly formally set out by Socrates, along the following lines. (I shall illustrate each principle with an example, this time that of snow.) In every case where some item, x, is the essential bearer of some property, F-ness (whose opposite is G-ness), the following principles obtain.

Principles governing essential bearers (where x is the essential bearer of F-ness)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 x is not the same thing as F-ness.</td>
<td>103c11-d3, 104b1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x, so long as it exists, is F.</td>
<td>103e4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 x will never, while being x, admit G-ness.</td>
<td>103d5-104c4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Rather, upon the approach of G-ness, x will either retreat or perish.</td>
<td>103d5-104c4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 x is not an opposite, but is permanently in possession of one, F-ness.</td>
<td>104b8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 x always imports its own character, and F-ness, to whatever it occupies.</td>
<td>104d1-8, 105b5-c7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 x is properly called 'G-less' = incapable of G-ness.</td>
<td>104d9-e6, 106a-b</td>
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I have set the principles out more or less in the order in which they are listed. But actually principle 6 is initially announced as the one that defines the class (104c11-12), and we may take it that it already for this reason constitutes a sufficient condition of something’s being an essential bearer. For on Plato’s causal assumptions the only way that some given item x could always import the same property, F-ness, to whatever it occupies is by itself being essentially F. Given that, the other six principles follow easily enough from the defining principle 6.

All of Socrates’ examples can be fitted to the same analysis as snow, but with varying degrees of clarity. The vital retreat/perish principle (4) is most readily intelligible for snow and fire: snow, for example, must literally retreat (be distanced) from heat if it is not going to perish (= melt). This provides the model that Plato needs for the eventual case of the soul, which on the approach of death must spatially

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14 Admittedly fire is a trickier case than odd numbers. If a fire becomes even hotter, can Plato avoid saying it was previously colder, and therefore participated in cold to some extent? The Cyclical Argument (69e5-72d10) suggests such an analysis. But cf. Gorg. 473d7-e1, where from A’s being even unhappier than B it need not follow that B is ‘happier’ than A.
depart from the body and travel to Hades.

A little strain begins to show, on the other hand, in cases where the retreatig is not a literal spatial distancing. Consider fever. Fever is an essential bearer of sickness, and whatever body it occupies is itself made to be sick. What will it mean to say that on the advance of health (the opposite of sickness), the fever must either retreat or perish? Presumably that it must either abate with the possibility of relapse (= retreat), or be altogether cured (= perish). Retreating this time means something less obviously locomotive and more to do with becoming inactive.

And some such deliteralization will be required, it seems, in all the other cases considered. Take oddness. Oddness belongs primarily to the numbers 3, 5, 7 etc. It is thanks to the presence of one of these numbers in a set of things, for example the set of chairs in this room, that that set also becomes numerically odd. On the approach of evenness – if, for instance, I try to make the number of chairs even by subtracting one – the existing number cannot stay and become even, but must either retreat or perish. Meaning what this time? Perhaps that if I remove a chair that I could later put back, the original odd number has retreated, whereas if I burn the chair, that number has perished. No doubt other interpretations could be devised, but I doubt if any can avoid taking ‘retreat’ in such a case to mean something like ‘become inactive’.

It should be emphasized at this point that the options of retreating and perishing were first introduced by Socrates, at the start of the Last Argument (102a11-103c2), with an example which cannot itself count as one of an essential bearer; and there too ‘retreat’ had to be understood along non-spatial lines. The case chosen was Simmias’ own particular (the largeness ‘in’ him). When he stands next to Socrates, who is smaller than him, his largeness advances; when he stands next to Phaedo, who is larger than him, it retreats again. Largeness is for Plato definable as the capacity to exceed, so Simmias’ own largeness will be his own particular capacity to exceed others, which is determined by his particular height, say six feet. Presumably for Simmias’ particular largeness to ‘perish’ would be for him actually to change height, while its ‘retreating’ consists in his ceasing to use his own particular capacity to exceed, without actually losing that particular capacity.

Clearly in a case like immanent largeness ‘retreat’ cannot be purely or even primarily a locomotive term. Yet the retreating that the soul will be shown to do on the approach of death could not, without serious damage to Socrates’ overall

15 By principle 2, the essential bearer must itself possess the property it causes. I am not sure how acceptable it is in English to speak of a ‘sick fever’, or, equally, in Greek to call a fever νοσερός, but (a) a fever can hardly be ‘healthy’, at and rate, and (b) the problem is unlikely to be more than one of linguistic idiom.

16 According to principle 5, an essential bearer is not itself an opposite, which immanent largeness is. Also, according to principle 6, if x is an essential bearer of F-ness, ‘x always imports its own character, and F-ness, to whatever it occupies’ (e.g. snow makes anything it occupies both snowy and cold). Immanent largeness, by contrast, presumably only makes things large, in the way that immanent tripleness makes things three, and there is no hint at a further property, analogous to oddness, that it brings with it. We should take it then, that the Last Argument opens with the example of immanent largeness simply in order to introduce the concepts of retreating and perishing, which will return for the final phase of the argument.

17 For largeness = the capacity to exceed, and smallness = the capacity to be exceeded, cf. Parm. 150c6-c1, Hippias Major 294a8-b4.

18 I say ‘determined by’ because his largeness is not altogether identical to six feet. Six feet is a height which equally gives him his own particular smallness, i.e. his capacity to be exceeded, for example by Phaedo.
contentions, be equated with its becoming inactive. It has to indicate the soul's departure to another place, outside its present body. The soul's retreating, in other words, has to be more closely analogous to the literally spatial retreating of snow or fire than to the non-spatial retreating of the number three or of immanent largeness. What we are witnessing is not a confusion on Plato's part, I think, but a perhaps inevitable strain imposed by devising principles for application over a comprehensive explanatory range.

Nevertheless, I think a common core of meaning can be discerned. All of the retreating items are being considered in their capacity as *importing* their essential property to that which they *occupy*, and these notions themselves imply something like local presence. Maybe we cannot always give the precise spatial co-ordinates of your state of health, your tallness, the number of visible planets, or the fire that ancient physics typically presumes to make a piece of iron hot by being present in it. But that does not mean they do not have spatial locations. Your state of health and your tallness are in you, and are therefore right now in the room you yourself are in. Likewise the number of visible planets is in the solar system, or the sky, and the fire probably has precisely the same spatial co-ordinates as the iron it occupies. If these items were said to 'retreat' from their locations, the primary meaning would be that they temporarily ceased to import their essential property to the things in question. In some cases, the natural way for them to do that would be to depart spatially from the occupied entity, as the fire might be expected to do from the iron, and as, on at least a possible understanding of disease, your illness could be thought to do from you. In other cases they might rather be presumed to stay but go out of use, as your tallness does when you are not actively overtopping somebody, and as the number of visible planets does when one of them goes below the horizon. In all cases, the common core meaning of 'retreat' is that the essential bearer, while continuing to exist, ceases actively to 'occupy' its host and to import its essential property to it. In the case of soul too, then, its retreat will consist in its continuing to exist but ceasing actively to occupy and animate the body it has occupied and animated up to now. In the context of Greek thought, especially given that death was earlier in the dialogue (64c2-9) defined as the soul's separation from the body, it was entirely natural to interpret the soul's retreat as its literal departure from the body.

To reformulate the same interpretation in the light of an earlier point, the assumption that the soul's 'retreat' from the body it has animated is to be understood as a spatial departure to another world enjoyed the weight of authority that religious belief had already conferred on it. In showing that, by thus departing for Hades, the soul is conforming to a universal retreat-or-perish principle, Socrates' argument is conferring scientific respectability on the existing tradition, not seeking to prove its content true *ab initio*.

I shall now proceed to the crucial final moves of the argument. Of the seven principles that Socrates has established for essential bearers, all are clearly meant to be applicable to soul, although only three are actually invoked in the closing moves of the argument, which run as follows.

105c8-d12. Soul is the essential bearer of life. It always imports life to whatever it occupies (Principle 6). Just as snow by its presence makes things both snowy and cold, so too, Plato must intend, soul by its presence make things both ensouled and alive. However it is only on the latter predicate, 'alive', that Socrates focuses. Since soul is the essential bearer of life, by Principle 3 it is incapable of admitting the opposite property, death – an incapacity which Socrates explains with an explicit comparison to the way in which the number three is incapable of evenness (105d13-15, recalling 104e5).

This now leads him directly to his key move, based on Principle 7 (‘x is
properly called “G-less” = incapable of G-ness’). Back at 100b9 Socrates undertook to prove that ‘the soul is something deathless/immortal (athanaton)’ (ἀθάνατον ἡ ψυχή). And that is exactly what he now claims to have done (105e2-10):

‘Well now, what do we call that which does not admit death?’
‘Deathless/immortal [athanaton]:’ (Principle 7)
‘Does soul not admit death?’
‘No.’
‘Then soul is something deathless/immortal [Ἀθάνατον ἄρα ψυχή;]?’
‘It is something deathless/immortal.’
‘Well now,’ said Socrates, ‘are we to say that this has been proved (ἀποδεδεῖχθαι)? What do you think?’
‘Yes, and most sufficiently (μάλα γε ἱκανῶς),19 Socrates.’

This is flagged up, as clearly as one could reasonably ask, as concluding the proof of the soul’s immortality. Yet it is hard to find an interpreter who recognizes it as the conclusion. Why should this be so?

It is because a further argument follows – what I have labelled stage 2 – in which an additional inference is made from the soul’s being deathless (athanaton) to its being indestructible (anōlethron). And that further move is assumed to be an integral final step, designed to show that soul is ‘deathless’, not merely in some innocuous or irrelevant sense, but in a sense appropriate to ground the vital immortality conclusion. That is, it is thought that showing the soul to be athanaton, ‘deathless’, is merely the intermediate step of showing that ‘dead soul’ is as much a contradiction in terms as ‘cold fire’ or ‘even trio’ would be, and that a vital move has yet to be made from that simple truth, on which all might agree, to the soul’s actual imperishability.

The trouble is that what follows makes a very poor case for any such additional development beyond the initial conclusion. For the actual step from athanaton to ‘imperishable’ is, when it finally comes, accomplished in a few lines, with an argument which seems at best only half-serious, coupled with the comment that it is totally uncontroversial anyway (106d2-9):

‘But this doesn’t need argument, because it could hardly be the case that anything else did not admit of destruction if that which is immortal/deathless, despite being everlasting, is going to admit of destruction.’
‘And everybody, I think’ said Socrates, ‘would agree that god, and the actual Form of Life, and anything else that is immortal/deathless, never perishes.’
‘Yes’, he said. ‘All men would agree the point, and the gods even more so!’

The preceding very tightly worded argument has at this point been replaced by comparatively relaxed banter, precisely because the specific point is trivially true, and is not in dispute, but merely needs asserting for completeness. Of course whatever is immortal is imperishable too, they are saying: try asking any god! More significant still, Cebes in his first remark quoted here treats it as already known and agreed that what is immortal is ‘everlasting’ (aidion), which shows that he has already understood athanaton as meaning ‘immortal’ in the familiar sense.

No, the motive for adding stage 2 of argument (105e11-107a1) has nothing to do with proving the soul immortal.20 That has already been accomplished in stage

19 ἀποδεδεῖχθαι … μάλα γε ἱκανῶς, 105e8-10. Compare Simmias’ acceptance of the Recollection Argument: 77a5, ἱκανῶς ἀποδέδεικται, with ἱκανῶς καὶ ὀρθῶς used to refer back to that same acceptance at 92e1-2. ‘Adequately’ is too weak a translation. If such unswerving confidence in his conclusion goes beyond the familiar epistemological caution of Plato’s Socrates, that is no doubt because in Plato’s eyes nothing less than total confidence could have led Socrates to face death as he did.

20 In Socrates’ final conclusion, ‘Then, Cebes, it is definitely the case that soul is something
1. The purpose of stage 2, as I foreshadowed opening summary, is to establish the further vital conclusion that the soul, when death approaches, must ‘retreat’, that is, leave the body and go to Hades.

The argument, moreover, is very straightforward. Its point of departure is Principles 3 and 4: if x is the essential bearer of F-ness, ‘x will never, while being x, admit G-ness, but upon the approach of G-ness will either retreat or perish.’ Or, translated into the terms of the present case: a soul, being the essential bearer of life, will never, while being a soul, admit death, but upon the approach of death will either retreat or perish. However, Socrates points out, in this one special case the option of perishing is unavailable. Why? Because, trivially and uncontroversially, anything that is athanaton – deathless or immortal – is also imperishable. That is, for living things, death is the only possible way of perishing, so that if they cannot die they cannot perish either. Hence, unlike all the essential bearers considered previously, the soul cannot perish when the opposite of its essential property approaches, and is reduced to the single remaining option, that of retreating. Snow can melt on the approach of heat, and fire be extinguished on the approach of cold: in both cases, this perishing is something they can do instead of staying and becoming, respectively, hot snow and cold fire. In the case of soul there is no equivalent option: soul cannot perish, because for it to do so would be for it to die, i.e. to do the impossible thing of staying and taking on the property dead, the opposite property to the one it essentially bears. Hence uniquely in the case of soul, perishing is an unavailable option, and this leaves it, when death approaches, with no alternative but to retreat, or, in other words, to go to Hades.

Recognizing stage 2 as added in order to secure a partly separate conclusion, concerning the soul’s departure for Hades, enables us to return to the inference that concludes stage 1 (105e6) and assess it for what it is, the culmination of the immortality argument. However, it will turn out that the added stretch of argument in stage 2 about the soul’s departure to Hades retrospectively spells out some of the reasoning already tacitly underpinning the main conclusion in stage 1. Hence we can use it to throw light on exactly what that reasoning was.

The vital retrospective sentence from stage 2 is 106b2-4:

If the immortal/deathless is also imperishable, it is impossible for soul, whenever death attacks it, to perish. For what we have said before shows that a soul won’t admit death, and won’t be dead.

That is, the eternally prolonged future existence of the soul is guaranteed by the fact that, were it to pass out of existence, it would thereby become that contradiction in terms, a dead soul.21 For a soul to die, and thereby become dead, is as impossible

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21 In case it should be objected that the Cyclical Argument has already admitted the idea of a dead soul, with souls being said to alternate between being alive and being dead, it needs pointing out that nowhere in that argument is it said to be souls that are the subject of this change; the implication is if anything that it is we human beings – soul-body composites – who alternate between the two states. A second problem is how to relate the Last Argument to the provisional definition of death as the soul’s separation from the body (64c4-9), since the soul’s death, as counterfactually envisaged in the Last Argument, cannot satisfy that definition, being rather the soul’s simple extinction. This might seem to imply that the earlier definition was incomplete; but it will do nicely as a definition of death as it actually occurs, and hardly deserves to be criticized for ignoring a kind of death which the Last Argument will maintain to be intrinsically impossible
as for three to come to be even, or for snow to become hot snow.

One famous objection, voiced originally by the second successor of Aristotle, Strato of Lampsacus,22 runs: ‘Just as fire is uncoolable for as long as it exists, perhaps so too soul is deathless for as long as it exists.’ Strato’s point is the following one:

Principle 3 tells us only that soul is necessarily alive as long as it exists, i.e. that there is no such thing as a dead soul. But that does not show that a soul always exists.

This objection, and variants of it, have enjoyed success among modern critics too.

But how damaging is the objection to the stage 1 argument? Suppose a soul were to cease to exist, that is, to perish. Given the scarcely deniable premises that (1) for a living thing to perish entails its dying, and (2) what has died is thereafter dead, it may well seem that a soul that ceased to exist would ipso facto become dead. And this, a soul’s being dead, is exactly the impossibility that Socrates has argued to follow from the supposition that a soul is capable of ceasing to exist. A little more formally, Socrates’ argument can be expanded as follows:

(1) For a living thing to cease to exist is the same as for it to die.
(2) If anything dies, it is thereafter dead.
(3) A soul is a living thing.
(4) Therefore if a soul ceases to exist, it is thereafter dead.
(5) But it is impossible that something should be a dead soul.
(6) Therefore a soul cannot cease to exist, i.e. die.

Strato’s tentatively worded objection implicitly focuses on (4): the allegedly impossible consequence arises, he means, only if we illegitimately assume that the deceased soul still exists to serve as subject of the predicate ‘dead’. But is he right? If Plato has died, it follows that Plato is dead, with no necessary implication that Plato must still exist in order to bear the predicate ‘dead’. Similarly then, supposing Plato’s soul to have died, it must now be dead, again with no illegitimate assumption of its continued existence to enable it to bear the predicate. Even non-existent subjects are obliged to obey the laws of logic: for James Bond to be a married bachelor remains equally self-contradictory whether or not he exists.23

Admittedly there is a further inference, implicit in the move from (4) to (5), to be made from (a) ‘Plato’s soul is dead’ to (b) ‘Plato’s soul is a dead soul’. The two formulations may look inter-entailing, but it is open to a supporter of Strato to argue that they are importantly different, and that only the latter contains a genuine contradiction. Whether entailments of this form are sound seems to me a tricky question. Consider the following two models:

Model 1
1a. Plato was a philosopher
1b. Plato has died
1c. Plato is in perpetuity dead
1d. Plato is in perpetuity a dead philosopher

Model 2
2a. Plato’s body was a body
2b. Plato’s body has died
2c. Plato’s body is in perpetuity dead
2d. Plato’s body is in perpetuity a dead body

Model 1 yields in (1d) a correct conclusion. Model 2’s correct conclusion is found at (2c), and (2d) is a false further inference.

anyway. Its one possible oversight is its failure to cater for the death of the body. Does the body ’die’, in Plato’s usage? That may seem to be presupposed at 106e4-5, ‘that of him which is mortal dies’ (τὸ μὲν θνητὸν ... αὐτοῦ ἀποθνῄσκει), but it is just possible that that locution is chosen in order to avoid referring to the death of the body, since ‘that of him which is mortal’ could rather be the soul-body composite. At 80c2-d3, where we might have expected it, there is no talk of the body’s dying, just ‘what we call a corpse’ (ὅ δὲ νεκρὸν καλοῦμεν, 80c3-4).


23 Significantly, although the essential bearer of F-ness is said by Socrates to be itself F ‘so long as it exists’ or ‘whenever it exists’ (103e5), his principles nowhere limit its inability to be un-F to the time when it exists.
Now consider the parallel case of Plato’s soul:

3a. Plato’s soul was a soul
3b. Plato’s soul has died
3c. Plato’s soul is in perpetuity dead
3d. Plato’s soul is in perpetuity a dead soul

To which of the two models should we assimilate this? If we follow Model 1, we do indeed reach the conclusion at 3d: ‘Plato’s soul is in perpetuity a dead soul’, where ‘dead soul’ represents precisely the impossibility on which the Last Argument trades. Hence on Model 1 it may well appear that Plato’s soul cannot be dead, and therefore cannot have died. If on the other hand we were to adopt Model 2, we could infer nothing beyond ‘3c. Plato’s soul is in perpetuity dead’. If the latter model is the more apposite one, perhaps Plato’s soul may be dead without also being that contradiction in terms, a dead soul. Similarly the fire that was previously burning in the grate may now be said to be cold without thereby being – that contradiction in terms – a cold fire.

I suspect that to insist on Model 2 is the most promising way to undermine Plato’s defence of immortality. But showing Model 1 to be inapposite could in itself prove a demanding task. We should therefore remain impressed by the power of Plato’s argument. My aim has not been to vindicate the *Phaedo*’s final immortality argument as demonstrative. It has been to show that the argument is plausible enough to permit the assumption that Plato intended it seriously, both as a worthy culmination to his proofs of the soul’s immortality, and as the basis on which Socrates went confidently to his own death.

(Footnotes)

1 At 104d1-3 the text is in a disastrous state. Fortunately its meaning is made entirely clear by the example that follows at 104d5-7, and my paraphrase is based on this. I do not think that any simple emendation proposed so far has convincingly restored the required meaning, and I fear that it may require more ambitious correction, perhaps along the following lines: Ἀρ’ ὦν, ὦ Κέβης, τάδε ἀν εἰη ἢν ἐκαστόν, ὅτι ἄν κατάσχεται τὴν αὐτοῦ ἰδέαν αὐτὸ ἴσχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντίον αὐτῷ <συνεπομένου> τινός. ‘Would they, Cebes, be the things each of which, whatever it occupies, compels it not only to possess its own character, but also that of an opposite which always accompanies it?’ Where I have supplied <ὧν ἐκαστόν>, some manuscripts have nothing, others read ὅ. This latter, I suggest, was supplied to restore the syntax after the original words fell out, but incorrectly, since what follows seems to require a singular subject (cf. αὐτοῦ, αὐτῷ). In the last clause, Stallbaum’s ingenious ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντίον αὐτῷ τῷ ἐκ τινὸς avoids emendation, but is in my view hardly credible as Platonic Greek.

2 Presumably likewise fire makes things it occupies fiery as well as hot; fever makes bodies feverish as well as sick; three makes things triple as well as odd (see 104d5-7); and (to look ahead) soul makes things ensouled as well as alive.
What Do We Know?: Research Method and Philosophical Purpose of Plato’s *Phaedo*

Seferoglu, Tonguc

Introduction

It has widely been held that Plato's argumentation in many sections of the *Phaedo* is opaque and non-systematic so that his ideas seem to admit of several interpretations, none of which unfortunately is totally conclusive. Some might, then, tend to think that this difficulty arises from Plato's lack of carefulness and yet undeveloped philosophical skills. However, as I hope to show presently, the opacity of many arguments is actually intentional.

In this respect, I will argue that Plato had not primarily intended to establish fully-fledged theories about first-order questions. Such arguments, say, that for the immortality of soul or that for a theory of formal causes, are of secondary in ranking. Plato's fundamental purpose, if I take it right, is to show the way in which we ought to inquire into a question, such as the immortality of soul, and to define the meta-philosophical principles of inquiry.

Epistemic modesty is not only one of these key principles for Plato's theory of knowledge in the *Phaedo*, but it also seems to be a distinguishing trait of any genuine philosopher. In this respect, reading the dialogue through epistemic modesty can provide a useful account for how we ought to conduct philosophical investigation as well as what should be considered as a legitimate philosophical approach. Simply, Plato had consciously written in a way that would praise a modest attitude towards arguments on the one hand, and he focuses on to show the merits of this attitude in inquiry on the other.

In order to illustrate this, I will examine that the section on *misologos*, which I take as a meta-philosophical discussion. This section seems to suggest taking a modest approach regarding trueness of an argument. This approach, as I will argue, is a precondition not only for attaining truth, but also for gaining skill in arguments. Having said this, then, I will go on commenting Socrates’ autobiography for showing that this precondition for effective inquiry is also at work in Socrates’ philosophical journey. Finally, in concluding remarks, I will in passing bring in some observations from Damascius’ and Olympiodorus’ commentary on the *Phaedo*. In doing so, I hope to show that although these 6th century commentators’ take on ‘Socrates’ modest attitude’ serves for another end, *i.e.* to praise his personality, it is striking to observe that they attribute a philosophical carefulness and modesty for those who are doing philosophy at its best.

The Fate of *Misologoi*

Now, let me start to spell out what *misologoi* is and directly start with quoting the relevant passage of the dialogue:

T1 ’Don’t you think, he[Socrates] said, if a contest for badness were set up, those who are in the first rank there also would be no doubt a few?’ ’Probably’, I[Phaedo] said.

‘Yes, probably’, he said. ‘However, on this point arguments aren’t like men, yet I was following the way you lead just now. But [the resemblance is] in the manner by which, whenever someone trusts some argument to be true without skill in arguments (τις πιστεύσῃ λόγῳ τινὶ ἀληθεῖ εἶναι ἄνευ τῆς περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνης), and then a little after it seems to be false to him, sometimes it is, sometimes it is not, [the same
happens] again with argument after argument. – and [it happens] especially (μάλιστα) to those who waste their time on disputations (οἱ περὶ τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς λόγους διατρίψαντες), as you have seen that they end up supposing that they’ve become wisest and only they’ve understood that there is nothing sound and steady at all, neither in things nor in arguments (οὔτε τῶν πραγμάτων...οὔτε τῶν λόγων, but all the things that are simply like they rotate up and down in Euripus, and do not remain in any place at any time (90b1-c6).

To put it simply, for Socrates those who engage in antilogike, the game of contradiction, are the most likely to become misologoi. Surely, this claim is hardly surprising since Socrates’ attitude towards disputations seems to need no comment at all. What is striking, I think, is the idea that Socrates does not pin down misologoi only to contradiction-mongers. For Socrates contradiction-mongers are ‘especially’ open to this fate. This, however, does not beat the odds for becoming a misologist for anyone engaging in arguments. That is to say, anyone who puts too much trust to an argument without skill is liable to hate arguments though the odds for a contradiction-monger is really high. All the more, the upshot of this discussion is not that contradiction mongers will never attain the truth since they believe that there is not any. It is, however, that unless one adopts a less devoted and a more careful attitude towards arguments, she, one way or another, is likely to be a misologist. That is to say, they are quantitatively more vulnerable to this misfortune, rather than being qualitatively distinct from any other person who participates the same misfortune.

Future Less Vivid

Let me finish this part by defining the fate of misologos according to Socrates:

T2 Then, Phaedo, it would be a pitiful fate, if there were in fact some true and secure argument, and one that could be discerned (εἰ ὄντος δή τινος ἀληθοῦς καὶ βεβαίου λόγου καὶ δυνατοῦ κατανοῆσαι), yet owing to association with arguments of the sort that seem now true and now false (δοκοῦσιν ἀληθέσιν εἶναι, τοτὲ δὲ μὴ), a man blamed (αἰτιῷτο) neither himself nor his own lack of skill (ἀτεχνίαν), but finally relieved his distress (διὰ τὸ ἀλγεῖν ἅσμενος) by shifting the blame from himself to arguments, and then finished out the rest of his life hating and abusing arguments, and was deprived both of the truth and of the things that are (τῶν δὲ ὄντων τῆς ἀληθείας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης στερηθείη) (90c8-d7 tr. after Gallop).

All the more striking idea in this passage is that Socrates does not claim without any reservation that there are some true and secure argument to be discerned. Rather, as the use on optative mood suggests, he proposes tentatively that such an argument remains a possibility, a future less vivid, for those who do not suffer the fate of misologists. This passage, once again, appears to underline the way in which one should deal with argument without skill. Socrates’ advise is that whilst judging without skill arguments, we are tending to think of the same argument true at one point, but false at another. Therefore, we should cognize and assess our own skills, or lack of skill, so that we might thrive in dealing with arguments.

For Socrates, moreover, a misologist does not take the responsibility of any failure, instead she thinks that there is no stable truth in arguments and everything fluctuates from one extreme to the other. What Socrates suggests is that one should reflect on her own attitude and lack of skill in discerning the truth and knowledge of the things that are. Therefore, it seems that argument against misologoi is not merely targeted at contradiction-mongers. Rather, contradiction-mongers are at one extreme and genuine philosopher at the other among the spectrum of those who engage in arguments. While the former lacks skill, the latter is skilled in arguments. Perhaps, then, others lie between these two and a true student of philosophy is the one who she begins with careful reflection on arguments and recognize her own
fallibility.

Methodology in Autobiography

In this section, I will examine how Socrates encourages Cebes, who is on the verge of giving up his question against the immortality of soul, to engage in arguments. In doing so, I hope to show the role of carefulness and trusting not too much to an argument in philosophical inquiry. Then, I make some comments on autobiography to see how Socrates employs these principles.

Cebes' Fortune-telling

First, let me briefly spell out Cebes' opposition to Socrates argument for the immortality of soul. Earlier in the dialogue, Cebes disagrees with Socrates in that Socrates, by means of theory of recollection for instance, proves only a 'partial' immortality of soul rather 'full' immortality of soul. For Cebes, it does not necessarily follow that because the soul has existed before birth, it will continue to live after death. That is to say, one need to show not only that soul pre-exists, but also that it is 'still existing somewhere when we died.'

Then, after arguing against Simmias' opposition and showing that soul is not an attunement, i.e. it is not a blend of bodily elements in due proportion, Socrates offers to turn to investigate Cebes' argument. Cebes, however, seems to be rather discouraged for his argument because Socrates was able to rebut Simmias with no difficulty. Let me quote in full:

T3 'You'll find a way, I think' said Cebes; 'at any rate this argument of yours against attunement has surprised me beyond expectation (θαυμαστῶς μοι εἶπες ὡς παρὰ δόξαν). Because when Simmias was speaking his perplexity (ἡπόρει), I was very much wondering (ἐθαύμαζον) if anyone would be able to handle this argument, so it seemed to me quite remarkable (πάνυ οὖν μοι ἀτόπως) that it immediately failed to withstand the first assault (τὴν πρώτην ἔφοδον οὐ δέξασθαι) of your own argument. Accordingly, I shouldn't wonder (οὐκ…θαυμάσαιμι) if the argument of Cadmus suffered the same fate (ταὐτὰ…πάθοι).'

'No big talking (μὴ μέγα λέγε), my friend' said Socrates, 'in case some evil eye (βασκανία) should turn the coming argument to rout. But that shall be God's concern (τῷ θεῷ μελήσει); for ourselves, let's come to close quarters, in Homeric fashion, and try to see if, in fact, there's anything in what you say (εἰ ἄρα τι λέγεις) (95a7-b6 trans. after Gallop).'

Let me reiterate what I have just said about misologoi. For Socrates, they are persons whom exceedingly put trust to an argument without skill. Because these people lack of skill in arguments and so have been refuted many times and in many occasions, finally they become haters of arguments so that they are deprived of attaining knowledge. In following couple of paragraphs, I hope to show that if it is not for Socrates, Cebes would have fell into the fate of misologists.

Initially, let me look at Cebes' psychology for spelling out what is going on in his head. At the outset, Cebes, as he remarks, seems sure that Simmias' argument was really strong and it is difficult to handle it. This conviction is mark by the fact that Cebes did not at all expect dismissal of the soul-attunement argument. Then, the way in which Socrates had refuted Simmias amazed him since it was, for Cebes, 'extraordinary', sc. atopos. Therefore, Cebes loses his confidence for his own argument so that he would not have been surprised if his argument shares in the same fate, sc. patos.

1 Cf. Gallop (1975:168)
2 87a4 ὡς…ἀποθανόντων ἡμῶν ἔτι που ἔστιν
3 Let me for now put aside how this demonstration is advanced since it is not relevant to what I am going to argue in what follows.
4 Cf. 89b4-c7
Let alone the philosophical likeness, Plato seems to use a similar language in this present passage to that of misologos. In the former section, Socrates talks about a certain ‘fate’ of misologoi that befalls to people. In the latter, as it has just been said, Cebs tells that his argument would suffer the same fate, i.e. his argument not to have withstood to Socrates reasoning, as that of Simmias had suffered. There is, however, a difference between what Socrates relates and what Cebs seems to accept. While on the one hand, Socrates talks about a fate that befalls to ‘people’, on the other hand argument itself, for Cebs, will suffer this fate.

At any rate, it seems clear to me that Socrates and Cebs are referring to the same kind of fate. Cebs, who seems to have forgotten what Socrates has said about misologists, belittles argument of Simmias although it seemed very strong to him. For Socrates, this pitiful fate of misologoi happens to a person who blames ‘arguments’, instead of blaming himself and his lack of skill. Upon witnessing this fate happening to Simmias’ argument, however, Cebs also loses his trust in his argument, rather than Simmias’ -or his own- lack of skill.

Briefly then, Cebs seems to show reluctance to pursue his argument. This is because Cebs supposes that his argument will fail to withstand and suffer the same fate as Simmias’ one. Socrates, then, cautions Cebs not ‘to talk big’ in case ‘an evil eye’ would ‘collapse’ Cebs’ argument. Finally, Cebs and Socrates begins discussing the question about the imperishability of soul.

The Role of ‘Wonder’ in Philosophical Inquiry

It is, I think, noteworthy that whilst describing his experience regarding Simmias argument and Socrates’ refutation, Cebs uses θαυμάζω and its cognates for three times only in seven lines. Cebs, as I discussed above, first wondered whether Simmias’ argument could ever be refuted, then he is amazed by the way in which Socrates refutes it immediately, finally he wonders whether his argument would withstand to Socrates’ ‘assault’.

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5 Cf. 89c11 and 90c8.
6 Cf. 90c6-d7
7 It is of course also the case that Socrates’ skill, not only their lack of skill, contributed to refutation of Simmias’ argument.
8 Here, allow me to note that one can take Simmias and Cebs not as ‘different persons’, but rather ‘unified characters’ through whom Plato aims presenting a specific analysis. What I mean, they can be thought as one single character who tries to endure the Socrates’ argumentation. If taken in this way, Cebs’ fear might make more sense in that he takes the way in which Simmias argues in heart. Indeed, it is also remarkable that Cebs does not agree with Simmias in that soul is not stronger and long-lived than body (87a5-6). What unifies Simmias and Cebs, as I take it, their manner of argumentation rather than their counter-arguments against immortality and imperishability respectively.
9 Interestingly enough, Xenophon claims that Socrates intentionally ‘talks big (μεγαληγορίᾳ)’ in his trial so that he would sentenced to death. For Xenophon, Socrates’ motivation was to escape evils of old age. Cf. Apologia Socratis 2.1-3. Although Plato might reasonably not aim at Xenophon, it still catches attention that Socrates bans Cebs to talk big so that they could inquire into his argument. This seems in accordance to Plato’s Apology where Socrates is depicted as a persistent inquirer.
10 θαυμαστῶς at 95a8, ἐθαύμαζον at a9, and θαυμάσαιμι at b3. Cf. Also ἀτόπως at b2.
11 Note that assault, which renders ἔφοδον at 95b2 can also mean ‘method of reasoning’. Cf. Arist. Top. 105a14 when he defines epagoge.
Cebes’ first amazement, on the one hand, seems to hinder him to approach Simmias’ perplexity since he thinks that it is not possible to handle it. If it is not for Socrates, Cebes would have thought that Simmias’ argument would not admit of any rebuttal. His final amazement, on the other hand, discouraged him to defend his argument so that he seems not to care about it. Again, thanks to Socrates’ encouragement, Cebes is brought back to conversation and inquiry. Therefore, it appears that Cebes’ reaction to amazement is depressing and this distress holds him back from inquiry. Simply, amazement has an unconstructive effect on Cebes.

However, if one looks at Socrates’ own amazements in his philosophical journey, each and every time she seems to discover an enthusiasm and positive effect. This journey begins with Socrates’ amazement at natural science, which drives him to examination of his questions among natural scientists. Unlike Cebes’ attitude towards Simmias’ argument, Socrates does not seem to have driven away from inquiry due to his amazement, or say, his ‘admire (96a7 θαυμαστῶς ως ἐπεθύμησα)’. However, once he engaged in their answers, Socrates had become disappointed with their answers.

Next, Socrates tells that he was amazed, in a perplexing sense, by the explanations that natural scientists gave. Their answers are far from persuading him, even worse, he is so amazed, or say perplexed, that he no longer knows ‘why anything else comes to be, perishes and exists.’ Therefore, Socrates decides to adopt a different method of inquiry, which he jumbles by himself.

Lastly, Socrates comes across the philosophy of Anaxagoras, which pleases him and makes him to think that he found an instructor that suits his own intelligence. Nevertheless, when Socrates had read his book in detail, he found that Anaxagoras’ answers were no different than those of natural scientists. ‘Therefore, regarding his interest in Anaxagoras’ philosophy, Socrates says that ‘these marvellous hopes of mine were dashed.’ However, although his initial amazement with Anaxagoras had faded away, Socrates does not give up his search and lose his confidence in inquiry, unlike Cebes’ discouragement. Finally, he embarks a second-journey for discovering aitia of coming to be, perishing and existing.

In brief, there seems to be solid difference between the manner that Cebes is inclined and the way of Socrates as it is narrated. Both amazements and disappointments that result from frustration of amazements seem to have a constructive effect on Socrates in contrast with Cebes. While Cebes seems to overvalue his amazements and disappointments, Socrates has a more moderate and cautious attitude about his findings. This, if I take it right, harks us back to the argument from misologos in that Socrates, in both cases, looks like proposing a more modest or moderate trust for arguments unless one has skill in them.

Commentaries on the Phaedo

In these concluding remarks, let me briefly note the relevant sections of the Phaedo commentaries which motivated my reading of epistemic modesty. Olympiodorus in his commentary asks why Socrates is uncertain about the presence of good men in the Hades:

One may wonder why Socrates is so positive with regard to the Gods: ‘that
I am going to better Gods, I do not doubt; whether to better men also I am less sure. What is the reason of his hesitation (τὸ αἴτιον…τῆς ἀμφιβολίας) in the case of men?...[I]t is modesty (μετριάζων) that makes Socrates say that he is not so sure (μὴ πάνυ…δισσυχρίζεσθαι), for it would have been bad taste (φορτικὸν) to say these things about himself, which would have made him blush (ἐρυθριάσειεν) if another were to say to them.17

It is of significance to note that Olympiodorus does neither ignore Socrates' hesitation regarding men nor argue simply that it is not possible for humans to know the future of dead and their existence in Hades. Rather, he connects this uncertainty with the character of Socrates, i.e., his modesty. To talk about oneself overconfidently and praise oneself would be ‘vulgar’18, and thus Socrates is unwilling to talk in this way.

Moreover, later in his commentary (8.17), Olympiodorus remarks that Socrates does not say this because he is ‘in doubt (διστάζων 8.17.2).’ but because he believes that ‘it is bad taste to praise oneself (φορτικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἐαυτὸν ἐπαινεῖν 8.17.3).’ Then, Olympiodorus asserts that Plato is not ‘doubtful (ἀμφιβάλλειν 8.17.7)’ about the immortality of the soul, but his motive is ‘philosophical caution (φιλόσοφον εὐλαβεῖαν 8.17.2) since it is a bad taste to praise oneself’.19

Damascius, too, has a similar take on Socrates' hesitation. For Damascius, Socrates does not 'claim stoutly (διατείνεται 45.1)’ regarding men since he ‘will learn only upon his arrival yonder (45.2-3)’, but not any time earlier. Damascius maintains that the condition to arrive there, viz. the company of Gods, for Socrates, is to have ‘the noblest life (ζωῆς ἀρίστης 45.2)’. However, ‘since the standards of nature belonging to humans are rather weak’20, one should be careful whilst talking about these things. Then, he refers to a later passage to show that Socrates critical of ‘talking big’ and hesitate to rely decisively on his intellectual abilities for defeating any argument.21

Finally, returning to the question posed at the beginning of this section, I hope it is now possible to state that Socrates' take on antilɔgοι is to set down a precondition, or a meta-philosophical principle, for successful philosophical inquiry. If we read the whole dialogue with this idea in background, I think the way in which Socrates argues for the immortality of soul and a theory of Forms would become more coherent and reasonable. Since it plainly appears that most of the arguments for these two subjects are incompletely formulated, it is quite likely that Plato was aware of these weaknesses, if not he deliberately did them. This incompleteness not only invites the reader to conversation and help in completing arguments, but also it also refers to this meta-philosophical principle regarding the way in which arguments themselves could be developed.

Taken together, these findings can suggest a role for carefulness and suspicion

17 Ol., Ph. 6.1-3...7-9
18 s.v. φορτικὸς LSJ II.2. NB. It could be used for qualifying ‘low’ or ‘base’ arguments as well.
19 Cf. Rep. 539c-ε where Socrates utters ‘caution (ἐπ’ εὐλαβεία d3)’ for the philosophers who will engage into the question and answer conversations. More strikingly, in the Phaedo, whilst defining second-best course of investigation into nature, Socrates says that he must be ‘careful (99d5 εὐλαβηθῆναι)’ when seaching into aitía of coming to be. Otherwise, he would be blinded as those who looks to the sun during an eclipse.
20 45.3. τὰ μέτρα τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ἀσθενέστερα
21 Phd. 95b4 μὴ μέγα λέγε, μὴ τις ἡμῖν βασκανία περιτρέψῃ τὸν λόγον.
in promoting an epistemological modesty, which invites a person to critique her own judgements. This assessment will of course come to end once one achieves skill in arguments. That is, though self-reflection on one’s judgements is an ongoing process and open-ended, Socrates does not propose that this is a never-ending course. However still, it remains an immense question whether Socrates proposes to attain this skill, or a sound and secure argument through this skill, with regards to the Phaedo or his professed underestimation of his skills is simply ironical. No matter which of two we choose, I think, it is still crucial to realize Socratic modesty, even though he might not be sincere, hints the way in which a philosophical person should start engaging in arguments.

Resumen

¿Cómo conocemos?: metodología y propósito filosófico en el Fedón de Platón.

Se ha dicho que muchos de los argumentos en el Fedón de Platón son opacos y poco sistemáticos, de modo que sus ideas parecen dar cabida a distintas interpretaciones, ninguna de las cuales es, desafortunadamente, concluyente. Peor aún, se ha opinado que este diálogo parece estar compuesto de argumentos desperdigados, por lo que resulta imposible hablar de la unidad del Fedón. Por esta razón, también a vece se tiende a considerar que este desorden proviene del más vale descuidado estilo literario de Platón y de la carencia de fuerza en sus argumentos. No obstante, como espero poder demostrar en este breve espacio, dicha opacidad no se debe a que Platón no pudiera articular los argumentos sistemáticamente, sino al interés que tenía en la manera en que uno lidió con las discusiones argumentativas o, en un sentido más general, en la tarea del filósofo. Por ello el Fedón puede leerse como un diálogo orientado a establecer un estudio conceptual y teórico que establezca ‘desacuerdos’ filosóficos. Para poder apaciguar nuestros desacuerdos, Platón nos invita a que tomemos primero que nada una postura epistemológica y que establezcamos una base metodológica común, que es seguramente la misma que él favorece. En cuanto a esto último, demostraré que la ambición epistemológica y pedagógica de Platón en el Fedón invita a los participantes a conciliarse y a contemplar cuidadosamente una investigación filosófica, cualquiera que ésta sea. Este objetivo meta-filosófico es el principio que le da unidad al diálogo.

A mí parecer dicho principio puede definirse como un tipo de modestia epistemológica, una característica distintiva de cualquier filósofo genuino. Si se lee este diálogo tomando en cuenta esta modestia epistemológica, creo, es posible que tengamos un ejemplo útil de cómo se debe conducir la investigación filosófica, más allá de que debamos considerar a ésta aproximación como la legítima. De este modo es posible apreciar la unidad del diálogo si enfocamos nuestra atención en una investigación meta-filosófica, en lugar de centrarla en los argumentos de primer orden. De ser así, el aparente transcurrir desordenado de los argumentos no presentaría ninguna dificultad interpretativa, puesto que Platón parece sacrificarlos concientemente a favor de un análisis meta-filosófico.

Con esta finalidad, primero me enfocaré en la opinión de Sócrates sobre los misólogos. Esta sección, tal como yo la entiendo, nos invita a tomar una aproximación modesta en cuanto a la veracidad de un argumento. Esta postura epistemológica es una precondición para obtener la verdad, pero también para adquirir destreza a la hora de argumentar. Posteriormente haré un comentario sobre la autobiografía que narra el recorrido filosófico de Sócrates. Finalmente, a manera de conclusión, trataré
algunas de las opiniones de los comentarios al Fedón de Damascio y Olimpiodoro. Al hacerlo, espero demostrar que incluso si 'la actitud modesta de Sócrates', que estos comentaristas subrayan, sirve para ensalzar su personalidad, resulta llamativo observar que atribuyan un cuidado y esmero filosófico, así como la modestia, a quienes mejor ejercen la filosofía.

Estos resultados en su conjunto nos pueden sugerir un tipo de cuidado y modestia a la hora de promover una postura epistemológica, que invite a la persona a criticar sus propios juicios, y a conciliarse con sus 'iguales epistémicos'. Esta valoración se llevará a cabo cuando uno logre adquirir pericia en discusiones argumentativas. Esto es, a pesar de que la reflexión de los juicios propios es un proceso continuo e indefinido, Sócrates no propone que éste sea un proceso sin fin. Quedará pendiente la gran pregunta sobre si Sócrates propone adquirir pericia en argumentos en el Fedón, o si la subestimación de sus propias habilidades es simplemente irónica. Pero, sin importar cuál de las dos posturas tomemos, pienso, sigue siendo fundamental destacar la modestia socrática, incluso en caso de que él no sea sincero, puesto que nos indica el camino por el cual la persuasión filosófica puede comenzar a involucrarse en discusiones argumentativas.
Dans la dernière partie du *Phédon*, Platon introduit assez brusquement la notion de beauté lors de la discussion concernant la participation des choses sensibles à la réalité intelligible. Dans ce dialogue, la réflexion sur la beauté elle-même n’est pas approfondie et si l’introduction de cette notion pourrait paraître contingente, il me semble pourtant que l’on peut en découvrir la nécessité. D’ailleurs, chez Platon, parmi toutes les Formes intelligibles, la beauté est spécifique en ce sens qu’elle est, comme il l’admet dans le *Phèdre*, ce qui se manifeste avec le plus d’éclat et ce qui suscite le plus d’amour dans le domaine sensible (250c). La beauté apparaît aux sens de manière beaucoup plus impressionnante que d’autres entités intelligibles.

Pour comprendre pourquoi Platon adopte la notion de beauté dans le *Phédon*, nous ferons d’abord la comparaison avec celle qui est discutée dans l’*Hippias majeur*, ce dialogue de la jeunesse où la tentative de définir la beauté se termine par un échec. Nous examinerons ensuite ce que Platon commence à développer dans le *Phédon* pour établir une relation entre le sensible et l’intelligible, en prêtant notamment attention à la notion de *skiagraphia* ou « trompe-l’œil ». Cette notion, dont c’est ici la première apparition dans les dialogues platoniciens et qui est toujours négativement utilisée par Platon, se retrouvera également dans la *République* lors de la critique contre la technique mimétique qui consiste à produire des illusions. Or, dans ce dialogue, Platon met en avant la fonction des images dont la perception nous amène à l’intuition des êtres intelligibles. L’examen de ces divers points nous conduira à déterminer l’une des significations que possède le *Phédon* dans le développement de la philosophie platonicienne. L’établissement de la théorie des Formes intelligibles ne me semble pas être indépendant de la réflexion de ce philosophe sur les apparences, considérées soit négativement, soit positivement, et sur le statut de la sensation qui saisit ces apparences.

1. La beauté dans l’*Hippias majeur*

Dans l’*Hippias majeur*, Socrate demande à Hippias « ce qu’est le beau », et non pas « quelle chose est belle » (287d11-e1). Ce sophiste essaie de définir le beau comme « une belle vierge » (287e4) mais cette réponse ne satisfait pas Socrate car pour lui le beau c’est « le beau en soi » (*auto to kalon*) grâce auquel toutes les autres choses apparaissent comme belles quand « survient » cette forme (*eidos*) (289d). Dans ce dialogue, Platon emploie des expressions qui désigneraient l’être intelligible si elles se trouvaient dans les dialogues de la maturité. Il est possible de le lire comme s’il était une contribution à l’élaboration d’une doctrine des formes intelligibles et de la participation¹. C’est « le beau en soi » qui « survient » aux choses, cette action de survenir étant exprimée par le verbe *prosaignesthai*. Cependant, Hippias, négligeant la précision de Socrate, comprend ce verbe dans un sens exclusivement physique qui pourrait se traduire plutôt par « s’ajouter » (289d-e). Socrate et Hippias emploient tous deux le même verbe mais il me semble juste de le traduire par « survenir » chez Socrate et « s’ajouter » chez Hippias². Ce dernier pense que la beauté vient s’ajouter

² On trouve cinq occurrences du terme *prosaignesthai* dans l’*Hippias majeur* : trois dans les mots de Socrate (289d4, 290b7, 292d1) et deux dans les mots d’Hippias (289d8, 290e5). Comme en 290b7, Socrate l’emploie du point de vue d’Hippias, il convient de le traduire en
à une chose pour l’embellir, une action considérée comme celle qui se réalise entre deux éléments de même niveau sensible. C’est pourquoi le sophiste prétend que la beauté est lor, alors que Socrate tente de faire allusion au fait que la beauté elle-même survient ou advient au niveau sensible en provenance d’un niveau supra-sensible. La position d’Hippias est matérialiste et relativiste, et Socrate qui ne l’accepte pas lui dit que l’or comme l’ivoire font apparaître belles les choses lorsqu’ils conviennent, et laides lorsqu’ils ne conviennent pas (290d). Ainsi, le sens du terme prosaignesthai reste ambivalent entre l’exigence métaphysique de Socrate et la position matérialiste d’Hippias. Dans ce dialogue de jeunesse qui se termine sans aboutir à une conclusion définitive, on trouve certes une certaine allusion au caractère intelligible du « beau en soi », mais Platon lui-même supprime le sens métaphysique de l’eidos.

2. L’acte de « s’ajouter » dans le Phédon et la question de skiagraphia

Dans le Phédon, où Platon instaure la théorie des Formes intelligibles, il emploie également le terme prosaignesthai et s’y trouvent aussi deux usages différents, l’un matérialiste et l’autre idéaliste, ce dernier étant intégré dans la théorie de la participation qui recourt à la notion de beauté.

Voyons d’abord l’usage matérialiste du terme prosaignesthai dans la première partie du Phédon. Il s’agit là de la position hédoniste de l’« ami du corps » (philosômatos) distinguée de l’« ami de l’argent » (philokrêmatos) (68b-c). Il est dit que cette position nous apporte la fausse vertu qui s’oppose à la vraie vertu fondée sur la pensée pure (phronêsis) et qui résulte d’un calcul mercantile consistant à saisir et à prévoir la succession des affections telles que plaisirs, peines et peurs. Dans ce dialogue, Socrate considère la fausse vertu comme un mode d’échange qui consiste à « échanger des plaisirs contre des plaisirs, des peines contre des peines, de la peur contre de la peur — une plus grande quantité contre une plus petite, comme si c’étaient des pièces de monnaie » (69a7-9). À ce mode incorrect d’échange, s’oppose un mode correct d’échange qu’explique Socrate en les comparant :

Il est à craindre qu’il n’y ait au contraire qu’une seule monnaie qui vaille et en fonction de laquelle tout cela doit être échangé : la pensée (phronêsis) ! et que si c’est à ce prix-là, et à l’aide de cela, qu’on les achète et qu’on les vend, toutes ces choses aient des chances d’être, réellement, du courage, de la modération, de la justice, en un mot de la vertu vraie accompagnée de pensée (meta phronêseôs) — que s’y ajoutent ou s’en éloignent (prosgignomenôn kai apogignomenôn) plaisirs, peines, et toutes affections du même genre — ; mais si au contraire, coupé de toute pensée, tout cela n’est que matière à échange mutuel, il est à craindre qu’une telle vertu ne soit qu’une vertu en trompe-l’œil (skiagraphia), vertu réellement servile qui ne comporte rien de sain, et rien non plus de vrai (69a9-b8).

Ici, la succession des affections dans la fausse vertu est exprimée par les deux processus contraires : « s’ajouter » (prosgignesthai) et « s’éloigner » (apogignesthai) (69b4). Ces actions expriment l’échange mutuel qui se passe entre les choses au même niveau sensible. Par contre, la vertu vraie relève d’un échange qui se réalise en fonction de la « pensée » (phronêsis) considérée comme étant le seul moyen de nous faire aboutir à la vertu sans recourir au calcul qui compare les plaisirs ou d’autres passions. Dans un passage de ce dialogue, Platon définit cette notion comme étant l’état de l’âme en contact avec l’intelligible (79d). Phronêsis dans le Phédon signifie donc pensée pure ou sagesse philosophique. L’usage de ce terme, qui se distingue du calcul qui compare mutuellement des affections au niveau sensible, nous semble coïncider avec l’institution de la théorie des Formes dans le Phédon.

De plus, il est à noter que Platon considère la fausse vertu comme skiagraphia, terme qui désigne une technique spéciale, développée à son époque et utilisée pour obtenir une peinture où le jeu des ombres et des couleurs reproduit les apparences « s’ajouter »
et donne l’illusion de la réalité. Insistons sur le fait que c'est là que pour la première fois se trouve le terme skiagraphia dans les œuvres de Platon. Or, selon Agnès Rouvelet, les textes les plus anciens où apparaît ce terme, datent du IVe siècle avant J.-C. Ils constituent « un corpus restreint mais homogène dans lequel le mot présente une valeur tout à fait différente ». Les dialogues de Platon constituent les textes essentiels dans lesquels doit être cherché le vrai sens de la skiagraphia. Même s’il semble difficile de déterminer le sens exact de la skiagraphia dans l’histoire de l’art, au moins peut-on dire que ce terme désigne une nouvelle technique apparue entre le Ve et IVe siècles, et que Platon lui reproche de tromper l’âme humaine. Nous nous contenterons de considérer la skiagraphia comme une technique consistant à créer une illusion par le modelé des ombres et des lumières.

Au livre X de la République, Platon, dans l’argument concernant la mimétique, compte la skiagraphia parmi les procédés artificiels qui causent du trouble et du désordre dans l’âme par l’effet de l’illusion optique. Il écrit que « c’est en exploitant cette sensibilité de notre nature que la peinture en trompé-l’œil (skiagraphia) ne laisse rien à envier à la sorcellerie (goêtheia), comme le font aussi la démonstration de marionnettes (thaumatopoia) et tous les autres procédés de ce genre » (602d1-4). Les notions de goêtheia et de thaumatopoia se trouvent dans d’autres passages de la République et également dans le Sophiste. Ainsi au livre X, le peintre imitateur est considéré comme un « magicien » (goês, 598d) et aussi comme un « sophiste étonnant » (thaumastos sophistês, 596d1). Et il est affirmé dans le Sophiste que le sophiste est comme un « imitateur » et comme un « magicien » (235a1, 8) et qu’il possède une technique capable d’« ensorceler » (goêteuein) les jeunes gens en montrant « des apparences parlées de toutes choses ». Le terme thaumatopoioi se trouve dans l’allégorie de la caverne de la République où Platon décrit le dispositif de projection des ombres (514b5) ainsi que dans un passage du Sophiste où le sophiste est considéré comme appartenant au genre des thaumatopoioi (235b5). Comme le remarque N.-L. Cordero, la tâche du thaumatopoios est d’élaborer des choses étonnantes, des prodiges, des mirages, c’est-à-dire des apparences trompeuses. Ainsi, l’introduction de la notion de skiagraphia dans le Phédon constitue un élément important pour la critique postérieure de Platon contre l’illusionisme qui trompe l’âme humaine.

Cette notion de skiagraphia se rattache à celle de simulacre (phantasma) considérée négativement dans la République, alors que Platon admet une certaine valeur à l’image (eikôn), cette opposition entre phantasma et eikôn étant clairement proclamée ultérieurement dans le Sophiste. En effet, le mot eikôn ne se trouve jamais dans le livre X de la République qui fait la critique des poètes imitateurs, alors que sont utilisés les autres mots : phantasma, eidôlon, mimêma. Cependant, dans les


4 A. Rouvelet, op. cit., p. 23.


autres livres de ce dialogue, le terme eikôn se retrouve à plusieurs reprises aussi bien que le terme eikasia. Le recours platonicien à la notion de skiagraphia dans le Phédon me semble ainsi montrer que la pensée de Platon qui réprouve et dévalorise l’illusionnisme sophistique et la tromperie des apparences se trouve déjà en germe dans ce dialogue.

Or, dans ce passage où se rencontre la première occurrence du terme skiagraphia chez Platon, ce philosophe met en valeur la vertu vraie sans opposer l’image à l’apparence illusoire de la fausse vertu. Il recourt cependant à la notion de « purification » et affirme que la pensée (phronêsis) est un « moyen de la purification » (69b8-c3). Pour accéder à la vertu vraie, il faut que l’homme purifie son âme, lui-même traînant le corps. Après la mise en question de l’acquisition de la pensée véritable (65a-66a), Platon en admet l’impossibilité pendant la vie trempée de corporeité et il introduit la question de la purification (66b-69e). Il nous semble pouvoir considérer que la notion de purification sert de base à la formation de la doctrine qui contrecarre l’illusionnisme et qui fonde la vie humaine dans laquelle nous sommes obligés de rester dans le domaine sensible. Mais avant d’examiner comment s’est établie la doctrine platonicienne, voyons une autre occurrence du terme prosaignesthai dans le Phédon.

Dans son sens matérialiste, le terme prosaignesthai apparaît aussi dans un autre passage de la dernière partie du Phédon où il s’agit de la position des savants physiologues qui expliquent l’agrandissement par l’ajout de matières (96d). Certes, cette position qui se rapporte à la génération et à la disparition des choses physiques n’est pas la même que l’opinion hédoniste de l’ami du corps qui met en valeur l’échange mutuel des affections psychiques. Toutefois, ces deux positions nous semblent posséder une certaine caractéristique commune en ce sens qu’en les suivant, notre perception des choses est obligée de nous maintenir plongés dans la succession infinie des événements reçus directement par la sensation corporelle. Cette caractéristique, qui correspond à l’effet de la skiagraphia, constitue l’aporie que Platon doit surmonter dans sa lutte contre l’illusionnisme et contre l’asservissement à la variation infinie des phénomènes temporels.

3. La survenue de la beauté et la question de l’image

Après avoir abandonné cette position basée sur l’explication matérialiste ainsi que celle d’Anaxagore qui explique insuffisamment la cause de la génération des choses, Socrate commence dans ce dialogue ce qu’on appelle la « seconde navigation » (99e9-d1) pour rechercher la vraie cause dans son expérience, et il en arrive à soutenir l’idée de la participation des choses sensibles à la réalité intelligible dont l’exemple est « le beau en soi » (auto to kalon, 100c4-5). C’est là que Platon introduit le terme prosaignesthai au sens métaphysique. Socrate tente d’expliquer la causalité des belles choses par leur participation à l’intelligible en affirmant très brièvement que le fait qu’une chose soit belle peut s’expliquer de trois façons : soit par la « présence » (parousia) de l’intelligible à la chose sensible, soit comme une « communauté » (koinônia) qui se trouve, semble-t-il, entre le sensible et l’intelligible, soit encore par l’action de la beauté intelligible qui « survient » (prosaignesthai) (100d). Socrate s’abstient ici d’approfondir la question concernant la modalité de

7 Rép., II, 375d5, III, 401b2, 5, 8, 402b5, c6, VI, 487e5, 6, 488a1, 489a5, 10, 509a9, e1 (deux fois), 510 b4, 8, e3 (deux fois), 511a6, VII, 515a4, 517a8, d1, 531b4, b6, 533a3, 538c5, IX, 588b10, d10.
8 Rép., VI, 511e2, VII, 534a1, 5.
9 Dans le texte que nous avons cité, il y a une difficulté dans l’établissement du texte à propos du verbe prosaignesthai. Nous avons adopté la conjecture prosgenomon pou proposée par Ueberweg, adoptée par F.M. Cornford et R. Hackforth, le participe s’accordant avec ekeinou tou kalou ; c’est donc la forme du beau qui survient aux choses belles.
l'action de survenir du beau en soi mais on peut dire que Platon établit l'idée de participation des choses sensibles aux Formes intelligibles, en recourant au terme *prosiginesthai* dont le sens métaphysique a été suggéré dans la mise en question de la beauté dans l'*Hippias majeur*. On voit ainsi comment s'opère le passage du sens matérialiste au sens métaphysique dans l'expérience de Socrate, développée dans le *Phédon*.

L'introduction de la beauté dans cette théorie de la participation me semble s'expliquer également par la critique contre l'illusion skiagraphique et par la mise en valeur de l'image dans la recherche de la vérité. En effet, ce philosophe recourt à la notion d'image (*eikôn*) dans la recherche de la vérité. Juste avant l'introduction de la beauté pour fonder la doctrine de la participation du sensible à l'intelligible, Socrate explique sa méthode, qui fonde cette doctrine, en prenant l'exemple de la vision d'une éclipse de soleil.

 Certains corrompent parfois complètement leurs yeux pour n'avoir pas regardé dans l'eau l'image (*tên eikona*) de l'astre qu'ils étudient, ou n'avaient pas utilisé un moyen de ce genre. Et c'est à ce type d'accident que je réfléchissais ; je me pris à craindre que mon âme ne devienne totalement aveugle à force de regarder les choses avec mes yeux et d'essayer de les atteindre par chacun de mes sens (99d5-e4).

 Socrate explique ainsi une approche qui consiste à voir l'image pour saisir son modèle dont la perception détermine cause éventuelle des problèmes. Sur la base de cette approche qui s'appuie sur la perception visuelle, il pense qu'il faut « se réfugier du côté des *logoi* et examiner la vérité à l'intérieur de ces *logoi* » (99e5-6), en admettant pourtant qu'il s'agit dans un sens, que sa comparaison pourrait ne pas être ressemblante. Il nous semble que Platon, comparant *logos* et *eikôn*, insiste non seulement sur la perception sensible de l'image distincte du modèle intelligible, mais également et surtout sur la relation dynamique qui apporte l'image par rapport à son modèle, le *logos* étant considéré comme une intervention de l'intelligible dans le domaine sensible. C'est pourquoi, par la suite, il introduit l'action de survenir (*prosiginesthai*) de la beauté dans l'explication de la participation du sensible à l'intelligible.

 Il me semble que cette relation dynamique de la participation est regardée du point de vue de l'homme qui doit vivre dans le monde sensible mais qui tente de se purifier pour chercher la vérité en étant pourtant souvent trompé par des illusions skiagraphiques. On comprend que Platon introduit négativement la notion de *skiagraphia* dans la mise en question de la purification après la prise de conscience de la réalité de la nature humaine qui consiste dans le fait que l'on ne peut échapper à la nécessité d'être dans le corps (66b). C'est dans la recherche philosophique pour l'accès à l'être intelligible que Platon propose la purification qui présuppose la nécessité de la corporéité dans la vie humaine.

 Or, la purification de la corporéité ne contredit pas la mise en valeur de la fonction sensitive qui nous conduit à l'intuition intelligible. Au contraire, la perception appropriée de l'image peut être fondée sur la purification de l'âme humaine. En suivant ce qu'indique l'image, nous sommes conduits à l'intuition de l'être intelligible tout en restant physiquement dans le domaine sensible, alors que l'apparence illusoire nous trompe souvent en nous faisant rester dans les choses instables. Il nous paraît que Platon entame la réflexion sur la valeur de la vie dans notre expérience de ce monde sensible en se basant sur l'examen des modes d'apparence. En effet, la fonction de l'image qui indique son modèle sera intégrée dans son système philosophique portant sur les activités humaines dans ce monde sensible. Notamment dans la théorie de l'éducation des futurs gardiens de la cité idéale dans la *République*, Platon considère que l'éducation musicale doit nous rendre capable de saisir à la fois l'image et son modèle (402c).

 Platon ne développe pas la théorie des images dans le *Phédon* mais il me semble
que la mise en valeur de l’image se manifeste dans l’argument de la réminiscence du Phèdon, où il s’agit de l’expérience humaine dans laquelle on parvient à concevoir quelque chose d’intérieur par la sensation d’une chose extérieure. Parmi plusieurs exemples, Platon recourt à celui de la peinture dont l’image nous fait concevoir son modèle (73e), pour aboutir à l’explication du ressouvenir de l’être intelligible à partir de la sensation.

Dans le Phèdon, l’attitude de Platon par rapport à la sensation est tantôt positive, tantôt négative. Lorsqu’il en traite négativement, il la considère comme attachée à la corpéité. Or, la sensation a une fonction positive si notre âme la considère comme un point de départ et la dépasse en suivant ce qu’indique l’apparition sensitive afin d’aboutir à l’intuition intelligible sans que nous restions plongés dans le domaine de la sensation. C’est pourquoi Platon répète l’expression « à partir de (ek) la sensation » (75a7, a11, b6) dans la théorie de la réminiscence, alors que lorsqu’il critique la sensation après l’argument de la réminiscence, il répète l’expression « à travers (dia) la sensation » (79c3-5, 83a4-5), celle-ci restant bien reliée au corps. Platon tente de réfléchir sur la méthode qui nous permet de saisir la relation entre le sensible et l’intelligible. Nous assistons donc dans ce dialogue à l’émergence d’une réflexion sur les images qui se développera ultérieurement.

On peut dire que dans le Phèdon où il établit la théorie des Formes, Platon tente d’établir sa propre théorie des images en distinguant celles-ci des illusions skiagraphiques qu’il rapproche de la fausse vertu. Il s’agit de la fonctionnalité sensitive dans la vie humaine où l’on doit purifier notre âme en évitant les illusions skiagraphiques. Dans sa tentative d’établir sa propre doctrine philosophique Platon commence donc là à réfléchir sur la modalité de la sensation humaine.

L’introduction de la survenue de la beauté intelligible dans le Phèdon représente ainsi un moment crucial dans la pensée platonicienne pour établir la relation entre le sensible et l’intelligible, par pays particular attention à la notion de skiagraphia, “trompe-l’œil”.

Abstract (English)

In the last part of Phaedo, Plato abruptly introduces the notion of beauty during the discussion concerning the participation of sensible things in intelligible reality. To understand the reason for this usage of beauty, we shall examine, on one hand, the discussion about beauty in Hippias Major, and, on the other hand, what Plato begins to develop in Phaedo to establish the relation between the sensible and the intelligible, by paying particular attention to the notion of skiagraphia, “trompe-l’œil”.

In Hippias Major, Socrates asks Hipias what is beauty. For Socrates beauty is “the beautiful itself” (auto to kalon) thanks to which sensible things appear as beautiful when this form (eidos) “arrives”, the action of which is expressed by the verb prosaignesthai. However, Hipias understands this verb exclusively in a physical sense which can be translated as “be added” (289d-e). Therefore, the sense of the word prosaignesthai differs between the metaphysical requirement of Socrates and the materialist position of Hipias.

In Phaedo we find both competing uses of this term, materialist and idealist. In its materialistic sense, the term prosaignesthai is used in a passage (69b) discussing the hedonist position of “lover of the body.” It is said that this position reflects false virtue which is opposed to real virtue based on pure wisdom (phronēsis) and that the false virtue is the result of a mercantile process, the exchange of affections. This
exchange is expressed by two opposite processes: “be added” (prosagnesthai) and “be separated” (69b4). Here, Plato considers false virtue as skiagraphia, a term which indicates a special technique used to create a painting in which the effect of shadows and colors gives the illusion of reality. It is notable that this is the first occurrence of the term skiagraphia in Plato’s dialogues. In Book X of the Republic, he includes the term among artificial processes which cause confusion in the human soul by the effect of optical illusion. This notion of skiagraphia is connected with that of phantasma, while Plato admits a certain value in eikôn, this opposition between phantasma and eikôn being clearly proclaimed later in Sophist.

The usage of the term prosagnesthai in a materialistic sense also occurs in another passage of Phaedo where it is about the position of scholars who explain enlargement by adding materials (96d). This position as well as the opinion of the hedonist seem to possess a common characteristic in the sense that by following them, our perception shall necessarily plunge us into the infinite succession of things received directly by physical sensation.

After leaving this position based on a materialistic explanation, Socrates finally comes to discuss the participation of sensible things in intelligible reality by introducing beauty itself (auto to kalon) as an example of intelligible reality. Here Plato introduces the term prosagnesthai in a metaphysical sense. Socrates tries to explain the participation by asserting briefly that the fact that a thing is beautiful can be explained in three ways: by the “presence (parousia)” of the intelligible to the sensible thing, or as a “community (koinônia)” between the sensible and the intelligible, or still by the action of the intelligible beauty which “arrives (prosagnesthai)” (100d). Plato establishes the idea of participation by using the term prosagnesthai. In this way, we see movement from a materialistic sense to a metaphysical sense in Socrates’ experience, developed in Phaedo.

Introduction of beauty does not seem to be without relation to criticism against skiagraphia, criticism which goes hand in hand with relevant estimation of image (eikôn) in Plato's search for the truth. Indeed, this philosopher uses the notion of eikôn in his search for the truth by considering logos as eikôn (99d-100a). In Phaedo where Plato establishes the theory of Ideas, he tries to undertake his own reflection on the function of images which are different from skiagraphic illusions considered as closer to false virtue. This function is also found in the theory of reminiscence where Plato cites an example of a picture to explain recollecting a person by looking at his portrait. We thus witness in this dialogue an emergence of his theory of images which will be developed later.

In this way, the introduction of the arrival of intelligible beauty in Phaedo represents a crucial moment in Plato’s thought for establishing the relation between the sensible and the intelligible. Plato’s reflection on the perception of sensible appearance helps free the soul from the deceit of skiagraphic illusions.
La relación de compatibilidad entre los paradigmas poéticos platónico y tradicional en la anécdota del sueño de Sócrates en el *Fedón*

Soares, Lucas

En el *Fedro*, el Sócrates platónico se erige como un tipo de filósofo que va *más allá* o que puede adentrarse cómodamente en el ámbito eidético que hay por encima del cielo, un terreno al que nunca pudieron ni podrán arribar los poetas tradicionales con su palabra (*Phdr.* 247c3-6). En este conocido pasaje puede leerse un nuevo esbozo de paradigma poético platónico, diferente al relevado en *República* y, posteriormente, en *Leyes*. En efecto, al hacer referencia a la posibilidad de un poeta no tradicional que describa en su obra el ámbito propio de las Ideas, aquella realidad (*ousía*) sólo visible para el intelecto (*noûs*), que es de una manera real (*óntos oûsa*) y que constituye el objeto del verdadero conocimiento (*alethés epistéme*), o, dicho de otra manera, de un filósofo que se exprese en términos poéticos sobre temáticas de corte filosófico, Platón procura establecer en *Fedro* una estrecha vinculación -ya insinuada en el argumento ontológico de las camas de *República X*, pero dejada más tarde de lado en el transcurso de ese mismo libro- entre la poesía y el ámbito eidético propio del saber filosófico, o al que accede el filósofo mediante una ejercitada captación sinóptico-dialéctica. Tal tipo de poesía filosófica aparece ilustrada a la perfección en la propia palinodia socrática, la cual erige a Sócrates -y en última instancia a Platón- como paradigma de filósofo poeta, palinodia que ha sido obligada a pronunciarse “con ciertos términos poéticos” (*toîs onómasin poietikoîs tisin*, *Phdr.* 257a3-6). Partiendo de esa palinodia como modelo, Platón se propone abordar el tema del éros con discursos filosóficos que se nutran de términos poéticos, o sea, a través de una explícita mixtura de elementos filosóficos y poéticos, cuyo ejemplo más claro es el *Fedro* en su conjunto, o, en términos más generales, el género dialógico platónico en tanto éste pone en escena una interacción entre los registros filosófico y poético (*Phdr.* 257b1-6). Cabe comparar, en este sentido, los rasgos estilísticos prescriptos por Platón en *República* para su paradigma poético con los aplicados por él mismo en la palinodia socrática del *Fedro*, la cual se caracteriza, paradójicamente, por el empleo de un lenguaje ornamentado, plagado de elementos pasionales y retóricos, tales como metáforas, personificaciones, imágenes y símiles sensibles, propios de la poesía tradicional que había sido descartada en *República*.

Teniendo en cuenta esta relación de compatibilidad que Platón establece en *Fedro* entre su paradigma poético-filosófico y el de tipo tradicional -paradigmas que en los libros II, III y X de *República* aparecían claramente en tensión-, en el presente trabajo nos interesa apoyar tal relación en la anécdota del sueño relatada por Sócrates al comienzo del *Fedón*, en la cual el filósofo confiesa ante Simmias y Cebes haber compuesto desde su encierro en la cárcel -ya que anteriormente jamás lo había hecho- poemas basados en la versificación o musicalización de las fábulas de Esopo y un himno a Apolo.

Fuera del marco de la palinodia socrática, volvemos a encontrar en *Fedro* tal paradigma poético-filosófico platónico en el célebre mito de las cigarras, pasaje en el que, refiriéndose al don que éstas pueden conceder a los hombres, el filósofo aparece caracterizado como un “amante de las Musas” (*philómousos*). ¿Pero en qué sentido cabe caracterizar así al filósofo cuando la filosofía como área del pensamiento no tenía asignada entre los griegos una Musa determinada? Justamente en ese mito se advierte la operación platónica de atribuir al dominio filosófico una Musa respectiva o “Musa filosófica”,

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como aparecerá más explícitamente al término del Filebo. En este sentido el filósofo, al igual que los demás artistas tradicionales que cultivan su Musa respectiva (poetas épicos, líricos, trágicos y cómicos, músicos, bailarines, etc.), también podrá ser caracterizado como “un varón amante de las Musas” (philómouson ándra, Fedro 259b5). Pero Platón no quiere expresar con ello que el filósofo sea un amante de todas las Musas que presiden el pensamiento en todas sus formas a la manera de diosas patronas de la poesía, la literatura y la música, sino que, en tanto abocado al cultivo de la filosofía, sería más bien un amante de la Musa filosófica, cuya aparición queda circunscripta a las áreas de competencia de dos Musas (Calíope y Urania). En efecto, según este mito platónico, la raza de las cigarras surgió de los hombres que hubo antes de que nacieran las Musas, los que, al nacer éstas y aparecer el canto, quedaron tan transportados de placer, que cantando se descuidaron de comer y de beber, muriendo finalmente sin advertirlo. Dicha raza recibió así como don de las Musas el de no necesitar alimento, el de cantar desde el momento en que nacen hasta que mueren sin comer ni beber, y el de ir tras su muerte a notificarles cuál de los hombres de este mundo les rinde culto, y a cuál de todas ellas (Fedro 259c6-d7).7

De las nueve Musas existentes, hijas de Zeus y Mnemósine, Platón sólo menciona en este mito a cuatro, y, sobre todo, con vistas a asignarle una región de las Musas a la filosofía, a Calíope, cuyo dominio abarca la poesía épica y la elocuencia, y a Urania, vinculada a la astronomía.8 Además de precisar mejor en qué sentido la filosofía era vista en Fedón -puntualmente en la anécdota del sueño que abordaremos más adelante- como la música más excelsa, este mito de las cigarras da cuenta de con cuál (o cuáles) de las nueve Musas existentes hay que vincular concretamente al filósofo. Éste, en efecto, es caracterizado en Fedro como un amante de dos Musas específicas, que en sus discursos filosóficos pone en juego una interacción entre los dominios de la astronomía y la elocuencia, o, en otras palabras, entre los discursos divinos y humanos.9

Pero pasemos ahora al tema de la nueva relación que establece Platón en Fedro entre su paradigma poético y el tradicional. Una vez examinada la posibilidad del paradigma poético platónico (o de filósofo poeta), la pregunta que naturalmente surge aquí es cómo se relaciona este paradigma con el de tipo tradicional. Dijimos al comienzo que en Fedro Platón pone en juego una relación armónica entre ambos, la cual aparece ilustrada en el pasaje sobre los nueve modos de vida posibles para las almas y en la anécdota del sueño de Sócrates del Fedón. Vayamos al primer pasaje. Más allá del ropaje mítico-religioso que envuelve todo este tramo del segundo discurso de Sócrates, dedicado al destino de las almas y a sus distintas generaciones y reencarnaciones, nos interesa puntualmente la denominada “ley de Adrastea” (Fedro 248c2),10 que Platón introduce a fin de prescribir una escala jerárquica de nueve modos de vida según su grado de excelencia. Dentro de ella veremos qué lugar les corresponde al poeta tradicional inspirado (o maniático) y al no inspirado (o cuerdio), distinción que Platón ya había establecido en Fedro -y ya antes en el Ion- al vincular la poesía con una de las cuatro clases de manía divina. Según dicha ley, toda alma que, tras haber entrado en el séquito de la divinidad, haya llegado a vislumbrar “alguna de las verdades” (Fedro 248c3-4), quedará siempre libre de sufrimiento; pero cuando no las haya podido ver por haber sido incapaz de seguir el cortejo, o a causa de haber padecido cualquier desgracia, perderá sus alas entorpecida por su carga de olvido y maldad, y caerá finalmente a tierra.11 La ley de Adrastea prescribe en ese caso que tal alma sea, en la primera generación, plantada en diversos modos de vida, según haya visto más o menos alguna de aquellas verdades. Recordemos sobre todo el primer y sexto lugar dispuestos por esta ley:

Aquella que haya visto más lo será en el feto de un varón que haya de ser amante de la sabiduría, o de la belleza, un cultivador de las Musas, o del éros. A la sexta le irá bien la vida de un poeta, o la de cualquier otro dedicado al arte de la
imitación (Fedro 248d2-4, e1-2).

Cada uno de los niveles establecidos en la ley de Adrastea abre distintos e ineludibles modelos de vida, articulados por una disyunción de tipo inclusiva. El alma que más haya vislumbrado alguna de las verdades en el séquito de lo divino deberá encarnar primeramente en los géneros de vida de un filósofo, de un amante de la belleza, de las Musas o bien en un amante de los mancebos con filosofía (Fedro 249a2). El problema que suscita este pasaje es si Platón hace referencia aquí a una o a diversas personas en cada uno de esos géneros de vida, entre los cuales nos interesan sobre todo los relativos al primer y sexto lugar. Pueden abrirse al respecto dos grandes líneas interpretativas. La primera da lugar a suponer que en el primer nivel Platón intenta establecer una clara demarcación entre los dominios expresados en cada uno de esos géneros de vida, o sea el filosófico, el relativo a la belleza, a las Musas y al erótico. En el caso del amante o servidor de las Musas (mousikós) deberíamos pensar así en todo aquel consagrado al cultivo de alguna de las nueve Musas que ejercen el patronazgo de las diversas áreas del pensamiento, o, en términos actuales, de la cultura o formación humanística en general (la poesía épica, lírica, trágica y cómica, la historia, la astronomía, la elocuencia, la pantomima, la música y la danza). En tanto que “mousiké” era el término genérico con el que Platón designaba en los libros II y III de República a la educación poético-musical recibida por las jóvenes generaciones (donde mousiké era a la formación del alma lo que gymnastiké a la del cuerpo), el mousikós estaría aludiendo aquí a un poeta o compositor, ya que por lo general ambas ocupaciones iban unidas. De acuerdo con esta primera línea interpretativa, tendríamos entonces diversos géneros de vida comprometidos en el primer nivel de la escala. Una segunda línea interpretativa, reflejo de la opinión predominante, señala que en este primer nivel Platón estaría haciendo referencia a un solo varón o persona que simultáneamente encarnase tales dominios; de forma tal que el “amante de la sabiduría” (philósophos) fuera al mismo tiempo un “amante de lo bello” (philókalos), “amante de las Musas” (mousikós o philómousos) y del amor (erotikós). La palinodia socrática –o, en última instancia, este mismo diálogo compuesto por Platón- vendría a corroborar tal posibilidad de síntesis entre esas dimensiones. En este primer nivel se nos estaría hablando así de una y la misma persona: el filósofo. Para tal opinión predominante, sólo cabe leer esta disyunción inclusiva en los términos de una implicación recíproca entre los atributos puestos en juego, descartando toda posibilidad de concebirlos también de forma aislada. Si bien es cierto que la relación entre el filósofo y las Musas es desarrollada y resaltada en otros pasajes del diálogo, por ejemplo en el mito de las cigarras, no creemos que el verdadero mousikós se ciña aquí sólo a quien dedica su vida a una nueva forma de arte filosófico al servicio de Calíope y Urania, sino también a todo poeta realmente enloquecido o inspirado. A contramano de esta opinión según la cual sólo cabe concebir al poeta inspirado del primer nivel como siendo al mismo tiempo un filósofo (o un filósofo-poeta inspirado), cabe pensar que, teniendo en cuenta el carácter inclusivo de la disyunción, este pasaje no excluye la posibilidad de que en ese primer nivel Platón esté haciendo referencia también a las grandes personalidades de la poesía tradicional griega, contrapuestas allí a los poetas cuerdos o no inspirados ubicados en el sexto nivel.

Pero si Platón hubiese querido destacar tal síntesis, habría puesto en cada uno de los niveles una partícula conjuntiva (en vez de una disyuntiva), la cual habría aclarado sin más la relación entre los diferentes candidatos presentados en cada uno de los niveles de la caída. Por otra parte, si se tratara de tal síntesis, ésta debería justificarse también en los niveles subsiguientes, y no pareciera ser necesario que, por ejemplo, un buen rey fuera al mismo tiempo un guerrero, como tampoco que
un político sea a la vez un buen negociante, o un gimnasta un médico, sino más bien que el alma pudiese encarnar en uno u otro.19 Si optamos, pues, por leer los géneros de vida presentados en el primer nivel no en el sentido de un alma que englobe a la vez dichos dominios, sino más bien con una finalidad demarcativa, podemos suponer que Platón incluye allí no sólo las obras de los buenos filósofos, sino también la de los maniáticamente enamorados, así como la de los amantes de todo lo relativo al arte de las Musas en general, y, entre ellos, a los grandes nombres de la poesía tradicional, como Homero, Hesíodo y Píndaro (amanentes de las Musas ligadas a la poesía épica y lírica, respectivamente), y a otros muchos poetas divinamente inspirados. Como se desprende de algunos pasajes del Ion, Menón y Banquete, y ahora del Fedro,20 sus obras, además de ser caracterizadas por Platón como “buenas” y “bellas”, expresan asimismo muchas verdades.

Nos queda pendiente el sexto lugar. Tras las otras encarnaciones degenerativas -en segundo lugar, en el modo de vida propio de un rey justo, guerrero o apto para mandar; en tercer lugar, en el de un político u hombre de negocios; en cuarto lugar en el de un amante del trabajo corporal, maestro de gimnasia o médico; y en quinto lugar, en el de una vida relativa a la adivinación o a los ritos iniciáticos (Fedro 248d4-e1)-, las almas revestirán en el sexto lugar el género de vida propio de un poeta o de algún otro relacionado con la imitación (mimesis). ¿Está englobando Platón aquí, como creen algunos intérpretes, a toda clase de poetas?21 Pensamos que tal lugar no hace referencia al poeta tradicional sin más, sino a un tipo determinado de poeta, que ya había sido mencionado en Fedro 245a5-8, y antes en Ion 534b3-7, a saber: el poeta cuerdo, no inspirado o poseído por la divinidad, que mediante los recursos que ofrece la técne poietiké cree poder traspasar las puertas de la gran poesía. Éste aparece así revestido de un “saber práctico” (tēchne), cuya actividad se define precisamente por oposición a la manía enviada por los dioses. Su pensamiento técnico-profesional estriba en la eficacia de sus fórmulas positivas, o, en una palabra, en las reglas del oficio obtenidas mediante aprendizaje, y no por “don divino” (theia dōsis), como en el caso del poeta inspirado. Si bien es cierto que Platón no explicita a qué tipo de poeta alude en este sexto nivel, suponemos, siguiendo tal distinción del Ion y del Fedro entre un poeta eminente en estado de manía divina y otro imperfecto en estado de cordura, que se trata más bien de este último, lo cual nos dejaría reservado el primer lugar de la escala para el poeta inspirado (sea el filósofo poeta platónico o el de tipo tradicional), poeta clave en Fedro en tanto se vinculaba, como vimos, con la manía poética, una de las cuatro formas que asumió la locura.22

Decimos que el primer lugar de la escala podría estar aludiendo también al poeta de tipo tradicional, ya que para llegar a ser un poeta inspirado no necesariamente hay que ser al mismo tiempo un filósofo. Los ejemplos de poeta inspirado que Platón suele brindar en sus diálogos hacen, por lo general, referencia -y ello puede observarse en la Apología, Ion y Banquete, entre otros- a los mayores representantes de la tradición poética griega como, por ejemplo, Homero y Hesíodo.23 Por otra parte, si al ubicar a la poesía mimética en el sexto lugar Platón estuviera haciendo, como creen algunos intérpretes, una referencia negativa sobre todo el conjunto de los poetas tradicionales, no se entiende por qué se esfuerza a toda costa en Fedro por resaltar la relevancia propia de la manía poética. Vale recordar nuevamente aquel pasaje en el que Platón trazaba la distinción central entre dos clases de poetas:

Pues aquel que sin la locura de las Musas llegue a las puertas de la poesía convencido de que por arte habrá de ser un poeta eminente, será uno imperfecto, y su creación poética, estando cuerdo, quedará oscurecida por la de los enloquecidos (Fedro 245a5-8).24

Tendríamos entonces en el primer nivel al poeta inspirado -ya sea el de tipo
platónico o tradicional-, y en el sexto al no inspirado o cuerdo. Tras éste, en el séptimo lugar seguiría en el orden de la caída de las almas el modo de vida propio de un artesano o labrador; en el octavo, el de un sofista o demagogo; y en el noveno y último, el de un tirano (Fedro 248e2-3). Cabe señalar, por lo demás, que el tema de la ubicación jerárquica de los géneros de vida comprometidos en esta ley de Adrastea no constituye para Platón el punto central, puesto que desde un principio deja en claro que la cuestión pasa más bien por el tipo de comportamiento (justo o injusto) que las almas detenten en cada una de sus encarnaciones (Fedro 248e3-5).

En la anécdota del sueño del Fedón hallamos un segundo ejemplo que, creemos, apoya nuestra lectura según la cual en Fedro no se plantea, como en República, una incompatibilidad o tensión entre los paradigmas poéticos tradicional y platónico. En dicha anécdota, Sócrates confiesa ante Simmias y Cebes haber compuesto desde su encierro en la cárcel (ya que anteriormente jamás lo había hecho) poemas basados en la versificación o musicalización de las fábulas de Esopo, y un himno a Apolo. Siguiendo la inquietud del poeta y sofista Eveno de Paros -mencionado asimismo en Apología 20b8-c1, y en Fedro como orador- acerca del motivo que impulsó esos poemas, Cebes retoma la cuestión para más tarde poder ofrecerle a aquél una respuesta firme cuando nuevamente lo interrogué sobre este mismo asunto. Sócrates aclara que no compuso tales poemas para rivalizar con los de Eveno, sino con vistas a descifrar la visión y significado de ciertos sueños que se le aparecían con frecuencia en el transcurso de su vida, y, sobre todo, para confirmar si ésa era realmente la música que el mensaje onírico le ordenaba componer. A través de la composición de esa clase de música popular lograría así purificarse, pues estaría cumpliendo con una obligación o precepto religioso.

Veamos la explicación que brinda Sócrates respecto de aquella célebre exhortación onírica: “compone música y practicala” (mousikèn poíei kaì ergázou, Fedón 60e6-7):25

Yo entendí que me exhortaba y animaba a hacer precisamente lo que venía haciendo, es decir, de hacer música, porque tenía yo la idea de que la filosofía, que era de lo que me ocupaba, era la música más excelsa. Pero ahora, después de que se celebró el juicio y la fiesta del dios me impidió morir, estimé que, por si acaso era esta música popular la que me ordenaba el sueño hacer, no debía desobedecerle, sino, al contrario, hacer poesía; pues era para mí más seguro no marcharme de esta vida antes de haber cumplido con este deber religioso, componiendo poemas y obedeciendo al ensueño (Fedón 60e7-61b1).

El filósofo reconoce aquí haber concebido puntualmente dos poemas: uno en honor a Apolo, dios a quien correspondía la fiesta que se estaba celebrando, y, tras haber caído más tarde en la cuenta de que el poeta debe tratar en sus poemas mitos (múthos) y no razonamientos (logoi), y que él mismo no era mitólogo (muthologikós), otro basado en una versificación de los mitos de Esopo que en ese momento recordaba (Fedón 61b2-7).

Sócrates siempre había entendido el mandato onírico en un solo sentido: como un estímulo divino para seguir purificándose a través del ejercicio de la filosofía; como una instancia a seguir cultivando la música filosófica, que era lo que justamente venía haciendo hasta entonces. Pero al recordar ese sueño en sus últimos momentos, descubre un nuevo sentido en dicho mandato, como si éste le ordenara literalmente abocarse a la composición de música popular. A causa de su carácter alegórico, dramático y su intención moral, las fábulas esópicas eran las que mejor se prestaban para una puesta en verso.26 Más allá de su veracidad histórica, esta anécdota del sueño de Sócrates nos brinda otro ejemplo en el corpus platónico de compatibilidad o de relación positiva entre los dos paradigmas poéticos en juego (el platónico y...
el tradicional-popular). La anécdota revela, en efecto, cómo Sócrates puede, sin que ello implique tensión o rivalidad, dedicarse tanto a la práctica de esa “música más excelsa” que es la filosofía (o al cultivo de la Musa filosófica, como más tarde dirá en el mito de las cigarras del Fedro), como a la versificación de mitos poéticos tradicionales (fábulas esópicas), cuya tipificación, como pudimos leer, no aparece allí en un sentido negativo. Es más: Sócrates resalta a lo largo del Fedón el claro valor purificatorio que detenta tal clase de música (ya sea la filosófica o la popular), valor que instala orden y concordia en el alma que -como dirá en Timeo 47c7-d7- se sirva de ella con inteligencia. Podemos asimismo vincular esta purificación del Fedón con la palinodia del segundo discurso socrático del Fedro. En ambos casos se trata de una purificación, en la medida en que se estaría dando cumplimiento a una obligación sagrada o precepto religioso: en el caso del Fedón puntualmente, a través del cultivo de la música filosófica o de la composición de música popular (demódes mousiké);27 y en el del Fedro, mediante la composición de una palinodia cuya mira era la expiación de la calumnia perpetrada contra el Éros en el primer discurso socrático, al igual que Estesícoro había compuesto la suya como una forma de expiar el haberse referido en malos términos sobre Helena.

Al igual que en República, hallamos también en Fedro, más concretamente en la palinodia socrática, la posibilidad de un paradigma platónico de poesía filosófica o de un estilo mixto de escritura que, al tener –tal como aparece dicho allí explícitamente- un acceso privilegiado al ámbito eidético, puede describir una región a cuyo lugar jamás habrán de llegar los poetas tradicionales con su palabra. Pero que nunca haya habido en el pasado ni llegue a haber en el futuro poetas tradicionales que describan tal ámbito eidético no implica necesariamente en este diálogo que sus obras sean concebidas en sentido negativo. A diferencia del planteo de República, vimos que en Fedro la posibilidad de un paradigma de poesía filosófica no entra en tensión con la caracterización positiva que hace Platón respecto de las obras de los grandes poetas tradicionales, a las que exalta como fuente imprescindible de instrucción para la posteridad. De allí que leamos en Fedro una coexistencia o compatibilidad entre ambos paradigmas, aspecto que creemos pudo observarse a la luz de la ley de Adrastea (en la que Platón ubicaba en el primer nivel de la jerarquía al poeta inspirado –sea el de tipo platónico o tradicional, en tanto ambos componen bajo el influjo de la manía divina-; y en el sexto lugar al cuerdoy laborioso) y de la anécdota del sueño del Fedón (en la que Sócrates reconoce haberse abocado a la composición de ambos tipos de música -filosófica y popular- con el fin de purificarse).

ABSTRACT

In the Phaedrus, Plato’s Socrates appears as a type of philosopher who goes beyond or who can comfortably penetrate the eidetic sphere that is above heaven, a place which traditional poets could never reach with their words (Phdr. 247c3-6). It is possible to read in this well-known passage a new outline of Platonic poetic paradigm, different to that revealed in the Republic and later in the Laws. Indeed, in alluding to the possibility of a non-traditional poet describing in his work the sphere belonging to Ideas, that reality (ousia) which is only visible to the intellect (noûs), which somehow real (óntos oûsa) and which constitutes the object of true knowledge (alethés epistéme) or, in other words, of a philosopher expressing himself in poetic terms on matters of a philosophical nature, Plato seeks to establish in Phaedrus a close link between poetry and the eidetic sphere to which philosophical knowledge belongs, or which the philosopher accesses through a practiced synoptic-
dialectic understanding. This type of philosophical poetry is perfectly illustrated in the Socratic palinode itself, which Socrates—and ultimately Plato—establishes as a paradigm of the poet philosopher, a palinode by necessity must be uttered “with certain poetic terms” (toîs onómasin poietikoîs tisin, Phdr. 257a3-6). Working from that palinode as a model, Plato seeks to approach the subject of éros with philosophical discourses fed with poetical terms, that is, through an explicit blend of philosophical and poetic elements, the clearest example of which is the Phaedrus as a whole, or, in more general terms, the Platonic dialogical genre in as much as this puts forward an interaction between the philosophical and poetic registers (Phdr. 257b1-6). Taking into account this relationship of compatibility that Plato establishes in Phaedrus between the poetic-philosophical paradigm and the traditional paradigm—which in books I, III and X of the Republic clearly appeared in tension—in the present work we are interested in supporting such a relationship in the dream anecdote as told by Socrates at the start of the Phaedo. In this anecdote, the philosopher confesses to Simmias and Cebes that since his time in prison, although he had never done such a thing before, he has been composing poems based on the versification and musicalization of Aesop’s fables and a hymn to Apollo. Following the concern of poet and sophist Euenus of Paros (also mentioned in the Ap. 20b8-c1 and in the Phaedrus as an orator) regarding the reasons that inspired these poems, Cebes returns to the question so that later he can offer Socrates a firm answer when he questions him again on the same matter. Socrates makes it clear that he did not compose these poems to compete with those of Euenus, but in order to decipher the vision and meaning of certain recurring dreams over the course of his life, and above all to confirm whether this was really the music that the dream message ordered him to compose. Through the composition of that kind of popular music he would then be able to purify himself, as he would be fulfilling a religious obligation or precept. “Compose music and play it” (mousikèn poíei kaì ergázou, Phd. 60e6-7) proclaims the famous dream exhortation that Socrates receives, and about which he offers the following explanation: “I used to think that it was impelling me and exhorting me to do what I was actually doing […], that is, producing music (mousikèn poieîn), because I had the idea that philosophy, which was what concerned me, was the greatest music (megístes mousikês). But ever since my trial, while the festival of the god has been delaying my execution, I have felt that perhaps it might be this popular form of music (demóde mousikê) that the dream intended me to produce, I should not disobey it, but rather on the contrary, make poetry; as for me it was safer not to leave this life before having fulfilled this religious duty (aphosiósasthai), composing poems (poiémata) and obeying the dream” (Phd. 60e7-61b1; along similar lines: La. 188c6-d6, and Ti. 47c7-d7). Here the philosopher recognises that he has composed precisely two poems: one in honour of Apollo, the god for whom the festival was held, and, having realised late that the poet must deal with myths (múthos) in his poems and not reasoning (logoi) and that he himself was not a mythologist (muthologikós), another poem based on a versification of the fables of Aesop that he recalled at that time (Phd. 61b2-7). Socrates had always understood the dream command in a single meaning: as a divine encouragement to continue purifying himself through the exercise of philosophy, an urging for him to continue cultivating philosophical music, which was precisely what he’d been doing until then. But on remembering that dream in his last hours, he discovers a new meaning in this command, as if it was literally ordering him to focus on the composition of popular music. Because of their allegorical and dramatic character and their moral intention, Aesop’s fables lent themselves very well to be put into verse. Regardless of its historical veracity, it is interesting to see this anecdote of Socrates’ dream as one of many examples in the Platonic corpus of compatibility (or of a positive relationship) between the two
poetic paradigms in play, the Platonic and the traditional-popular. In this regard, the anecdote may reveal how Socrates may, without this implying tension or rivalry, devote himself both to the practice of this “greatest music” that is philosophy (or to the cultivation of the philosophical Muse as he would later say in the myth of the cicadas in *Phaedrus*) and to the versification of traditional poetic myths (Aesop’s fables), which, as we shall try to show, do not appear to be typified in a negative sense. Furthermore, Socrates emphasises throughout the dialogue (such as in *Phd. 11fc2-6*) the clear purifying value found in this type of music—whether philosophical or popular—a value that brings order and harmony to the soul which, as he would later say in *Timaeus 47c7-d7*, makes use of it intelligently. This purification of the *Phaedo* can also be tied to the palinode of the second Socratic discourse in the *Phaedrus*, as in both cases this is a purification in as much as a sacred obligation or religious precept is being fulfilled (hence the use of the verb *aphosióo*); in the case of the *Phaedo*, precisely, through the cultivation of philosophical music or the composition of “popular music” (*démódes mousiké*) and, in that of the *Phaedrus*, through the composition of a palinode whose focus was on the atonement of the slander perpetrated against *Eros* in the first Socratic discourse, just as Stesichorus had composed his as a way of atoning for speaking ill of Helen.

**BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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(Endnotes)


2 Como al respecto señala Nussbaum (1986: 270, 302), la poesía filosófica contenida en la palinodia socirática implica un discurso que utiliza metáforas y personificaciones en un lenguaje elaborado, rítmico y lleno de colorido, que no representa a personas perfectas o idealmente buenas, y que se dirige no sólo al intelecto, sino también a la imaginación y al sentimiento. Para un contraste entre el uso de imágenes (eikónes) y comparaciones en el Banquete 215a4-6 (puntualmente en el discurso de Alcibiades, donde se muestra un tipo de discurso que afirma decir la verdad por medio de relatos e imágenes) y el empleado en la palinodia socirática del Fedro, cf. asimismo Diès (1927: 594).

3 La figura del “coro de las cigarras” ya puede advertirse en las primeras páginas del diálogo, al efectuar Platón una descripción del bucólico lugar en el que Fedro y Sócrates se echan a leer (Fedro 230c2-3).

4 Cf. al respecto Benjamin (1967: 84), para quien no existe una musa de la filosofía.

5 Sobre la asignación de una Musa específica a la filosofía (o “Musa filosófica”), véase especialmente Crátilo 406a3-5, República VI 499d3-4, VIII 548b8-c2, y Filebo 67b6-7: “Que los de los discursos emitidos en cada caso en el oráculo de la Musa filosófica”. Respecto de la posibilidad de una estética en el Filebo, cf. especialmente Murdoch (1977: 27-29, 34).


9 En República VII 530d-532b Platón afirmaba que el estudio simultáneo de la astronomía (Urania) y la armonía conduce al conocimiento de la Idea del Bien. Nussbaum (1986: 302) encuentra en el Fedro la primera materialización de la poesía filosófica que Platón tiene en mente.
10 Para otra aparición de esta ley, véase asimismo República V 451a4-5. Adrastea -identificada a veces con Némesis, hija de la Noche- era una diosa frigia de los montes, de carácter virginal, quien personifica el castigo o venganza divina para los hombres que pecan de húbris (véase al respecto Hesíodo, Trabajos y días, 200 y ss, quien la coloca junto a Aidós como agente del castigo a los humanos). En Esquilo, por ejemplo, representa la diosa encargada de castigar las palabras demasiado orgullosas o audaces (cf. Prometeo encadenado v. 936). Sobre las relaciones entre este mito de carácter escatológico y la teogonía órfica (donde Adrastea aparece como hija de Anánke, y fuera de esta corriente como hija de Meliseo, rey de Creta), véase Robin (1933: 40-41), Grimal (1951: 278, 373) y Lledó (1986: 350, n. 62).


12 Para un cuadro más detallado del ciclo de generaciones, reencarnaciones en otros cuerpos, daimon y modelos de vida de las almas, véase, entre otros pasajes escatológicos de raíz órfico-pitagórica, Fedón 80e1-82c8, 113d1-114c8; Gorgias 523a1-527a4, República X 614b2-621d3, Timeo 41e1-42e4, 90e1-92c3, y Leyes X 903b4-905d6. Un examen pormenorizado de dicha disyunción y su aparición en otros pasajes del corpus platónico puede leerse en De Vries (1969: 143-144). Sobre el tema filosófico de los géneros de vida en Platón, de República al Fedro, véase especialmente Joly (1956: 69-100).


14 Recordemos al respecto el encomio a Éros pronunciado por el poeta trágico Agatón en el Banquete, donde Platón establece una clara relación entre un Éros (concebido allí como dios de la poesía) y el arte de las Musas. Dicho poeta partía, en efecto, del supuesto de que Éros, por ser en términos de sabiduría “poeta” (además de ser el más feliz, bello, joven, delicado, flexible y elegante de los dioses, y de participar asimismo de las virtudes de la justicia, templanza y valentía), hacía poetas a los demás (Banquete 196d6-197e5).

15 Para la relación entre música y belleza, recordemos aquel pasaje de República III 403c6-7: “Pues es preciso que la música encuentre su fin en el amor de la belleza”.

16 Es interesante al respecto, República III 411c9-e2, donde el carácter filosófico se vincula con un trato con las Musas. Al igual que otros intérpretes, Nussbaum (1986: 300-301) observa en el primer lugar de la jerarquía de las vidas un “híbrido extraño” o “implicación recíproca” de filósofo, seguidor de las Musas y enamorado, trazando a su vez una distinción entre este planteo del Fedro sobre la poesía y el de República. Si bien, a diferencia de muchos especialistas, esta intérprete resalta la clara distinción establecida en la escala entre el tipo de poeta inspirado del primer nivel y el cuerdo y laborioso del sexto, no encuentra, tal como nosotros pensamos, que haya en Fedro una plena rehabilitación y alabanza de la poesía tradicional.


18 García Bacca (1966: CLXV, n. 64) observa bien que Platón coloca en sexto lugar el alma de los poetas y la de los que se dedican a la imitación, pero no la de los poetas que sigan la inspiración de los dioses o de la Musa correspondiente, pues éstos, al igual que en el Ion, son vistos como divinos.

20 Para la caracterización de los poetas tradicionales como “buenos”, recordemos algunos pasajes clave examinados del Ion 533e3-534a4, 534b7-c5 (“La Musa misma crea inspirados, y por medio de ellos empiezan a encadenarse otros en este entusiasmo. De ahí que todos los poetas épicos, los buenos, no es en virtud de una técnica por lo que dicen todos esos bellos poemas, sino porque están endiosados y posesos”), 538e3-4 (“qué clase de cosas son las que conviene que sea capaz de discernir para saber si un poeta es bueno o malo”); Protágoras 325e5, 326a6-7 (“los poemas de los buenos poetas”); Menón 81a8-b2 (“Algo verdadero, me parece, y también bello dicen Píndaro y muchos otros de los poetas, cuantos son divinos”); Banquete 209c7-e4 (“Si dirige su mirada a Homero, a Hesíodo o a los demás buenos poetas y contempla con envidia qué descendencia han dejado de sí mismos, que les procura inmortal fama y recuerdo por ser ella también famosa e inmortal; por haber mostrado muchas y bellas obras y haber engendrado toda clase de virtud”); y Fedro 245a1-8.

21 Véase, entre otros, De Vries (1969: 143-144), Asmis (1992: 358-359) y Griswold (1986: 152, 274, n. 8). Este último vincula las críticas a la poesía formuladas por Platón en República X con el “defecto” que caracteriza “las creaciones de la ordinaria inspiración poética” en Fedro. Sin trazar así una discriminación dentro del conjunto de los poetas, Griswold sostiene que todos éstos se ubican en el sexto lugar de la escala de los tipos humanos, y que, por tanto, la locura poética es inferior a la de tipo éròticó, pues ésta implica la aprehensión de las realidades suprasensibles (Ideas). Una línea similar puede leerse en Stern-Gillet (2004: 183, n. 44). En contra de tal postura, cf. Vicaire (1960: 53-54), quien sostiene que el poietikós del sexto nivel no hace aquí referencia al verdadero poeta (poietés), sino al poetastro o mal poeta; el poeta poseído y demente es puesto por encima del laborioso y dueño de sí, y recibe honores y fama porque sus obras instruyen y benefician a la posteridad.

22 Respecto del poietés implicado en el sexto nivel, creemos al igual que Nussbaum (1986: 301) que se trata del poeta cuerdo o no inspirado.

23 Sobre esta distinción entre dos tipos de poesía (“inspirada” y “artesanal”), Tatarkiewicz (1976: 129): “Puede parecer que Platón no se ponía de acuerdo consigo mismo fácilmente, que no tenía ideas firmes sobre la poesía y las relaciones que mantenía con el arte. Pero ésta es una impresión errónea que se produce por descuidar una consideración que es fundamental: existe poesía y poesía. Existe una poesía inspirada, y otra poesía artesanal”. Respecto de esta creencia en la inspiración artística, es interesante contrastar la posición de Platón en el Fedro y, más concretamente, su predilección por el poeta inspirado, con la que brinda Nietzsche (1878: §155-156, pp. 122-123) en Humano, demasiado humano, la cual, desconfiando de “la conocida ilusión” de la inspiración inmediata, se inclina por el poeta ejercitado, serio y laborioso.

24 Como bien resalta Guthrie (1975: 400-401), en el Fedro Platón afirma sin ironía que los poetas y profetas son muy superiores a los escritores o adivinos que se apoyan exclusivamente en técnicas humanas.

25 Sobre el término mousiké como referido al arte de las Musas en general, véase Hackforth (1955: 37), Bluck (1955: 42, n. 1), Loriaux (1969: 35) y Otto (1971: 67), entre otros. A propósito de la unidad entre poesía y música -recordemos que en República III armonía, ritmo y letra constituyen para Platón los tres elementos esenciales de la música- en dicho pasaje de Fedón, y de las dos líneas interpretativas posibles que sugiere el sintagma “trabaja en componer música”, Eggers Lan (1971: 86-88, n. 18 y 20) resalta, por un lado, la interpretación “pitagorizante”, según la cual la filosofía sería la música más excelsa en tanto implica una purificación del alma; y, por otro, la “metafórica”, que lee dicho sintagma a la luz de un pasaje ya examinado del Laques 188c6-d6, donde el personaje homónimo afirma ante Nicias su buena predisposición a dejarse examar por Sócrates, persona que demuestra una coherencia o armonía entre su modo de vivir y sus palabras. Sócrates vendría a ser así el verdadero músico (no en el sentido corriente del término) que logra...
implantar, en su forma de vida, una completa armonización entre palabras y actos. Sobre la relación de afinidad entre la armonía musical y la del alma, cf. asimismo Timeo 47c7-d7.

26 Respecto del género literario fabulístico como exponente de sabiduría popular en la tradición clásica (Hesíodo, inventor del género según Quintiliano; Arquíloco, Estesícoro, Semónides, Esopo, Fedro, etc.), y, más puntualmente, sobre los elementos básicos que caracterizan la secuencia narrativa de la fábula esólica, cf., entre otros, García Gual (2000: ix-xxvi). Entre los caracteres de la fábula que este intérprete destaca, cabe mencionar su extrema brevedad; su carácter alegórico, dramático y mecánico-esquemático; su intención moral; y su estilo austero, sencillo y didáctico. Cabe destacar, no obstante, que, desde la perspectiva del programa de reforma pedagógico-política establecido en República, sería impensable la inclusión de la fábula esólica, ya que el espejo alegórico del mundo bestial que ella refleja supone una sociedad dura, competitiva y despiadada, atravesada por una constante y amarga lucha por la vida, en la que la razón del más fuerte siempre termina por ser la mejor. Pero, fuera del marco de tal programa de República, en esta anécdota del sueño del Fedón se advierte cómo Platón rehabilita la fábula esólica como un tipo de música popular viable.

27 Nietzsche (1872: 119-124) encuentra en esta aparición onírica (“¡Sócrates, cultiva la música!”) de Sócrates elementos para sostener que, a pesar de su tendencia antitrágica, aquél tenía a veces frente a la música popular que frecuentemente despreciaba el sentimiento de un deber acaso desatendido. Para otras lecturas de este pasaje del Fedón, cf. Greene (1918: 70), Boyancé (1937: 262) y Nussbaum (1986: 300, n. 54-55), quien subraya un contraste entre el lugar educativo que detenta la poesía tradicional en algunos diálogos medios y en el sueño de Sócrates del Fedón.
Being in the *Phaedo*

(work in progress)

**Stone, Sophia**

We tend to think that the proofs for the immortality of the soul fail because of the last argument. I think this is because of a misunderstanding of Being in the *Phaedo*. In this paper, after I analyze the existence of the two classes of objects (*Phd. 77e-80b*) and argue for a third, I use the concept of Being from Parmenides for the last argument. If we understand Being as in Parmenides’s work, then we can avoid certain errors. For example, if we understand Being as μονοειδὲς ὃν αὐτὸ καθ αὐτό (78d5), then τὸ πῦρ and ἡ τριὰς and ἡ ψυχή each cannot be αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος, but a combination of many objects. With my analysis, I hope to show that the last argument in the *Phaedo* to be valid.

Motivating the Problem

Soul as a form or particular doesn’t work for the final proof in the *Phaedo*. If soul is a form, then the final proof fails in fallacious blunders. If soul is a particular, then not only does Socrates contradict what he said earlier about particulars in the affinity argument, it remains unclear whether, even if soul were immortal, how much of that soul can be said to be the soul of Socrates, since it is his soul that his friends are most concerned. Socrates is in good cheer up till the time he drinks the hemlock, but does his happiness rest on bad arguments?

My view is that these problems arise due to a fundamental misunderstanding of Being in the *Phaedo*, especially how particulars acquire their form characteristics. There are two principles at work in the final proof, the simple-minded *aitia* and the more sophisticated *aitia*. Along with these principles comes the exclusion of opposites: three axioms that Socrates uses in the final proof for the immortality of the soul. There is little agreement over how forms and particulars fit these principles and axioms. There is also much confusion about whether Plato meant to use transcendent forms, immanent forms or form characteristics and whether he is talking about forms, particulars or something else. What I offer in the paper is a new and charitable interpretation of his arguments.

Following the work of Curd and Nehamas, I argue here for a Parmenidean account of Being for Plato’s forms in the *Phaedo*, that is, for the view that forms are completely and wholly what they are while the objects that acquire form characteristics have those characteristics attributively, relationally, accidentally and temporally. First I focus on the claims made in the affinity argument at 78d1-7,


then I utilize this reading in my analysis of the final proof for the immortality of the soul. In my analysis, where others have assumed the role for forms, I argue for form characteristics, particulars, or mathematical intermediates. This move away from the traditional interpretations will come out especially in the final proof when Socrates talks about objects such as snow, fire, three and soul. Along with Frede, I argue that the final proof in the Phaedo is formally correct, i.e. Plato has neither drawn false inferences nor simply begged the question," but departing from Frede, I conclude that soul must be an intermediate object.¹

Being in the Affinity Argument

The language Plato uses in the Phaedo (78d1-7) specifies what a form is and limits what forms can be. He adopts a Parmenidean account of Being in his description of the forms in the Phaedo, an account that he returns to in the Symposium (211a1-b9). This conception of Being implies that a form: to on ('is'); monoeides ('is a single form'—i.e., it shares in no other forms); kath’hauto ('is itself by itself'—i.e., is not relational or dependent on anything else); asuntheta, ('is incomposite'); aei kata tauta ('is unvarying and constant') mé pote metabolèn ('is never changing').

In the Phaedo, forms are what they are completely.⁴ While there are characteristics that describe forms as such, a form is what it is by being a single characteristic that characterizes what it is: the form Beauty is beautiful. At 78d5 forms are described as μονοειδὲς ὃν αὐτὸ καθ αὑτό: being a single form, itself by itself. It has already been pointed out by Hackforth that monoeides “has the same force as πᾶν ὁμοῖον which Parmenides asserts of his ἓν ὄν, " which he takes as "the denial of internal difference or distinction of unlike parts." This Eleatic notion of Being includes that of immutability.⁶ Solmsen points out that the αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστι “itself which is” we find in the Phaedo can be recognized as the formula “which secures for each of [Plato’s] Forms the true (Parmenidean) ἔστιν.” So what is the meaning of “true Parmenidean ἔστιν”?

In Parmenides’s fragment lines B8.43-45, the goddess says:

Since now its limit is ultimate, Being is [completed] from every viewpoint (tetelesmenon esti pantothen), like the expanse of a spherical ball, and equally poised in every direction from its center. For it must not be either at all greater or at all smaller in one regard than in another.⁵ (Coxon transl.; transliteration in italics added)

αὐτάρ ἐπεὶ πεῖρας πύματον, τετελεσμένον ἐστὶ
πάντοθεν, εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλίγκιον ὄγωι,
μεσοθένι ἰσοπαλές πάντηι· τὸ γὰρ ὧτε τι μεῖζον

World,” American Philosophical Quarterly. 12: 105-117.
3 Frede (1978) 27-41: 32. Frede’s own criticism of Plato’s account is that he leaves open the exact nature of the soul, 38-39.
5 Hackforth (1955), 81 n. 2. Cited also in Solmsen (1971), 62.
6 Solmsen (1971), 63.
7 Solmsen (1971), 67. Note that Solmsen cites Phaedo 95d2 which is a mistake, he must have meant 75d2 where the phrase occurs.
οὔτε τι βαιότερον πελέναι χρεὸν ἐστι τῆι ἢ τῆι.9

The way the goddess describes Being is quite telling. The imagery is representative of how Being and its characteristics should be comprehended: it is not meant as a literal description. The Parmenidean Being is not round like a ball, nor is it shaped like a sphere. For 'round' and 'shape' imply a material object. Rather, like the expanse of a spherical object, Being is the same all around: its characteristic never changes no matter the perspective, no matter the time or place. Like the expanse of a Parmenidean sphere that is the same in every direction (B8.43-45), forms exclude degree, qualification, and relation. Understood this way, Being is atemporal, aspatial, non-aspectival and without parts.

Forms are what they are by themselves, needing nothing else. So in the Phaedo not only do forms exclude their opposites, (arguably) they also exclude other forms tout court. Which means in the Phaedo at least, forms cannot participate in other forms. So the objects that play a crucial role in the final proof—fire, snow, three, and soul—are not forms since a characteristic of another form occupies them: hotness, coldness, oddness, and aliveness.10

The reading of Plato I am going for also rejects the notion that there is a form for every particular. Instead, I hold that a particular is what it is by sharing in many forms. Thus, although Socrates’s soul is a particular as an embodied soul, it would not follow that there is a form soul—rather, his soul participates in several more basic forms. If the claims about forms and particulars in the affinity proof are meant to clarify and also limit what the objects are in the final proof, let’s turn to the final proof.

Final Proof

Socrates promises his friends at Phd. 100b5-9 that if they grant him the hypothesis that there is something as beauty, ‘itself by itself’ (αὐτὸ καθ᾽αὑτὸ), good and tall and all the rest (τἆλλα πάντα) that he hopes to show from these the aitia and to discover that the soul is immortal (ὡς ἀθάνατον [ἡ] ψυχή).12 So the first part of his proof is going to rely upon forms, ‘themselves by themselves. Socrates later makes clear (though his explanation is still a bit wanting) at 100d4-12 that:

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11 Contra Prince 2011: 15-17.
12 I am going to leave aitia here untranslated as it could mean ‘cause’ or ‘reason’ or ‘explanation.’ There is much disagreement in the literature about this term and so for simplicity I make no claims here about what the term means in an absolute sense.
Nothing else makes it beautiful other than that beautiful either being present in or communion with or in whatever and however it comes to be beautiful.

ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλο τι ποιεῖ αὐτὸ καλὸν ἢ ἢ ἐκείνου τοῦ καλοῦ εἶτε παρουσία εἶτε κοινωνία εἶτε ὑπή δὴ καὶ ὅπως ἡ προσγενομένη (100d4-6).

All the beautiful things come to be beautiful by the beautiful.

ὅτι τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ [γίγνεται] καλά (100d8-7).

The nature of what we now call ‘participation’ here is ambiguous. Later Socrates will give us examples to clarify a bit what he means. Notice though it seems that if we just stick to these surefire (ἀσφαλὲς) aitia that if we are asking for why soul is immortal, it seems at first that the answer must include a form. Many have taken this step and argued that soul must be a form to answer the question. However, if we look at the examples, it is clear that this first hypothesis is meant to show the connection between particulars and forms, and how particulars acquire their form characteristics. Socrates repeats this hypothesis at 100e2-3 and applies the hypothesis (which is now acting like a principle) to large things, small things, and so on at 100e5-101b2.

After applying the hypothesis to particular things, he applies it to number:

καὶ μέγα ἂν βοῷης ὅτι οὐκ οἶσθα ἄλλως πως ἕκαστον γιγνόμενον ἢ μετασκόν τῆς ἰδίας ὀὐσίας ἐκάστου οὗ ἂν μετάσχῃ, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ οὐκ ἔχεις ἄλλην τίνα ἀιτίαν τοῦ δύο γενέσθαι ἄλλ᾽ ἢ τῆς τῆς δυάδος μετάσχεσιν, καὶ δεῖν τούτοις μετασχεῖν τὰ μέλλοντα δύο ἔσεσθαι, καὶ μονάδος ὃ ἂν μέλλῃ ἓν ἔσεσθαι, τὰς δὲ σχίσεις ταύτας καὶ προσθέσεις καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τὰς τοιαύτας κομψείς ἐφης ἃν χαίρειν, παρεῖς ἀποκρινόσθαι τοῖς σεαυτοῦ σοφωτέροις· (101c9-2)

I take Socrates to be claiming here that whatever characteristic something other than a form has, it has that characteristic by its sharing (or participation) in a form. Later Socrates will call this aitia the safe and ignorant one (τὴν ἀσφαλῆ… τὴν ἀμαθῆ, 105c1). Notice that he is not here talking about how substances come to be. Rather, Socrates is talking about how anything, whether something is one, something is beautiful or something is tall comes to have that characteristic and so by having it, is that characteristic. As has been said before by Hackforth, “Beauty itself is not the cause of a beautiful thing, but of a thing’s being beautiful.”13

When understood in this way, other interpretations on offer can be excluded. For example, the interpretation by Prince that, “everything that comes to be—both substances and properties—does so by sharing in a Form,” should be excluded.14 I 13 Hackforth (1955), 144.
14 Prince (2011), 11.
tend to shy away from terminology of substances and their properties (for these are Aristotle’s terms – there is no ‘underlying subject’ a *hupokeimenon* in Plato’s ontology). Instead, I think of particulars having many characteristics and so participate in many forms. While there might be a single form that is responsible for a particular’s coming to be and passing away (i.e., the form Life) other forms are involved for a particular thing being that thing. Thus there is not a form Fire which is the *aitia* for a particular fire, nor is there a form Soul which is the *aitia* for an individual soul. Rather, there is a form Hot that is the *aitia* for an individual fire to be hot, and a form Life that is the *aitia* for an individual soul to be alive, and there is a form Justice that is the *aitia* for an individual soul to be just. In the *Phaedo* at least, Socrates does not posit a form for every particular. Instead, he posits a form for certain characteristics that characterize what a particular is. Thus we can point out the soul of Socrates from other souls in virtue of the many form characteristics it has.

There are some characteristics that particulars have accidentally, such as Simmias being tall (102c2) and some characteristics that particulars have necessarily, such as fire being hot and snow being cold (103d5-8). Characteristics of forms behave in a similar manner when particulars have them. That is, they exclude the opposite form characteristic. For although Simmias is said to be both short and tall (102c10-d2), a particular does not hold the opposite characteristics at the same time. Thus the first axiom Socrates gives is at (102d6ff):

> It appears to me that not only the tall itself is never willing to be tall and short at the same time, but also the tall in us is never willing to admit the short nor be overcome, but each of two things can happen, either it flees and withdraws whenever the opposite, the short, approaches it, or it is destroyed by the approach of the short. But it does not wish to remain and accept shortness and be other than it was.

While the characteristics of forms and the forms themselves both exclude their opposites, the grounds for the exclusion differs. We learned from the affinity argument that it is the nature of forms to always remain as they are: forms never change. So the form Large will never be large and small, and this is because a form doesn’t suffer a compression of opposites. That is, a form has a single characterizing characteristic that makes that form the kind of form that it is, and this characterizing characteristic never changes. Nor would a form acquire other characteristics than it already has, and this is all because forms do not change.

In contrast, what we call particulars always change, they will eventually lose every characteristic. It is also part of their nature that they suffer a compression of opposites. Either in time or in place or from this perspective or that, a particular will be both large and small. Simmias is both tall and small, though not at the same time and in the same respect—this is what the first axiom was meant to clarify. The first axiom (102d6-e3) applies to the accidental characteristics of objects. Simmias

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15 For example, see Aristotle’s *De generatione et corruptione*, 319b8ff.
will remain Simmias and upon the approach of an opposite characteristic, it is the 
shortness or tallness in him that withdraws or is destroyed.\textsuperscript{16}

The second axiom (103d5-8) applies to necessary characteristics of objects, 
and what happens to the objects when the opposite to the necessary characteristic 
approaches. Socrates gives the examples of snow and fire. Snow is something cold 
(necessarily) and fire is something hot (necessarily). When the hot (τὸ θερμὸν) 
approaches snow or the cold (τὸ ψυχρόν) approaches fire, the fire or the snow 
will either make way for it and escape or be destroyed (ἢ ὑπεκχωρήσειν αὐτῷ ἢ ἀπολεῖσθαι). What snow and fire cannot do is remain with the opposite to their necessary characteristic and still be snow and fire. It is worth saying here that to psuchron and to thermon are not the forms themselves (for forms do not change or move so they could not “approach” anything)—they are objects that have characteristics of the forms, the characteristics that these particulars happen to have necessarily. Socrates makes clear exactly this point at 103e 2-6.\textsuperscript{17}

He then applies the second axiom to numbers. The change from particulars 
to numbers is significant for the following reasons. Particulars always change and at 
some point in time they will be destroyed, apoleisthai. Numbers always remain the 
same and cannot be destroyed. We experience particulars sensorily: it is through the 
senses particulars are first comprehended. In contrast, we intuit numbers through 
the mind’s eye, through the intellect. In a way, numbers belong to that invisible 
realm, the same realm as the forms. Their particular instantiation in bodies, however, 
makes them present and known in the visible realm. In this way, number mediates 
the same two realms as the soul: the visible and the invisible. We don’t ever see the 
number three, we see its instantiation in three objects. It is just like the soul: we don’t 
ever see the soul, we just witness its instantiation in a living body. So the move from 
particulars having accidental and necessary characteristics to numbers secures for 
Socrates the ground by which he will rest his argument for the immortality of the 
soul.

The move to number requires the additional claim that number by nature is 
necessarily linked to a form’s characteristic, such as three by nature is necessarily 
odd, and two by nature is necessarily even. Numbers such as three and two are 
different from snow and fire because in a way, snow and fire are opposites to each other. 
If you dump a bunch of snow to fire, the fire will go out. If you throw some 
snow on a fire, the snow will melt. Snow and fire can vary in degrees with respect 
to their necessary characteristics and so the one can effect the other with varying 
degree: numbers cannot. Numbers are wholly and completely and eternally their 
characteristics: three will always be odd, two will always be even.\textsuperscript{18}

Socrates therefore adds the third axiom to account for objects that are not 
opposites but have necessary characteristics that are opposites. (104b7-c1):

\textsuperscript{16} For a good explanation of the military metaphors see O’Brien (1967), 204-208. 
\textsuperscript{17} “with the result that not only the form itself is worthy of its name in eternity, 
but also something else which is not the form but nevertheless always has the char-
acter of the form, whenever it exists”; ὥστε μὴ μόνον αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ἀξιοῦσθαι τοῦ 
αὐτοῦ ὄνοματος εἰς τὸν ἄει χρόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλο τι ὅ ἐστι μὲν οὐκ ἐκεῖνο, ἔχει δὲ 
tὴν ἐκείνου μορφὴν ἄει, ὅταν περ ἡ.
\textsuperscript{18} Incidentally, when you add two and three together to make five, it is not as if 
two and three change, but their units in combination change. That is, their multi-
tude changes to a new limit.
It appears that not only those are not admitting other opposites, but this is also the case for those things while not being opposites always have the opposites, and it seems that these do not admit the characteristic which is the opposite to the one in them, but in fact upon its approach, they are either destroyed or withdraw.

Some have taken snow and cold, fire and hot to be forms, but that interpretation poses a problem. That reading entails forms sharing in unlike forms: while fire is hot, fire is not identical to the hot, just as three is odd but three is not identical to the odd. Socrates would be breaking one of his conditions for calling something a form: that they are μονοειδὲς οὐκ αὐτὸ καθ ἀὑτό, a single form, itself by itself (78d5). Forms are also supposed to be asuntheton, “without parts,” (78c6-7)

At 104d1 Socrates asks Cebes if they should define these objects (i.e., numbers):

Wouldn't these be that which occupies, not only would they necessarily possess its own characteristic of it but also would always possess some opposite to it?

... τάδε εἴη ἂν, ἃ ὅτι ἂν κατάσχῃ μὴ μόνον ἀναγκάζει τὴν αὐτὸ ἰδέαν αὐτὸ ἰσχειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐναντίου αὐτῷ ἀεί τινος;

He then applies these occupiers to numbered particulars (104d5-7):

You know in fact that those which the characteristic of three things occupies, necessarily with respect to them, not only are they three, but they are also odd.

Οἶσθα γὰρ δήπου ἂν ἂν ἢ τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα κατάσχη, ἀνάγκη αὐτοῖς οὐ μόνον τρισὶν εἶναι ἀλλὰ καὶ περιττοῖς.

Many take ἡ τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα here to mean ‘the form of three’ but we know from the affinity argument that forms don’t move or change nor do they have any material or sensible characteristics. So it is implausible that forms are occupiers, unless Plato means this in some metaphorical or allegorical way. Yet the logic of the argument tells us that ἡ τῶν τριῶν ἰδέα functions here as a real aitia: the causal explanation for why something has come to be three and odd. More likely these are the characteristics of a form that are doing the occupying, like the tallness in us (102d7). There is also dispute in the literature over the issue of whether Plato is talking about the number three as such or three things. The plural genitive of three suggests that Plato is talking about three objects occupied by their characteristic. However, if one understands three as a multitude of three units, then the plural genitive of three units would be exactly three.19 Whether it is a number that is an intermediate, or numbered particulars, they have more than one characteristic: they are a trio, and, being a trio they are also odd.

Socrates has built, step by step, his proof for the immortality of the soul. Before

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introducing the final step, Socrates reminds his listeners how far they have come in the argument at 105b8-c7.

If you would ask me what in a body will make it hot, I would not tell them that safe ignorant answer, that which is from heat, but from a more sophisticated answer from the ones now, that which is fire. Nor if you would ask what generates sickness in a body, I would not answer that it is from sickness, but fever; nor would that which generates odd in number, I would not answer from being odd but rather a unit, and in this way for the others.


Socrates builds his proof from the forms themselves to the characters of the forms, to things coming to be a certain way because of something in them possessing a characteristic of the form. He is entirely justified because forms themselves are not sufficient for the aitia of something coming to be or its destruction: the focus must be on the particulars and their form characteristics. Yet as I claimed earlier, soul cannot be a particular because there is something in it that always remains the same and this is also the very aitia for a soul being alive. Similarly, the unit left over is the aitia for a number being odd. The odd numbers will always be odd because of this left over unit, just like the soul will always be alive because of its having the necessary characteristic from the form Life.

Problems with Soul as a Form or an Immanent Form

From passages 104d1-7 and 105d3-5, it has been argued by Hackforth (1955) and more recently by Prince (2011) that the subject of κατάσκῃ is a form or an immanent form occupying a body. For Hackforth, soul must be form until passage 106e5-7, and for Prince soul must be a form until passage 105c8-11, in both readings, the ontological status of soul changes from a form of soul to a particular soul.20 O’Brien (1967) similarly sees a shift from the form which ‘brings’ an opposite to the particular, to the particular soul which ‘brings’ life to the body. He says that “it would probably be wrong to exclude either interpretation in favor of the other.”21

As was pointed out by Keyt (1963) treating soul like a form entails that Socrates has proved the absurd conclusion that the ensouled body is immortal.22 Keyt understands the logic of Plato’s argument in the following way:

whatever has soul is alive; whatever is alive is ἀθάνατος; whatever is ἀθάνατος is indestructible; Therefore, whatever has soul is indestructible. In order to get the conclusion that the soul, and not the ensouled body, is immortal and indestructible, Plato must shift the predicates ‘indestructible’ and ‘immortal’ from that which has soul to soul itself.23

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21 O’Brien (1967), 228.
22 Keyt (1963), 171: “What follows is not that the soul is indestructible but that the ensouled body, the entire man, is indestructible.”
23 Keyt (1963), 171.
Plato would not have made the blunder that it is that which the soul occupies is immortal. As pointed out by Schiller (below) Keyt makes this claim because he assumes a parallel reading from 104d to 105d. Another answer is available to us, however. Bringing in the account from the affinity proof, it is the nature of particulars that they always change. Eventually they would lose every characteristic they have: the ensouled body could never be immortal. For soul is never \( \textit{a}e\i \) 'always' in a body -- rather, soul always brings life to a body whenever it exists in a body. This is the force of the second and third axioms: soul always has the character of being alive \( \delta\gamma\alpha\nu\pi\epsilon\rho \) -- whenever it exists (103e2-6) and whenever soul exists in a body, it brings that characteristic to the body, making that body a living thing (104c1-3). Once death approaches the body, the soul cannot stay and remain alive. Soul must withdraw since death is an opposite characteristic to the soul's necessary form characteristic, life.

Schiller (1967) argues convincingly that Hackforth and Keyt cannot be right, that Plato never treats soul as an immanent form. He says that soul is never called a form and "commonsensically should not be taken as other than a concrete thing."24 He points out that the main problem with their views is that they argue for a parallel reading of \( \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\chi\eta \) in 104d1-7 and 105d3-5. Because of its form, \( \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\chi\eta \) could either mean something that possesses or a thing that is possessed by something.25 At 104d5-7 the subject of \( \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\chi\eta \) is that which is possessed by the character of three: it is both a trio and odd. The subject is a particular thing. At 105d3 the subject of \( \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\chi\eta \) is that which possesses the character life: it will always bring life to that it occupies. The subject at 105d3 is the soul, which I have argued cannot be a form or a particular. This is where my account absolutely differs from Keyt, and in a way differs from Schiller and Archer-Hind. But Archer-Hind's note about the difference in the passages is very telling:

The soul does not occupy the body in the sense in which \( \tau\rho\alpha\varsigma \) occupies \( \tau\rho\alpha \). The triad is the cause why the three are three, the soul is not the cause why body is body but the cause why it is alive.26

However, unlike Schiller and Archer-Hind, we need not take soul to be a particular. If soul is the \( \epsilon\iota\iota\iota \) for a body being alive because the soul always carries with it life, then this is parallel to three being the \( \epsilon\iota\iota\iota \) for three objects being odd, because three always carries with it the monad. The objects Socrates is talking about here are intermediates, those unaccounted objects from the affinity argument that always have a characterizing form characteristic, along with other characteristics that make them what they are. With their characterizing characteristic and their intermediate status, they are, at one time, that which is occupied by a form characteristic as well as that which is something that occupies a body. Being intermediates, they never lose their characterizing characteristic, but nor do they go out of existence: this is what they share in common with forms. Hence the addition at 106d6:

I think, said Socrates, that god, and the form of life itself, and any other thing, that if it is immortal, then we would all be in agreement that they can never be destroyed.

24 Schiller (1967), 51.
25 See \textit{LSJ} for \( \kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\chi\omega \).
26 Archer-Hind (1883), 152 n. 6.
Ὁ δὲ γε θεὸς ὁμαι, ἐφι ο Σωκράτης, καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἴδος καὶ εἰ τι ἄλλο ἀθάνατον ἔστιν, παρὰ πάντων ἀν ὄμολογηθεὶ τη μηδέποτε ἀπόλλυσθαι.

As Dorthea Frede argued in her 1978 paper, Socrates has proven formally that the soul is immortal.27 Now, with the account of Being that I have given here, we know just what kind of object soul must be, an intermediate.

On pense souvent que les preuves de l’immortalité de l’âme ne marchent pas à cause du dernier argument. Je pense que c’est à cause d’un malentendu de l’être dans Le Phédon. Dans cet article, après que j’analyse l’existence de deux classes d’objets (Phd. 77e-80b) et plaide en faveur d’une troisième, j’utilise le concept d’être de Parménide pour le dernier argument. Si nous comprenons l’être d’après Parménide, nous pouvons éviter certaines erreurs. Par exemple, si nous comprenons l’être comme μονοειδὲς ὁ ν αὐτὸ καθ αὑτὸ (78d5), alors ni τὸ πῦρ, ni ἡ τριὰς, ni ἡ ψυχὴ ne peuvent pas être αὐτὸ τὸ εἴδος, mais une combinaison de beaucoup d’objets. Par mon analyse, j’espère prouver que le dernier argument dans Le Phédon est valide.

References


La multiplicité des lectures et l’unité de la structure
du mythe final du Phédon (107c114-c)

Tarasiewicz, Michal

Tout au long du Phédon, Socrate argumente en faveur de l’immortalité de l’âme. A la fin du dialogue il n’y a plus que Simmias qui reste perplexe (107b). Socrate décide alors d’abandonner le discours argumentatif pour essayer de persuader son ami par un mythe. La suite du texte montre qu’en réalité Socrate doit chercher à persuader non seulement Simmias mais aussi soi-même (114d). Tant que le philosophe vie ici-bas la question de la mort comme fin définitive de toute chose reste une possibilité ouverte. Seul un mythe peut lui donner la force de ne pas céder au charme du corps et de basculer dans la région inférieure de réalités périsissables (79d, 84b).¹

Le mythe final persuade peut-être facilement Simmias et Socrate mais certainement pas un lecteur moderne du Phédon. Le récit socratique surprend par l’ampleur et la complexité de son contenu, où comme dans un rêve tout semble se confondre. Il porte en soi des idées d’ordre : astronomique, géographique, biologique, éthique ou même eschatologique. En le lisant bien attentivement et en cherchant à comprendre ses nombreux sujets difficilement conciliables, il est difficile de ne pas penser que le Philosophe, peu avant sa mort, a perdu la raison. Il est rare de trouver deux interprètes qui liraient ce même mythe de la même manière.²

L’objectif de mon travail sera de montrer que derrière toute cette prétendue cacophonie de sujets abordés dans le mythe il est possible de voir une véritable symphonie. Les mythes platoniciens sont avant tout des représentations imagées de l’âme qui fonctionne à différents niveaux de la réalité sensible. Inutile donc de chercher à mettre en avant encore une lecture « sensible » du texte (géographique, biologique, ou autre…). Ce qu’il faut surtout faire, c’est saisir la forme du mythe, autrement dit, son âme, qui rend possible toute une multitude de lectures allégoriques. C’est uniquement à ce moment-là que le mythe devient véritablement « intelligible ».

Mon travail se composera essentiellement de trois parties. Tout d’abord je commencerai par le plus important, c’est-à-dire par l’explication de la structure du mythe. Ensuite j’essaierai de retracer très brièvement son contexte, pour bien marquer toute l’originalité du mythe platonicien. Et enfin, je terminerai mon exposé en montrant différentes interprétations du mythe à la lumière de sa structure. Je me limiterai seulement à l’analyse d’un seul extrait du mythe, notamment à celui où il est question des quatre courants (112e-113c).

I. La structure

Un mythe pour Platon est comme tout discours un « être vivant » (Gorg. 1 Sur les raisons du mythe voir aussi : Dixsaut p. 400, n. 330 et 331.
505c-d, Phèdre 264c). C'est-à-dire qu'il se compose d'un corps et d'une âme. Le mythe parle d'un côté de ce qui est sensible et visible, et d'un autre côté de ce qui est intelligible et invisible. L'âme n'intervient qu'indirectement, sous forme imagée. Pour la saisir le lecteur doit faire un effort, il doit faire une lecture active. Pour utiliser l'image du Phédon même, le lecteur doit être en mesure de « déshabiller » le mythe pour voir son principe qui est toujours l'âme. Et voir l'âme dans un mythe signifie en réalité se reconnaître soi-même, dans son contenu.

De plus le mythe comme tout être vivant imite l'ordre cosmique du monde. Sur un plan micro et macro cosmique. L'âme, que Platon compare dans le Phédon à l'harmonie vient harmoniser aussi bien le fonctionnement du corps humain que celui du corps cosmique. Il imite toujours, à une petite échelle, l'harmonie la plus haute, notamment celle de sphères célestes. C'est donc aussi une œuvre musicale, un « hymne » écrit en l'honneur des dieux (Rép. 607a), ou encore, pour reprendre les paroles du Phédon même, c'est une « incantation » (ἐπαδείν, 114d7), qui par sa beauté est supposée nous détourner de notre condition terrestre pour nous emmener dans la région supérieure de l'intelligible. Et comme toute œuvre musicale un mythe est composé selon certaines règles.

Une de ces règles dit qu'un mythe bien harmonisé doit se composer, de même qu'un être vivant, d'une partie haute, moyenne et basse (Phèdre 264c). Et par définition même il doit aussi « vivre », c'est-à-dire naître, croître et mourir, autrement dit avoir un début, un milieu et une fin. Je me limiterai ici seulement au développement de cette deuxième qualité, qui « anime » le mythe. Les trois autres parties, pourrions nous dire, parties « corporelles » du discours, seront faciles à déduire à partir du plan que je présenterai à la fin de cette analyse.

Je commencerai donc par son début. Le début du mythe doit être comme une semence qui porte en elle tout ce qui va suivre, c'est le prélude, ou, selon les paroles de Platon, un « προοίμιον » (Phèdre 266d). Ensuite il doit posséder un milieu qui représente en réalité le sommet de son « évolution ». Chez Platon le sommet du développement d'un discours est toujours marqué par une prétendue « digression », et plus exactement par un « détours » (ἐκτρέπω, Rép. 543c, Lois 682e) ou encore par ce que les auteurs tragiques nomment une péripétie (περι-πετής). Puis enfin comme tout être vivant, un discours doit avoir une fin pour clore le mythe par une conclusion (τέλος et κεφάλαιος, Phèd. 267d). Ces trois moments, le début (107c-d), le milieu (111b) et la fin (113d), touchent à la réalité supérieure, à l'endroit où l'âme se concentre en elle-même. Le point culminant du mythe se trouve dans sa partie centrale, où, dans le cas du mythe du Phédon, Platon écrit que l'âme individuelle rentre en communion avec les dieux célestes (111b).

Toute cette structure « vivante » de montée et de descente graduelle reflète le mouvement de l'âme, qui anime et harmonise la réalité sensible. C'est une structure en cercle qui est tout à fait visible dans le contenu même du mythe. L'âme circule à travers le mythe comme un souffle. Après une courte remarque sur l'immortalité de l'âme (107c-d), l'âme émerge de l'eau terrestre, et du brouillard de l'oubli pour

4 Je rappelle que pour Platon les dieux ont des corps, des corps célestes…
5 L'étude musical de la structure du mythe doit beaucoup à des auteurs comme : Eva Brann, J. B. Kennedy, ou encore M. Riley.
arriver à la plus haute région, celle de l'éther (110a), où elle peut contempler le monde vu d'en haut (110b s.). Puis, elle redescend, à travers des cavités et des fleuves (111c s.), jusqu'à la partie la plus basse de l'étre, notamment le Tartare (113c). Au moment de sa montée nous pouvons observer son ascension vers la lumière. Et au moment de sa descente, nous pouvons voir sa chute graduelle, du niveau de l'éther, à travers l'air, pour enfin se replonger dans l'obscurité de l'océan.

La meilleure description des mouvements de l'âme, de sa montée en force et de sa chute, se trouve dans la République, où apparaît la fameuse image de la ligne. La ligne permet de beaucoup mieux comprendre la structure non seulement du mythe mais de nombreux autres textes platoniciens. Si l'on décompose la structure du mythe à sa lumière, il devient beaucoup plus clair. L'important est de voir seulement que d'après Platon, l'âme dispose de quatre différentes attitudes (πάθημα) cognitives. Et qu'elle les utilise à différents niveaux de la réalité.

En regardant très brièvement la succession des sujets du mythe à la lumière du paradigme de la ligne voici ce que nous pouvons constater : Socrate ouvre son récit par une brève réflexion sur la condition de l'âme après la mort. Nous sommes ici au niveau structural de l'eikasia, au niveau des ombres encore. Ensuite il parle de différents niveaux de réalité (terre, eau, air, ether). Nous sommes ici au niveau de l'eikasia, où l'on aperçoit déjà les reflets des réalités supérieurs. Dans la partie suivante du mythe il décrit la terre vue d'en haut en marquant bien la transition à la vie sensible. Il nous introduit ici au niveau de la pistis, des descriptions essentiellement fondées sur l'expérience sensible. C'est ici aussi que le mythe parvient à son milieu, avec une vision de l'au-delà (111b).

Dans la seconde partie du mythe, Platon passe à la description de la terre vue de l'intérieur. Nous nous trouvons à cet endroit là du texte au niveau de la dianoia, avec un mélange de nombreuses données quantitatives et qualitatives. Le mythe entier se termine par la description des quatre courants et par le jugement de l'âme. Cette partie finale représente le niveau de la noesis, avec des divisions et des rassemblements dialectiques de la réalité. D'ailleurs, je fais encore remarquer qu'au-delà du début que la fin du mythe abordent le sujet de l'âme après la mort. Autrement dit l'épilogue répond, en cercle, au prologue.

Cette description que je viens de faire, de la structure du mythe basé sur la ligne, se rapporte uniquement au niveau horizontal (ou linéaire) du mythe : c'est-à-dire qu'elle résume la succession de ses grands sujets sans pourtant regarder ce qui se passe au niveau de chaque sujet en soi. Toutefois si pour un moment, on laisse de côté l'ensemble du dialogue pour se concentrer uniquement sur chaque partie du récit pris indépendamment du reste, nous verrons alors qu'il existe aussi une structure verticale du mythe. Autrement dit, que chaque partie du mythe, ou chaque sujet abordé, est aussi rédigée selon le paradigme de la ligne. Par exemple, au sein de la description de la terre (108d-110a) nous allons d'une vue très générale de la terre (eikasia), vers une perspective supérieure, prise du niveau de l'éther (noesis, 110a).

[cf. tableau 1]

6 Je suis ici Riley 2005.
8 Pour la définition de la dialectique voir : Phèd. 266b, Rép. 511b.
Les sujets abordés dans le mythe, de même que l’âme, tournent constamment en cercle. Il ne faut pas également oublier que le mythe ne reste toujours qu’une imitation très imparfaite de l’intelligible, et donc, qu’il ne faut pas s’attendre à une grande exactitude de la reproduction des mouvements de l’âme. L’important est de voir que cette structure paradigmatique du mythe est absolument essentielle pour sa compréhension. C’est l’élément clé qui fait partie de l’essence même du mythe, ce que je compte démontrer par la suite de cet exposé.

II. Le contexte

Avant de passer à l’analyse des quatre courants du mythe, à la lumière de sa structure, je vais essayer de le placer dans son contexte pour qu’il soit encore plus clair en ce qui consiste l’originalité de l’approche platonicienne du mythe.

Il semblerait que le mythe de Platon s’inscrit parfaitement dans l’esprit de son époque. Dans son récit même il avoue qu’il s’est inspiré d’une certaine « tradition » (110b, 109b9 et 107e). Et, à un autre endroit du texte, il explique encore que quelqu’un lui a transmis une partie de son mythe (108d) et que la description de la terre se fonde sur des rites « d’ici » (108a). Naturellement, il se pourrait que le Philosophe se réfère à une ancienne autorité uniquement pour donner plus de crédibilité à son discours. Mais ceci n’est pas du tout le cas ici.

Nous savons que Platon prend les anciennes traditions très au sérieux, même si souvent il n’hésite pas à les critiquer (Rép. 427c). En effet, il s’inspire de écrits de ses contemporains mais à la fois les transforment en quelque chose de tout à fait nouveau. Dans le mythe du Phédon nous voyons aussi bien des influences religieuses que philosophiques des auteurs connus de Platon. Par exemple les quatre courants évoqués par Platon (112e-113c) se trouvent déjà chez Homère.

Dans son commentaire du mythe Kingsley argumente, d’une manière très convaincante, qu’en réalité toute la description géographique du récit a sûrement été influencée par les voyages du Philosophe en Sicile. Par ce qu’il a pu voir et entendre pendant sont séjour. Les rites qu’il évoque sont sûrement ceux de la tradition orphico-pythagoricienne, fondée sur la vénération de la déesse Déméter qui cherche à sauver sa fille, la déesse Perséphone, qu’Hadès a emprisonnée dans son royaume souterrain.

Par ailleurs dans le Phédon, Platon consacre beaucoup de place aux philosophes de la nature (96a s.). Il cite Anaxagore (97c) et se réfère indirectement

9 Sur la multiplication d’une structure paradigmatique voir par exemple Voegelin ou Riley.
10 « Echoue là ta nef, près de l’Océan aux profonds remous ; toi, entre dans l’humide demeure d’Hadès. C’est la région où se jetent dans l’Acheron le Pyriphtégéthon et le Cocyte, dont les eaux viennent du Styx. Il y a un rocher, d’où tombent avec fracas les deux fleuves après leur jonction. Approche-toi de ce lieu, héros, comme je te l’ordonne, creuse une fosse d’une coudée de profondeur en tout sens, et verse dedans une libation pour tous les morts, d’abord de lait mêlé à du miel, ensuite de doux vin, en troisième lieu d’eau ; par-dessus répands la blanche farine d’orge. » (Homère, Od. X, 511 s.).
à Anaximandre12, Anaximène13, Empédocle14, Diogène d’Apollonie15, et à beaucoup d’autres (96b-c)16. Il leur reproche de ne pas avoir réussi à expliquer quelle est la véritable cause de toute chose parce qu’ils cherchaient toujours à expliquer la réalité en partant non pas de la pensée même, mais des phénomènes sensibles (99e). Malgré sa critique, Platon en use beaucoup pour la rédaction de son mythe.

Par exemple les différents niveaux de réalités qu’il décrit (géographique, cosmique, et autres), et la manière dont il les réunit, il ne fait qu’imiter le style de ses contemporains. Dans un passage du Phèdre Socrate demande à Phèdre : « Mais la nature de l’âme, crois-tu qu’il est possible de la concevoir de façon satisfaisante sans connaître la nature de l’univers ? ». A quoi Phèdre lui répond : « En tout cas, s’il faut en croire Hippocrate (…), on ne peut même pas traiter du corps sans avoir recours à cette méthode. » (270c).

La description de l’univers que donne Platon et qui souvent nous fait sourire, en vérité n’est pas un produit de pure imagination. Elle découle d’une profonde expérience humaine. Par exemple l’idée que la terre, dans son intérieur est un ventre rempli de l’eau, et que nous l’habitons comme des fourmis au bord d’un marécage (109b), est une idée très présente chez les auteurs anciens17. C’est une idée qui vient de l’expérience profondément humaine, de faire partie de la nature et à la fois de la transcender (du fini et de l’infini).

Toute la singularité de l’approche platonicienne, comme j’essaierai maintenant de le démontrer, consiste dans le fait qu’il subordonne les différents niveaux de la réalité sensible du mythe à l’âme, et plus exactement encore à l’intellect même18.

III. L’exégèse

L’usage que Platon fait des quatre fleuves du mythe laisse beaucoup de liberté interprétative. Selon la parole de Platon, les auteurs véritables de tout mythe sont les Muses, qui à travers leur discours jouent avec nous comme avec des enfants, avec ces nombreuses ambiguïtés du texte mythologique. Le lecteur a constamment l’impression d’être en train d’osciller entre un sens littéral et symbolique du mythe, ou entre une vision macrocosmique et microcosmique du monde. J’essaierai maintenant de montrer comment ce, pourrions nous dire, « trouble cognitif » se produit.

13 Pour par exemple les transformations de l’air, cf. DK, A7.  
14 Pour les analogies entre le corps et la terre, DK A74. Voir aussi mon interprétation de l’intérieur de la terre.  
15 Pour les analogies entre le corps et la terre, cf. DK B6, B12.  
16 Entre autres : Philolaos, Archélaos, Philistion, Dioclès de Caryste…  
18 Voir aussi : Philèbe 229e s.
Platon introduit la description des quatre courants (ῥεῦμα, 112e) après la description des différents creux et des mouvements des courants souterrains (111c-112e). A l'occasion de trois courants il parle encore de trois lacs, du lac d'Achérousias, du Styx, et d'un lac qui, selon les paroles de Platon, est « plus grand que notre mer » (113a). Je me limiterai ici seulement à l'analyse des quatre courants, en commençant déjà à rappeler leur nom et étymologie.

Le premier courant évoqué par Platon, l'Océan (gr. Ὠκεανός), porte le nom d'une divinité primordiale. L'Océan est traditionnellement conçu comme la source de toutes choses19. Le second courant, le fleuve Achéron, c'est « le fleuve des malheurs » (du mot gr. ἄχος, qui signifie « malheur »), dont le nom a été rapproché par la tradition orphique du mot ἀέριος (ἀέριος qui renvoie à l'air ou à la brume20. Le troisième courant est le fleuve Pyriphlégethon (gr. Πυριφλεγέθων), le fleuve (ῥύαξ, 111e, 113b) du « feu brulant » (de : Πυρι et φλεγέθων). Le dernier est le fleuve Cocyté (gr. Κωκυτώς), c'est-à-dire le fleuve des lamentations (du verbe grec : κωκώω).

Je passerai maintenant en revue, très brièvement, différentes lectures de cet extrait du mythe. Je proposerai une lecture physique, biologique, politiquo-éthique et enfin noétique. J'essaierai de montrer que toutes ces lectures sont vraies dans la mesure où elles se fondent sur la forme même du mythe qui constitue l'ultime modèle de toutes les lectures possibles21. J'appliquerai ici la méthode développée par le Philosophe même. Pour voir les petites réalités, difficilement saisissables, il faut déjà partir de ce qui est grand. Selon les paroles de Platon, il faut déjà apprendre à lire les « grandes lettres » sur un grand support pour ensuite être en mesure de lire les « petites lettres » (Rép. 368e).

Admettons alors que la lecture des quatre courants doit se fonder sur une lecture essentiellement physique (ou cosmique) du mythe, à grande échelle. L'Océan serait alors perçu comme la sphère des étoiles fixes. C'est Ouranos, c'est-à-dire le Ciel. Les grecs ne faisaient-ils pas souvent un rapprochement entre le dieu Océanos et le dieu Ouranos ? L'Achéron représente cinq astres qui imposent une limite aux réalités existantes. Le fleuve Pyriphlégethon représente la lune et le soleil, responsable du mélange des réalités. En effet Platon, à la suite d'autres auteurs anciens, parle la plupart du temps de sept astres, et plus exactement de deux, plus cinq, c'est-à-dire de la lune et du soleil d'un côté, et de Kronos, Zeus, Arès, Hermès et Aphrodite, de l'autre (voir Timée). Et enfin le Cocyté symbolise la terre, c'est le niveau de la nécessité (voir le mythe d'Er, Rep. 617b). La lecture analogue à la lecture cosmique serait une lecture littérale, et donc une lecture géographique du texte, conforme avec l'idée que les anciens se faisaient de la terre. Une terre encerclée par l'Océan. Les différents lacs et fleuves pourraient être facilement rapportés à ce que Platon a dû observer en Sicile, à laquelle il se réfère dans le mythe même (111e).

Une toute autre lecture serait une lecture biologique du mythe qui se fonderait sur le Timée (70e-77a). L'Océan se rapporterait aux quatre éléments primordiaux, l'Achéron aux différents organes (ventre, rate, foie, cœur et poumons). Le Pyriphlégethon à la moelle, les os, les tendons ou encore à la chair. Le Cocyté aux vaisseaux sanguins et à tout le mécanisme de nutrition (respiration et digestion inclus). L'équivalent de cette lecture, à un niveau inférieur, serait celui des différentes maladies que Platon évoque dans le mythe (110e). L'Océan serait à

19 Homère, Il. 14, 200 et s. Voir aussi Crat. 402b, Théét. 180d et Tim. 40d-e.
21 L'âme qui s'élève au niveau des idées, modèle de toutes choses, voir : Phédon 84b.
l'origine des maladies résultantes « d'un excès ou d'un défaut contre nature » (Tim. 81e) des quatre éléments de base (air, terre, feu, eau). L'Achéron serait responsable des maladies dues au changement brusque de l'état des organismes causé par un changement de climat par exemple (Tim. 81e, 88d). Le Pyriphlégethon serait l'image des maladies résultantes de l'inversion de processus de dégénération de tissu (Tim. 82c et s.), qui causerait toutes sortes de fièvres ou d'inflammations (en rapport au feu). Et enfin le Cocyte serait une représentation des maladies dues aux problèmes de respiration (Tim. 86a) et au froid causés par l'air (d'où l'évocation de la couleur bleuâtre, 113c).

Platon rapproche les quatre types de maladie d'un excès d'un des éléments primordiaux (Tim. 86a). Ce qui encore trouve sa confirmation dans le texte du mythe. Damascius, dans son commentaire du mythe du Phédon, fait remarquer que d'après une ancienne tradition orphique les trois premiers courants peuvent être rapportés aux éléments primordiaux. L'Océan à l'eau, l'Acheron à l'air, le Pyriphlégethon au feu. Il faut rapprocher l'élément de la terre au lac du Styx.

La troisième lecture que je proposerai serait une lecture politico-éthique. De même que dans la République le lecteur pourrait facilement trouver des analogies entre les différents régimes politiques, les différents caractères des hommes et les quatre courants. L'Océan serait alors le courant de l'homme aristocratique. L'Achéron serait celui de l'homme timocratique. Le pyriphlegethon serait celui de l'homme oligarchique et le Cocyte serait le fleuve de l'homme démocratique. Le Tyran reste esclave de la partie la plus basse, notamment du Tartare. Il faudrait encore rapporter les fleuves à ce qui suit dans le mythe, c'est-à-dire à différents types d'âme.

Sans rentrer plus en détail, j'ajouterai encore à la marge de cette lecture, que Platon, dans ses multiples jeux d'études par analogie, donne encore d'autres possibilités interprétatives du mythe du Phédon. Par exemple dans la République il fait un rapprochement explicite entre quatre régimes politiques (544cd) et quatre lieux géographiques. D'ailleurs, il fait la même chose avec trois caractères de l'âme (435e). Et dans le livre 8-9 il compare encore les caractères des hommes de régimes déchus à des maladies (564b-c, 567c), ce qui s'accorde très bien avec ce qui a déjà été dit. Chez Platon tout s'accorde avec tout…

J'essaierai maintenant, encore une fois, très brièvement, de présenter la quatrième et la dernière lecture possible des courants. La lecture noétique, qui en réalité m'a permis de formuler toutes les autres lectures. C'est, j'espère pouvoir le démontrer, ce qui explique le mieux l'origine même de toutes les interprétations « sensibles ». C'est elle qui dévoile le cœur même du mythe platonicien, son âme, pourrions nous dire.

Il s'agit bien évidemment d'appliquer une fois de plus le paradigme de la ligne à ce petit passage du mythe, mais en cherchant à élucider cette fois ci la pensée pure. Il faudrait donc rapporter l'Océan à l'eikasia, le niveau de l'imagination et de la pensée par conjoncture, le niveau le plus « extérieur » (112e) à la réalité intelligible. Achéron représente la vie, c'est donc le niveau de la pistis, de l'âme qui découvre la réalité à travers la certitude sensible. Le Pyriphlégethon par son double mouvement doit être

rapporté à la dianoia, ce mouvement de la pensée entre le sensible et l’intelligible, entre le bas et le haut. Et enfin le Cocyte, le fleuve le plus complexe, serait la synthèse de tous les autres. Il symbolise le niveau le plus haut de la connaissance, notamment celui de la noesis. C’est à ce niveau que l’âme apparaît le mieux, l’âme qui divise et rassemble les idées.


L’important est de voir que le mythe platonicien renvoie toujours à la réalité intelligible, comme d’ailleurs tout mythe religieux qui a été bien réalisé. Souvent nous prenons plaisir à lire le mythe sans même savoir pourquoi. C’est parce qu’on se reconnaît dans le mythe, en se regarder « d’en haut », mais on ne comprend toujours pas comment. D’où le besoin de ne jamais s’arrêter à la lettre même du mythe, mais de lire d’une manière active.

Conclusion

Comme j’ai essayé de montrer, le mythe du Phèdon porte en soi une grande flexibilité interprétative qui découle de sa structure même. Cette flexibilité permet au mythe de bien réaliser sa fonction, qui est avant tout élever l’âme humaine, par l’intermédiaire des images sensibles, à la contemplation des réalités intelligibles. Ou encore, d’aider l’homme à garder une certaine distance face à la région sensible (ou l’on verrait alors le mythe comme un support du logos). Quand un mythe est bien structuré sur le modèle intelligible, en laissant une grande liberté interprétative, il est alors en mesure de répandre à toutes sortes de situations particulières auxquelles l’homme peut faire face. La flexibilité du mythe est alors le meilleur moyen pour « exorciser » (ἐξορκίζειν) l’âme de nombreux « enchantement » (κήλης, Rép. 601b, 607c), que causent en elle les « idoles » (εἴδωλον, Rép. 602e) sensibles avec toutes sortes de désirs futiles (Rép. 572e, 558d). Il est alors non seulement inutile et erroné mais même mauvais d’opter pour une seul lecture allégorique du mythe qui s’opposerait à toute les autres. Pour rendre les choses encore plus simples, ce n’est pas l’interprétation qui compte le plus, car celle-ci doit toujours faire violence à l’ « animal » qu’est le mythe, mais c’est la force que nous arrivons à tirer du mythe. Cette force de transcender la région sensible sans pourtant lui devenir totalement étranger.

D’où les paroles finales du Philosophe, qu’il prononce après avoir chanté son mythe: « prétendre à toute force qu’il en va exactement comme je viens de le dire, cela ne convient pas à un homme qui à quelque intelligence. Mais qu’il en aille ainsi, ou à peu près ainsi, de nos âmes et de leurs séjours – si du moins l’âme est vraiment une chose immortelle – voilà au contraire, me semble-t-il, ce qu’il convient de soutenir, voilà le risque que doit courir celui qui croit qu’il en est ainsi. Car c’est un risque qu’il vaut la peine d’être couru. Et tout cela, il faut en faire pour soi-même une incantation – c’est bien pourquoi d’ailleurs, depuis un bon moment, je n’en finis pas avec ce mythe » (114d).

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The ‘argument from similarity’ is not well regarded as an argument. Even in antiquity Damascius was able to affirm of it the ‘the older commentators have not been able to defend its validity nor to parry the attacks launched against it from the side of the other schools.’¹ I have no intention of suggesting that it is not an argument at all, though I think that we should follow ancient practice by seeing it as as a λόγος rather than an ἀπόδειξις. What I aim to do is to suggest that it should not really be considered a proof of the immortality of the soul, and at the same time that it plays a role that is much richer than can simply be attributed to an argument.

If we look back to the ancient commentators on the Phaedo we learn that Iamblichus had found in the dialogue several independent arguments for the immortality of the soul.² The argument from similarity would count as the third of these. Olympiodorus simply uses the word λόγος for argument, even when explaining the view of Iamblichus;³ Damascius too uses λόγος at I 207.1 (cf. 207.12 x 2), though when speaking specifically of Iamblichus’ thesis (207.5) he employs the verb ἀποδεῖξαι. However, Neoplatonists discovered independent arguments and proofs where we should not, as can be seen from the fact that Olympiodorus himself detects no fewer than six ἐπιχειρήματα for the refutation of Callicles in the Gorgias between 492d and 499b,⁴ the first four of which would not look like arguments to us. But the surviving commentaries are much less ambitious for the reasoned content of this passage than Iamblichus had been, and correctly so in my view.

What I wish to argue is that the primary purpose of the passage is not to provide an additional formal argument by which the conclusion that the soul is immortal should be reached. Rather that purpose is to begin to establish a kind of two-level picture of the environment in which the soul must move, placing the soul itself in a liminal position albeit with greater affinity to one of those levels than to the other. That picture will finally be completed in the description of the true earth and the soul’s journeys within it that follows the final argument. I hasten to add that in its final form this is not a ‘two-world’ vision, but describes a single coherent world with parts that combine to form a dynamic system.⁵ A faculty that supplies a kind of picture to supplement a written logos is well known from the Philebus (39b-c), but I prefer to look at the issue in terms that the Phaedo itself invites.

The wider passage, 77d5-84b4, contains much that is not argument, and many hints that it is intended to introduce the myth-like vision that follows at 107c-115a. It begins with the needs of the gathering to find some ἐπίσκεψις to charm away their childlike fears, and though Socrates does not directly affirm that this is what he is doing, (1) he ought to be trying to supply what the inner child needs at this point, (2) he introduced the argument from similarity to counter the childish fear of the

¹ This translation of in Phd. I 207 is that of Westerink 1977, 124.
² See Olymp. in Phd. 10.1.11-15, 11.2.1-5, 13.4.6-9; Damasc. in Phd. I 207; on this see Westerink 1973, 15.
³ See 10.4.13, 11.2.2, 5, 13.4.7; he specifically uses that term for the argument from similarity, e.g. in Phd. 13.1.3 and 13.4.1-3 and 7.
⁴ Three are taken to be from endoxa (the presumption that happiness is not in need, then Euripides’ question at 492e and finally the Water-Carriers myth), and three to be more substantive ones, of which the first is the image of the two persons with sound and leaky jars respectively. On this passage see Lycos 1994.
⁵ To that extent I am in agreement with Thesleff 1999.
soul’s dispersal (78b7–9), and (3) he concludes the argument with the claim that the philosopher in particular should have no such fears (84b3–7). The inner child needs something to provide the security to believe what reason is telling it. But the text makes it plain that the ‘incantation’ required is something to be repeated daily until the childish fear has been purged away, thus presumably differing from ordinary logical proofs that are expected to achieve their goal by convincing the interlocutor on the spot, being addressed of course to their rational faculty as opposed to any ‘child within’.

Now if we are entitled to view the argument from similarity as offering the kind of ‘incantation’ that is required, then a second difference from Socrates’ preferred style of argument is suggested by the Meno, an important dialogue given that the Phaedo seems already to have alluded to it at 73a7–b2. That dialogue had insisted on the priority of settling what a thing is over the question of what sort it is (71b3–4, 86e1, 100b4–6). The argument from similarity is introduced as an investigation of what sort of thing is liable to disperse, what sort is not, and which of the two sorts the soul resembles (78b4–9). In other words it is asking whether the soul is such as to be dispersed prior to settling what soul is, in much the same way as the Meno was asking whether virtue was such as to be taught prior to agreeing what virtue is. It is an argument about the kind of thing the soul is, and has all the vagueness that one might expect, with the soul failing to resemble completely either kind of reality with which Socrates compares it, and with it seemingly resembling more closely entities that might indeed be eternal, but are not the kind of entities whose mode of existence any of us would actually want to experience after death. Asking what sort of thing the soul resembles would finally settle nothing, and the ultimate reaction of the most respected of the interlocutors will confirm that it has settled nothing (84c1–d8). Simmias has seen that one could try to prove the immortality of a lyre’s attunement in much the same way (85e3–b5), while Cebes, who had already conceded that even the slowest learner would agree that the soul resembles the ever-constant reality rather than an ever-changing bodily one (79e3–6), is concerned that this resemblance may entail no more than a very long-lasting nature (87a5–b2). It simply has not given either of them cogent reasons for belief in its immortality, and at 88b4–6 Cebes is requiring a proof that the soul is in its very nature indestructible and imperishable.

If an episode in a dialogue is not represented internally as successfully proving a given thesis, and particularly if it does not proceed in the manner in which Plato thinks investigation should proceed, then there is every reason to question whether its purpose is to act as a proof at all. This episode is depicted rather as a means of countering the ‘inner child’, and the inner child is not susceptible to reason anyway. At this stage Alican believes that what Plato is doing is employing the comparison ‘as

6 Note that the fear of dispersal, as introduced at 77e1, uses the expression διαφυσάκαιδιασκεδάννυσιν, and that the latter verb is repeated at 78b6 while the former is repeated at 84b6.
7 It is true that Socrates has by now accepted the invitation of Cebes to return to the point from which they had left off (78a10–b2), but Plato has still designed the argument to answer our childish fears in particular. Indeed, the argument is specifically aimed at the idea that the soul disperses at death, which had been the exact content of the childish fear (77d5–e3). The point at which they had left off was the content of the childish fear as opposed to the availability of the ἐπόδοι.
8 He does not of course want the soul of the body-loving person to resemble it as much of the soul of the philosopher, since the dialogue serves also as an exhortation to the philosophic life.
9 On this see Alican (2015), especially 319: ‘The Forms are absolutely amazing. But nobody wants to be one.’ Of course Alican acknowledges that the soul in being compared with the non-composite and deathless reality is also compared with gods (318), but for him too Forms are the focus of this passage.
10 The dusmathestatos should perhaps include that inner child.
11 Echoed by Socrates at 95d7–e1.
a dramatic vehicle to discuss the Forms, if only to say something about them by way of introduction and orientation.”¹² I think that this is partially correct, but that Plato wants to convey his picture of two-level world with the soul able to journey between levels, not just the one level of it. Of course one of these levels of reality is familiar to all of us anyway, so that the divine and imperishable level is the one requiring emphasis, but the picture of the soul within this two-level world is also important.

So what Plato is doing is offering us part of his vision at this point, and this accords with the assumption that the ‘child within’ is more responsive to pictures than to pure reasoning. Our Socratic epôidos will require a vision underlying the words of his spell, countering the imaginings that preclude belief. The epôidos will of course use logoi as a therapy, and to judge from the Charmides (157a5) these will be beautiful logoi in some sense, and beauty has the particular property of being accessible to our vision or our visual imagination. The visual imagination is intimately involved in this depiction of what the world of the soul is like. While one half of Socrates’ two-part vision is not available to one’s sight, he begins to map out what looks like an unfamiliar world beyond our world which later turns out to be just another level of one single world at 108e-113c. The invisibility of that world is linked with the very imaginable picture of Hades at 80d5-81c2, and prior to that comes the picture of the body only slowly decaying, especially when mummified in Egyptian fashion (80c1-d3). Pictures of ghost-like beings trailing a bodily shadow emerge from 81b1 to 81e2, and the notion of the soul unable to free itself being reincarnated as various animals appropriate to their past lives (81e2-82b9) is again the kind of visual material to which the inner child will respond.

The philosopher’s fate cannot be painted so vividly, but what he understands is the way in which the soul can become locked in the body by its own volition, so he must try to squeeze out of it, and to avoid the pleasures and pains that distort his view of what is real. The body is prison-like (82e2-7, a wider theme in the dialogue), pleasures and pains are like nails that threaten to fix the soul in place (83d4-7). The alternating cycle of pleasures and pains is imagined visually as Penelope weaving and unweaving her mythical web (84a4-7). And at 84b5-7 Socrates concludes his vision by taking us back to that childhood fear of the soul being scattered upon the winds. Visions are offered as antidotes for misleading visions.

Can we say that Socrates has used an argument to address the child within? In a sense he has indeed done so, but the argument had been less important than the pictures that it conjures up. When Simmias and Cebes reveal what has been missing here, it is their rational faculties and not their inner child that speak. Not only had the argument itself been unsatisfactory, but the vision built upon it had not been securely derived from it. In between, however, Socrates reveals further reason for thinking that Plato has been consciously presenting Socrates as a visionary in this passage, and a visionary of a type that the Timaeus (71e6-72b5) considers incompatible with somebody in sane and rational mode. The person who breaks into prophetic mode is properly to be separated from the rational interpreter of the former’s utterances.

Socrates fears that he seems to be poorer in his gift of prophecy than Apollo’s swans, who break into their most beautiful song just as they are about to leave for Hades. Is it then the case that he had been offering us a swan-song during this passage, and imparting at least the first part of a vision that will be completed later in his description of those other parts of the universe that embodied humans cannot know? Is it a first glimpse into the approaching world that Socrates will see more clearly later?

This will require a brief diversion. The Whooper Swan Cygnus cygnus that

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¹² See Alican (2015), 316.
may be found wintering on coastal marshes around the Aegean does have a pleasant sound, which is at its most musical in spring (as with most birds), when it heads for arctic Europe. The composer Sibelius details the sound of sixteen of these birds encountered in Finland in April 1915 during or at the end of their spring migration, describing their calls as somewhere between woodwind and brass. His experience underlies the final movement of his fifth symphony, where indeed he does construct a theme from a series of three-note sequences typical of this species, using principally the brass instruments to convey it. The mythical swan-song of the Whooper Swan has behind it a real migration of the flying creature, a real migration that could easily be seen as a flight to their death by those who experience a huge over-wintering flock for several months, note the increased volume and urgency of their calls one day, and then observe that they have disappeared the following day. Such myths designed to explain the phenomena associated with bird migration are not uncommon. For those who knew or suspected the reality behind the myth it could be explaining the emotions of a creature on its journey home, and since these birds were seen as sacred to Apollo, the Hyperborean migratory god who is also in charge of prophecy, these emotions were those of a visionary creature.

That Socrates is like the swans and serves the same master is emphasised at 85b. Whether Plato knew or suspected that the swans that deserted Greece in the spring were flying north to return later, we cannot tell, but it is likely that he recognised the story of the swan that is about to die as the kind of tale likely to be told to young children as an explanation of a departure that would otherwise be as unexplained as the late summer departures of nightingale, swallow and hoopoe—which also required a myth to which Socrates refers in the same context (85a7-8). The singing swans serve as a powerful symbol of transmigration regardless.

For all these reasons one has to understand that the argument from similarity is adopted by Socrates not for the rational elimination of doubt but as a tactic for visually engaging and inspiring the child within us and introducing that the small children within us to the prospects of an unseen world lying beyond their present experience. That tactic will be resumed once again when the rational adult has been appeased by the final argument for immortality. Indeed, one may note that at 108d9-e2 Socrates offers to describe not the exact truth about the expanded world that he envisages, but the ἰδέα of the world οἵαν πέπεισμαι εἶναι. The myth will resume the account of what the world is like.

Here I should like to offer a rather different kind of proof of my own vision outlined above. As many of you will know from the last two IPS meetings and their associated publications, I have been using multivariate analysis of Plato's commonest language (excluding philosophic terms) for a variety of purposes, and I regard it primarily as an indicator of style; the stylistic differences between blocks of text may be an indication of authorship, date, sub-genre, or register, but within dialogues it is expected that they usually involve register. Analysis of the Phaedo involved the following divisions: 57a-62e7, 62e8-70b4*, 70b5-72d10, 72e1-77e3, 77e3-84b7, 84c1-?, 84c1-91c6, 91c7-95e7, 95e8-100b9, 100c1-107b10*, 107c1-111c3, 111c4-115a9, 115b1-118a17. In the first analysis blocks marked with an asterisk were divided at approximately the half-way point. It was the ordinary language of 77e3-84b7 that was at issue, and tests showed that it resembled the final myth-like episode more than any other passage of comparable length within the Phaedo. One did not expect it to display the same language, since unlike the myth-like episode it is still primarily dialogical, without long stretches of monologue. It is by no means as extreme as the myth episode, but it is towards the same corner of the following scattergram [Figure 1]:

13 See Tarrant 2013 and 2016, among other publications.
Another test examined the same blocks of the *Phaedo* against various sections of the *Phaedrus*. Here Phdr. A = what precedes Lysias’ speech; Phdr. S1 = Lysias’ speech; Phdr. B = what intervenes between that and Socrates’ first speech; Phdr. S2 = Socrates’ first speech; Phdr. C = what intervenes between that and the palinode; palinodeA stops at 246a, palinodeB runs from 246a to 253c, and palinodeC is the remainder to 256e; Phdr. D = everything after 256e divided into four sections. The major division observed was between blocks with myth-like or poetic diction in clusters two and five to the right, and more regular discourse in clusters one, three and four to the left. It is necessary only to examine the content of the related clusters two and five for our present purposes. Cluster two (four blocks) contains material from the *Phaedo* only: the part dealing with the argument from similarity, this time divided into two sections, 77e-80c and 80c-84b, plus both parts dealing with the myth-like vision at 107b-111c and 111c-115a. Cluster five (also four blocks) contains only material from the *Phaedrus*, coupling Socrates’ earlier speech with all three parts of the palinode. [Figure 2]
Fig. 2: Dendrogram (Cluster analysis) of blocks from *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*

Linguistically, then, the language of the passage 77e-84b is closer to the final episode of Socrates myth-like vision at 107b-115a than anything else in the *Phaedo*, and together this material is closer to Socrates’ inspired speeches in the *Phaedrus* than to anything else in either dialogue. I therefore conclude that 77e-84b is indeed meant to be a different type of speech from that of the more regular dialectical sections. This is consistent with its being meant to convey the first stage of Socrates’ inspired vision of the soul’s place in a two-tiered world. It is time then to rehabilitate this passage and to view it as it was intended, as a contribution to the persuasion not of our ‘rational adult’ but of our slow-learning child within. If this appears to be introducing a divided self into the *Phaedo* and to pay insufficient regard to the dialogue’s unitary psychology then this is the price that one must pay for having it employ more than one type of diction: tailoring the types of diction to the relevant types of soul, as the *Phaedrus* would have it.

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According to widespread conviction, any understanding of a Platonic dialogue must start by identifying the “real subject” or the “primary aim” around which the dialogue unfolds.¹ For the *Phaedo*, this question seems to have a clear answer: the dialogue’s subject is death. More specifically, and in view of his own approaching demise, Socrates attempts to show in a series of arguments that the philosopher should not fear death, for it actually constitutes a relief from the sufferings of life, a release from bodily shackles and a transition to immortality. It should, therefore, be a characteristic pursuit of philosophers to study death and to desire it. This *communis opinio* arises not only as a result of an interpretative assessment of the dialogue; it is directly presented within the dialogue itself: In 64a-b, a Socratic reference to the relation between philosophers and death incurs the laughter of Simmias, who remembers and cites the view that philosophers “are, indeed, verging on death and […] this is what philosophers deserve to undergo” (64b).²

But whose point of view is this? It is the view of “the Many”, which would also be accepted by many compatriots of Simmias, i.e. inhabitants of Thebes, a city known for the influence exerted by Pythagoreanism. This widespread perception of *hoi polloi*, though, which coincides with the most common interpretative approach to the dialogue, is explicitly criticized by Socrates, who finds fault with its lack of conceptual clarity and awareness: The Many fail to understand “in what sense real philosophers are verging on death, in what sense they are deserving of it, and what kind of death they deserve” (64b).

The double emphatic ᾧ and the additional οἵου jointly indicate here that “death” is a *pollachôs legomenon*: not a unique concept, but a word that calls for further investigation, analysis and conceptual distinction. The lack of interest manifested by the vast majority of commentators for this Socratic statement is therefore surprising.³ In the present paper, I will investigate various occurrences of

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¹ I cite here from the beginning of an important paper by G.M.A. Grube on “The Structural Unity of the *Protagoras*”. *The Classical Quarterly* 27 (1933), 203-207. In the beginning of this paper, Grube criticizes such monistic approaches and mentions *Phaedrus*, *Sophist* and *Politics* as typical cases of a disputed “real subject”. We might assume that *Phaedo* is not mentioned, because its “real subject” has always been regarded as clear and evident.

² Translations are my own, but I draw extensively on those by Gallop (1975) and Sedley/Long (2010).

³ The sentence goes completely unnoticed in the commentaries of Gallop (1975), Dorter (1982), Bostock (1986) and Frede (1999), while Rowe only comments: “i.e. not as a punishment but as a reward, and not being killed but being separated from the body” (1993: 136). Burger speaks in another context of an “ambiguous meaning”
the word “death” and its cognates throughout the dialogue, in order to demonstrate
that Socrates’ arguments depend upon a double meaning of “death” as termination
of life (D1) or as philosophical vocation (D2).

Two notions of “death”...

The distinction between two different notions of death has already been
made earlier in the dialogue. The first relevant passage is the brief but significant
conversation brought on by the reference to Evenus, who seems to combine the
features of a sophist, an orator, and a poet. In these three functions he contests, in
different ways, themes and spheres of philosophy, while at the same time remaining
opposed to it. Requested to dispel the concerns of Evenus in view of his own recent
engagement in poetry and music, Socrates justifies this activity in a playful way and
concludes with an ambiguous message to Evenus:

ταῦτα οὖν, ὦ Κέβης, Ἐὐήνῳ φράζε, καὶ ἐρρῶσθαι καὶ, ἂν σωφρονῇ, ἐμὲ διώκειν
ὡς τάχιστα. (61b)
So give Evenus this message, Cebes: say good-bye to him, and tell him, if he's
sensible he will come after me as quickly as he can (61b).

This reference is perceived by Socrates's interlocutors as an invitation for
Evenus to follow Socrates in death – and this assessment inspires the ensuing
discussion on suicide. This perception, however, does not prevent Socrates from
interjecting a highly interesting remark. Commenting on the certainty with which
Cebes rules out the possibility of Evenus following him in death, Socrates retorts:

Τί δέ; ἦ δ' ὃς, οὐ φιλόσοφος Ἐὐήνος; (61c)
Why? Isn't Evenus a philosopher? (61c)

To follow Socrates in death means here to follow him in the practice of
philosophy. Socrates thus reveals another meaning of death –death as philosophy–,
offering to the perceptive reader the possibility of distinguishing two concepts of
“death”. His interlocutors understand death in the ordinary sense, i.e. only as physical
death:

D1“Death” is the termination of worldly life.

But Socrates then undertakes a conceptual shift that actually prefigures a new
concept:

D2“Death” is the in-life emancipation from the bonds of body/sensibility, as
intended and practiced by the philosopher.

Both definitions, i.e. both notions of death, are employed and exploited in
various passages of the dialogue. Yet, neither Socrates nor his interlocutors seem
interested in making an explicit distinction. In fact, neither have modern interpreters
been willing to make this differentiation.4 The first instance of the implicit distinction
mentions briefly that this is a “clear indication that what is meant is not only the
physical death”. Ebert, finally, sees in the Socratic reference the intention of a “rein-

4 My own first reference to the importance of the distinction of two different notions
of death was made rather en passant in an early paper dealing with the Socratic ‘au-
tobiography’ (Thanassas 1999: 5-6; see also Thanassas 2003: 1-2). : “Socrates is not
concerned with the first sense of death, even though this is the death he currently
faces himself […] By contrast, he is only concerned with the matter that has always
preoccupied him, namely philosophy”. Meanwhile the need for “distinguishing two
desires for death” or “two kinds of death” has also been expressed by Warren (2001:
is provided by a reasonable and fully justified question raised by Cebes:

Πῶς τούτο λέγεις, ὦ Σωκράτης, τὸ μὴ θεμέλιον εἶναι εαυτόν βιάζεσθαι, ἐθέλειν δὲ ἀν τῷ ἀποθνῄσκοντι τὸν φιλόσοφον ἑπεσθαί; (61d)

How can you say this, Socrates? How can it be forbidden to do violence to oneself and at the same time be the case that the philosopher is willing to follow the dying? (61d)

Cebes notes here an obvious contradiction that arises for the philosopher: he cannot but wish for the occurrence of death, but at the same time he cannot cause it himself. The contradiction is resolved if we realize that the prohibition of exercising violence on ourselves refers to bringing about physical death (D1) and, as such, is forbidden. The invitation to follow Socrates in his release exhorts us to follow him in “death” as D2, i.e. in philosophy. But Socrates avoids making this clarification; at this point of the dialogue he completely bypasses the newly introduced notion of D2 and returns to the first, superficial interpretation of his message to Evenus, trying to explain why that invitation did not involve an incitement to suicide. This move links him back to the unequivocal understanding of death shared by his interlocutors. His reservations against suicide are based on the impiety of such an act,5 and they are not really justified philosophically. We encounter here for the first time something that will be observed several times in the course of the dialogue: When Socrates is asked to talk about death as decease (D1), he is unable to offer arguments with conclusive philosophical validity. In any case, this first allusion in 61c to a different meaning of death (D2) is a distant hint, which attempts to prepare the perceptive reader for the distinction denoted in 64b.

The reasons proclaimed by Socrates to corroborate the absolute prohibition of suicide offer Cebes the opportunity to take recourse to them for his justified consideration that the wise can only be indignant in view of death (62c-e). Socrates responds on two levels. On the one hand, he expresses the hope that after physical death (D1) he will be placed among good gods and humans:

ἦξειν πρῶτον μὲν παρὰ θεοὺς ἄλλους σοφοὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς, ἔπειτα καὶ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων τετελευτηκότας ἀμείνους τῶν ἐνθάδε. (63b)

…that I shall enter, first, the company of other gods both wise and good, and secondly of dead men better than those here (63b).

On the other hand, he identifies philosophy as a death process, making now the first explicit reference to the notion of D2:

Κινδυνεύουσι γὰρ ὧδε τυγχάνονσιν ὁρθῶς ἀπόμενοι φιλοσοφίας λεληθέναι 95, 101), who sees the distinction as “provided by the Phaedo, but in a somewhat roundabout way” (2001: 102) and limits its function within the context of the discussion on suicide, in the beginning of the dialogue. Madison also belongs to the few commentators who have questioned the meaning of death in Phaedo; she even distinguishes between “two levels” of operating with the “discussion of philosophy as preparation for death: […] fear of death and carelessness with one’s soul” (2002: 428); Madison, however, avoids tackling the vital question concerning the status of the “Genuine Philosophers” (see below); and she underemphasizes the importance of practicing philosophy as a project of Forms, when she states that the primary concern of the dialogue is to live a philosophical life and to care for one’s soul (2002: 430). Balla (2010: 119) also argues for a distinction between two topics in the dialogue: the “right method of approaching truth” vs. “the immortality of the soul”; yet, she seems reluctant to accept the tension between the two topics and prefers to stress that “the two topics are not without connection to each other”, since the first is a prerequisite for discussing the second.

5 For a recent, extensive discussion of the passage, see Warren (2001).
Other people may well be unaware that the sole pursuit of those who correctly engage in philosophy is dying and being dead (64a).

But Simmias is not able to grasp this notion; in his intervention he hastens to identify the Socratic ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι as a θανατῶσι:

ὅτι τῷ ὄντι οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες θανατῶσι, καὶ σφᾶς γε οὐ λελήθασιν ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν τούτο πάσχειν. (64b)

… philosophers are indeed verging on death and […] this is what philosophers deserve to undergo (64b).

While, for Socrates, dying (as D2) is a (constant) enterprise within life, for Simmias death (as D1) diminishes to a (momentary) transitory πάσχειν which interrupts life. Simmias proves thus unable to follow the Socratic conceptual openness and is rather eager to cancel it; he revokes death’s polysemy and brings the conversation back to his preferred unambiguity, in which he even equates the Socratic understanding with the vulgar opinion.

Faced with this withdrawal, Socrates defends himself by pointing out that there is more than one notion of death and he stresses the need to raise the question which forms the starting point of this paper: “in what sense, and what kind of death?” The Socratic distinction thus presents itself as an attempt at defending the distinction against the common understanding, which remains blind towards it and unwilling to accept any notion of death other than D1. A preliminary clarification of the two concepts of death might prove useful at this point. “Death” as D2, i.e. as philosophy, denotes the search for truth through logoi, through valid arguments and not through myths and comforting or exhortations; the content of D2 becomes apparent later, when Socrates, in his so-called autobiography, develops the hypothesis of Forms. Dealing with D1, on the contrary, reflects an existential anxiety, which cannot be tackled philosophically; philosophy is not expected to remove existential burdens. To be sure, in the course of the dialogue, the theory of Forms will be employed to confront the question of physical death and the afterlife; but the effectiveness of this exploitation is obviously limited – as shown by the fact that none of the Socratic arguments in support of immortality demonstrates logical validity and argumentative persuasiveness.

… and a neutral common ground

No doubt, Socrates avoids making an explicit distinction between D1 and D2. It seems that this absence is an essential element of the dramatic evolution of the dialogue. Indeed, Socrates not only does not distinguish between the two notions, but rather introduces a third, more general concept, which can ‘accommodate’ both D1 and D2. Immediately after the introduction of D2 by Socrates, and after Simmias’ falling back to D1, Socrates employs in 64c a new, broader definition (D), which he repeats later:

DDeath is (i) “the separation of the soul from the body” (64c), or (ii) “a release and parting of soul from body” (67d).

(i) ἡγούμεθα [...] τὸν θάνατον εἶναι [...] τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλαγήν (64c)
(ii) τοῦτο γε θάνατος ὀνομάζεται, λύσις καὶ χωρισμός ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος (67d)

This definition derives from a ‘soul-body’ metaphysical dualism, which
functions here as a quasi-self-evident precondition of the dialogue as a whole.\textsuperscript{6} We have no reason, and no evidence, to doubt that this definition is delivered by Socrates with a serious intention.\textsuperscript{7} But apart from its metaphysical impact, this definition also functions as an essential component of the dialogue’s dramaturgy: It is general enough to satisfy not only the expectations of Socrates’ interlocutors, who share a common understanding of death (D1), but also his own desire to include it in his concept of “death” (D2), which he equates to philosophy altogether. This is undertaken immediately after (i):

δῆλός ἐστιν ὁ φιλόσοφος ἀπολύων ὅτι μάλιστα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ σώματος κοινωνίας διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων. (64e-65a)

The philosopher clearly releases his soul from its association with the body as far as possible, and more than other people (64e-65a).

And Socrates reiterates the correlation of death (in the sense of D) and philosophy once again after (ii):

Λύειν δέ γε αὐτήν, ὡς φαμεν, προθυμοῦνται ἀεὶ μάλιστα καὶ μόνοι οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες ὀρθῶς, καὶ τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τούτο ἐστιν τῶν φιλοσοφῶν, λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος. (67d)

And it’s mostly—or only– those who correctly practice philosophy, who are always eager to release it, as we say, and the occupation of philosophers is just this: a release and parting of soul from body (67d).

It is significant that the broad definition D appears in both instances in the context of a Socratic attempt to redirect the discussion. The first (i) takes place after Simmias perceives the Socratic “dying and being dead” (ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι) as a “verging on death” (θανατῶσι), thus transferring the discussion from D2 to back to D1. In the second case (ii), Socrates himself has presented at length the views of the “Genuine Philosophers”, who focus on D1 and expect from physical death not only redemption from life’s sufferings but also access to pure and clear knowledge.

Definition D thus accomplishes a quasi-defensive task, as a first regression line to which Socrates retreats in order to articulate a version of “death” plausible to those who otherwise would only accept D1 (but not D2) as a definition of “death”. This move will allow him later on to transfer again the discussion to D2. This shift remains an on-going Socratic endeavour within the dialogue. While his interlocutors are troubled by the question “what happens after death?” (D1), Socrates prefers to ask the question: “how to live?” With regard to D1 and the afterlife, Socrates cannot provide any valid or fully convincing arguments, but only some argumentative hints (and a concluding myth) that are needed to uphold some kind of hope for an afterlife; he seeks, therefore, every opportunity to direct the discussion towards his own real concern: “death” in the sense of D2, i.e. philosophy.

Definition D emphasizes the separation of soul and body – a separation with direct moral implications. It is not achieved when e.g. one merely tries to keep the

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\textsuperscript{6} For a recent analysis of the significance of this metaphysic dualism, see Pakaluk (2003).

\textsuperscript{7} As Madison (2002: 426) does: She sees in D only “a primarily metaphorical sense” and finds it surprising, that Socrates does not offer an “argument or explanation […] for this bold statement” (426). She concludes that D “must be interpreted not as Socrates’ own view of the nature of death, but as a metaphor for philosophical conversion”. To me it seems completely unnecessary and unjustified to question the seriousness of Socrates’ belief in D; on the contrary, D will provide the ground for the development of the whole dialogue.
body away from the soul, or simply ignores its influence. The role and impact of the body always and inherently affects the soul; what is needed, therefore, is not simply the body’s isolation, but its subordination to the soul and its control by the latter. Only this control reaffirms and ensures the duality ‘body-soul’; in contrast, a dedication to the body always eliminates the separation and allows it to act upon the soul.\(^8\) This will become clear later in the dialogue, which therefore does not substantially differ on this issue from the tripartite division of the soul in the Republic, where the appetitive part denotes merely a sphere of the body’s effects on the soul. Passages like 80a and 94b-c, on the other hand, allude clearly to the ways in which the body can be controlled by the soul.

In any case, definition D does not fulfil the need for the distinction raised by the questions in 64b: “death in what sense?”, and “what kind of death?” It does not provide an answer to these questions, not only because it is a single definition (thus not reflecting different notions or meanings), but mainly because it obviously not only permits but also effectively and deliberately reproduces the polysemy of “death”, accommodating within it two different concepts. This polysemy, however, is necessary for upholding a discourse between participants who share different expectations.

The “Genuine Philosophers”

There is, however, a passage in the dialogue which seems to undermine all claims that have been made up to this point: It is passage 66b-67b, in which, after having emphasized the importance of the duality introduced by definition D, Socrates delivers a series of views whose adoption is seen as necessary for all “Genuine Philosophers”:

Οὐκοῦν ἀνάγκη, ἔφη, ἐκ πάντων τοῦτων παρίστασθαι δόξαν τοῖς γνησίως φιλοσόφοις, ἃστε καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους τοιαύτα ἄττα λέγειν, ὅτι «[...]». (66b)

For all these reasons, then, some such view as this must present itself to genuine philosophers, so that they say things to one another such as these (66b): “[...]

There follows an exposition of some considerations and arguments extending over more than one Stephanus page. Socrates employs here direct speech, thus personating the Genuine Philosophers; the presentation takes place without any interruption or interference, without Socrates even asking his interlocutors Simmias or Cebes for a formal confirmation of his remarks. The Socratic report ends thus:

τοιαῦτα οἶμαι, ὦ Σιμμία, ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγειν τε καὶ δοξάζειν πάντας τοὺς ὀρθῶς φιλομαθεῖς. (67b)

Such are the things, I think, Simmias, that all who are rightly called lovers of knowledge must say to one another, and must believe (67b).

Throughout the whole passage on the Genuine Philosophers, Socrates reproduces foreign words, which he clearly places in quotation marks, introduces as a form of δόξα, and characterizes again at the end of the citation as a version of δοξάζειν.

All these indications are, I believe, sufficient to corroborate the legitimacy and significance of the question: Does Platonic Socrates adopt the views of the Genuine Philosophers?

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8 Warren remarks that this definition might be considered as complete by anyone who is devoted exclusively to the body and neglects the soul; this is why Socrates will then show that, “rather than forcing a separation of body and soul, the pursuit of bodily pleasures forces the two to become more tightly together” (2001: 103).
Philosophers? This question can be answered only with an assessment of the content of the passage itself and of the role it occupies in the context of the whole debate. Let us see then what exactly the Genuine Philosophers maintain:

a. As long as the soul remains embodied, it is unable to grasp the truth.

b. Pure knowledge as the soul’s release from the body (i.e. as death in the broad sense of D) is only possible after the end of worldly life (i.e. only as death in the sense of D1).

c. The same applies for wisdom (φρόνησις), of which the Genuine Philosophers declare themselves to be lovers (ἐρασταί), stressing that their erotic desire will be fulfilled only post mortem (ἐπειδὰν τελευτήσωμεν [...], ζῶσιν δὲ οὐ).

d. In our mundane existence, our ability to come closest to knowledge depends on the distance we keep towards the body, including sensation, which appears in the passage solely as a source of error; the challenge is to remain free of it – or to get purified of it (καθαρεύωμεν, καθαροί, καθαρῷ καθαροῦ).

The Genuine Philosophers substantiate here all those prejudices of the Many, which Socrates indirectly but clearly pointed out when he stressed (64b-c) their naivety and inability to understand in what sense philosophers are linked to death and refer to it. According to the Genuine Philosophers, a philosopher is necessarily a thanatophile; he ardently desires his death and looks forward to it. If we assume that Socrates adopts and ratifies the opinions of the Genuine Philosophers, we have to accept that he cancels the distinction he had tried to introduce at 64b (ἡ; οἵου;).

There are, however, serious and clear indications that may allow us to challenge such a conceptual withdrawal:

i. In the first place, we have to identify the gaps, paradoxes and weaknesses of the opinions of Genuine Philosophers, dealing, for example, with the notion of the ‘dead lover’. Both in its literal and metaphorical sense, love indicates a tension that arises between an insufficiency (generated in/by our mundane existence) and a desire to compensate for this need. The Genuine Philosophers, however, present themselves as lovers of a Beyond – and this means: As long as they live, their erotic object remains inaccessible; only in the Beyond will they be able to acquire it – but by then they will have lost their longing as well. Love of a Beyond implies from the outset a contradiction.

ii. The often positive role of sensation in the dialogue is incompatible with its full depreciation by the Genuine Philosophers.9

iii. Is the assumption that Socrates adopts the positions of the Genuine Philosophers consistent with his own way of life? If pure knowledge and wisdom is only possible post mortem, and if the only in-life requirement for achieving them is a καθαρεύειν, then what is the point and the purpose of the philosophical quest in our lives? Why does Socrates, even now, shortly before his own death, continue to ask, to wonder and to seek, if he indeed believes that in a few hours he will have full access to the only true and possible knowledge?

iv. Characteristically, for the Genuine Philosophers, the body is the source of an incessant production of “pursuits” or “distractions” (ἀσχολίας, 66b), i.e. a permanent excuse for the inability to find the necessary σχολή for philosophical activities; in contrast to this opinion, the whole dialogue is transmitted on the basis of a principal σχολή (58d: σχολάζω), thanks to which Phaedo can narrate it to Echecrates.10 But if the body constantly produces “pursuits” or “distractions”, then

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9 75a, 83a.

10 I owe this observation to a comment contained in a student paper by Christina Rings, written for a course on Phaedo taught by me at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich during the Summer Semester 2015.
the Genuine Philosophers should accept the impossibility of philosophy altogether.

v. The very starting point of the Genuine Philosophers —“as long as we possess the body, and our soul is contaminated by such an evil” (66b), we will never be able to attain knowledge— in fact undermines the dualism ‘soul-body’ and the belief in the superiority of the soul; it suggests instead that, throughout our lives, the soul is fully subjugated to the influence of the body.

vi. Already in the passage immediately following, and after having restored definition D and conveyed extensively the notion of philosophy as a version of “death”, Socrates recalls in a self-reference his lifelong efforts to attain wisdom (ἡ πολλὴ πραγματεία ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ παρελθόντι βίῳ, 67b). This wisdom (φρόνησις) is characterized as the “correct currency” (τὸ ὀρθὸν νόμισμα, 69a) and appears as unaffected by pleasures and fears (69b). For the careful reader, this extensive reference to the in-life pursuit of virtue (68c-69e) is opposed to the thanatophilia of the Genuine Philosophers. We seek virtue “for the sake of the whole life to come” (τοῦ ἔπειτα βίου παντὸς ἑνεκα, 90e), and this life is therefore a value in itself and not a burden or obstacle. The need to attend to the soul in our lifetime (107c) provides the starting point and the background for the myth that will be narrated by Socrates at the end of the dialogue. This myth concludes with another appeal to acquire virtue and wisdom within one’s lifetime (114c). But even the very fact that this myth describes different paths and destinies of the souls after death (D1) means that this death cannot fulfil (as the Genuine Philosophers seem to believe) the function of a universal purgatory.

vii. Characteristically, both in the beginning and the closing of the reference to them, the beliefs of the Genuine Philosophers are what they “say to one another” (πρὸς ἀλλήλους λέγειν, 66b, 67b); this reminds us much more of a sectarian group than real philosophers in the Socratic version, i.e. of people who are fond of an open, public elenchos of their own beliefs but also of the beliefs of the others.

viii. To these observations we might add the remarks stated by Burger, who acknowledged already in 1984 (but without the due resonance11) the ironic tone of the passage. Among other things, the position of the Genuine Philosophers implies a renunciation of all moral and intellectual responsibility, arguing that the body – and not the soul– is to blame for all ills (Burger 1984: 43). Furthermore, if the body is the only obstacle to knowledge and wisdom, death would automatically imply a complete purification of all people without exception (Burger 1984: 44). And finally if, in our mundane life, we are doomed to constant errancy, while posthumous life fully partakes of wisdom, then “why should learning be necessary, and how could it be possible at all?” (Burger 1984: 44).

It seems, therefore, that in the passage on the Genuine Philosophers Socrates___

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11 In 1984 Burger could only hint at a previous laconic statement by Hackforth (1955:16): Socrates “can hardly have held that attitude to life expressed in the Phaedo account of the ‘true’ [i.e. ‘genuine’] philosophers”. Meanwhile, another rare exception is the concise but substantial account of Zehnpfennig (1991: XXII-XX-IV), who emphasizes the ironic mood of Socrates (“sublime mockery”) and calls the philosophical type presented by the Genuine Philosophers a “caricature of a philosopher”. She also identifies this type with Pythagoreanism (1991: 180, 182) and stresses the implication that the soul is actually dominated by the body. D. Frede has argued (1999:21) against Zehnpfennig that Socrates does not provide us in the dialogue with “a third way of life, between the common one and that of the genuine philosophers”. Yet, it is far from certain that ‘common understanding’ and Genuine Philosophers are opposed; at least in one point, namely in their perception of what philosophy is, they converge.
does nothing more than what he says: He presents a series of foreign beliefs, without explicitly or implicitly stating that he adopts them. A typical parallel case is the reference to the Friends of Forms in the *Sophist* (248a-249d). There, of course, the disapproving stance of the Eleatic Stranger is explicit and obvious; without it, it is likely that the outline of their views would also be perceived as a genuine ‘Platonic’ position. But why does Socrates not deliver in *Phaedo* an explicit criticism such as that encountered in the *Sophist*? And in general: Why does Socrates relate an extensive account of the views of the Genuine Philosophers? The answer, I think, can be given only if we take into account the whole dramatic framework of the dialogue. Socrates uncritically cites the views of the Genuine Philosophers as a response to implicit but clear and reasonable expectations of his interlocutors. Simmias and Cebes appear in the dialogue as representatives of a common understanding of death, similar to that of the Many in 64b, which they have only partially elaborated philosophically under the shadow of a conceptually crude Pythagoreanism. The detailed Socratic reference to the Genuine Philosophers allows him to present this view in philosophical terms and indirectly examine it, without this intention being his main pursuit.

The fanatic attitude of the Genuine Philosophers represents thus another version of the body’s domination of the soul. The passage can only present an ironic caricature sketched by Socrates and addressed to philosophical zealots of his time – probably of a Pythagorean provenance. Taking these Genuine Philosophers as representatives of true philosophy would be a colossal misunderstanding of the Socratic-Platonic intention; on the contrary, they are the exact opposite of the “true philosophers” in 64b-c. Therefore, the passage on the Genuine Philosophers not only does not invalidate the distinction between D1 and D2, but their absurd and self-defeating position is possible only on the basis of their inability to make this distinction: For them, philosophy (D2) is death (D1). Only the differentiation between the two notions prevents a misunderstanding of the passage and the attribution of the positions of the Genuine Philosophers to Socrates.

**Misology**

As we all know, the dialogue proceeds with a Socratic exposition of three (plus one) arguments for the immortality of the soul. This is an attempt to comfort his interlocutors about his imminent demise. This lengthy focus of the conversation on death as passing away (D1), which continues with the objections raised by Simmias (‘soul as harmony’) and Cebes (‘soul as a weaver’), is interrupted for the first time in the digression on misology. This is not meant to be a charming or superfluous break. The digression is located exactly in the middle of the dialogue, and makes up

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12 This parallel is also made by Ebert (2004: 139), who even assumes a convergence in the content of the passages on Genuine Philosophers and on the Friends of Forms. But then it is all the more surprising to observe his unwillingness to recognize in the passage on the Genuine Philosophers a Socratic detachment similar to that of the Eleatic Stranger towards the Friends of Forms. Although Ebert accurately remarks in the speech of the Genuine Philosophers a “confessio Pythagorica”, he concludes that in this way Plato presents Socrates as “a Pythagorean φιλόσοφος” or as an “anima naturaliter Pythagorica” (2004: 141, 151)!

13 I propose that “genuine philosophers” be used only for the phrase γνησίως φιλόσοφοι (66b), and that οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφοι (64b-c) be translated as “the true philosophers”. Gallop blurs the distinction by translating both as “genuine philosophers” (1975: 8, 11); Burger also identifies both (1984: 38).
The digression is marked by the fact that Echecrates comes to the foreground for the first time after the initial framing of the dialogue (59c). This shift from the prison-dialogue to the frame dialogue also denotes a transition in the content. What in a superficial reading might appear as a break is in fact a Socratic detachment from the expectations and fixations of his interlocutors on D1 and the thematic shift of the debate from D1 to D2: from physical death to philosophy. Socrates here avails himself of the chance to deviate for a moment from the issue of the risks arising from human mortality and to discuss the greatest risk for philosophy itself, which he identifies as a hatred for *logoi*: as misology. The significance of the passage is underlined by the fact that it is the only extensive part of the dialogue where the co-protagonist and interlocutor of Socrates is the person who gave his name to the dialogue: Phaedo.

The shift begins with an affectionate Socratic gesture narrated by Phaedo to Echecrates (89b-c):

καταψήσας οὖν μου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ συμπισάς τὰς ἐπὶ τῷ αὐχένι τρίχας εἰώθει γάρ, ὅταν τούχων, παίζειν μου εἰς τὰς τρίχας—Ἀδριον δή, ἥπη, Ἰσως, ὥ Φαίδων, τὰς καλὰς ταύτας κόμας ἀποκερῇ.

-Εἰοικεν, ἦν δʼ ἐγώ, ὥ Σώκρατες.
-Οὐχ, ἂν γε ἔμει πείθη.
-Αλλὰ τί; ἦν δʼ ἐγώ.
-Τίμερον, ἥπη, κἀγὼ τὰς ἐμὰς καὶ σὺ ταύτας, ἐάνπερ γε ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τελευτήσῃ καὶ μὴ δυνάμεθα αὐτὸν ἀναβιώσασθαι. (89b-c)

Stroking my head and gathering the hair on my neck—it was his way now and again to make fun of my hair—he said: So tomorrow perhaps, Phaedo, you’ll cut off those lovely locks.

- It seems so, Socrates, I replied.
- You won’t, if you listen to me.
- What then? I asked.
- Today, he said, I’ll cut my locks and you yours, if *logos* dies on us and we can’t revive it.

The passage provides the most explicit contrast of Socrates’ interests with those of his interlocutors. The latter worry about death in the sense of D1: They seek proofs of immortality, or they lament the death of their friend. Socrates, on the contrary, is primarily interested in *logos* and in philosophy (D2), concerned only about their endangerment. While his interlocutors are preparing themselves to mourn his death on the following day (D1), he invites them to give priority to another probable mourning: the mourning for a possible failure of *logos*. For this would be the “greatest evil”.

In 68d Socrates had remarked that death (D1) is something commonly perceived “by the others” as one of the greatest evils (τὸν θάνατον ἡγοῦνται πάντες οἱ ἄλλοι τῶν μεγάλων κακῶν). This is, obviously, a view shared by his interlocutors (certainly by Simmias and Cebes). Now, in the digression, he formulates his own opinion about the greatest evil, which proves once more to be in contrast to the view of the Many. What is this greatest evil?

Μὴ γενώμεθα, ἦ δ’ ὡς, μισόλογοι, ὥσπερ οἱ μισάνθρωποι γιγνόμενοι· ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἁμαρτία τῆς θανάτου, ἱερή ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ λόγου. (89d).

To become misologists, he said, just as some become misanthropists; for there is no greater evil that could befall anyone than hating *logoi* (89d).
The previous reference of Socrates (in 89b-c) to a possible mourning for the death of logos could be misinterpreted as denoting the potential failure of a specific argument or series of arguments. One might assume, for example, that if the immortality of the soul is the highest philosophical question, the failure to prove it would be a version of the death of logos and would justify mourning today instead of tomorrow. This version would place anew the digression close to the topic of D1, restoring physical death to the epicentre of the dialogue: The lamentation should begin today, because even more important than tomorrow's death of Socrates is his current inability to prove the immortality of the soul. The account, however, of the greatest evil, in its implicit but unmistakable contrast to the opinion of the Many, revokes this interpretive version. The failure of logos lies not in the inability to compose or to defend a specific argument or answer a specific philosophical question. Mourning becomes Logos only when a deep and firm hatred has arisen for it:

Οὐκοῦν, ὦ Φαίδων, ἐφι, οἰκτρὸν ἂν εἴη τὸ πάθος, εἰ ὄντος δή τινος ἀληθεῦς καὶ βεβαιοῦ λόγου καὶ δυνατοῦ κατανοῆσαι, ἐπειτα διὰ τὸ παραγίγνεσθαι τοιούτως τοι λόγους, τοὺς αὐτοῖς τότε μὲν δοκούσιν ἀληθεύειν εἶναι, τότε δὲ μὴ, μὴ ἑαυτὸν τὰς αἰτίες τῷ μὴ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀτεχνίαν, ἀλλὰ τελευτῶν διὰ τὸ ἄλγειν ἄσμενος ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους ἀν’ ἑαυτὸν τὴν αἰτίαν ἀπάσαι καὶ ἕκη τὸν λοιπὸν βίον μισᾶν τε καὶ λοιδορῶν τοὺς λόγους διατελοῖ, τῶν δὲ ὄντων τῆς ἀληθείας τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης στερηθείη. (90c-d)

Then, Phaedo, it would be a pitiful fate, if there were in fact some true and secure logos, and one that could be discerned, yet owing to association with logoi of another sort –those that seem now true and now false– one blamed neither oneself nor one’s own lack of skill, but finally relieved one’s distress by shifting the blame from oneself to logoi, and then finished out the rest of one’s life hating and belittling logoi, deprived of both truth and knowledge of beings (90c-d).

Hatred is caused here by a repeated disappointment of trust. And the emergence of such hatred for logos effectively brings its death; for if we irrevocably abandon it, the damage will be irremediable. Such damage deserves our grief because the disappointment of trust is unjustified, the death of logos is unnecessary: While there is a true logos accessible to us, and our inability to approach it is caused entirely by us, we attempt to transfer to logos a responsibility which is exclusively ours.

While death is, in the opinion of the Many, a great evil, a possible death of logos, i.e. of philosophy, would be the greatest evil (μεῖζον κακών, 89d). Yet, the same characterization (μέγιστον κακῶν) was attributed earlier (83c) to an excessive adherence of the soul to sensory data:

Ὅτι ψυχή παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἀναγκάζεται ἁμα τῇ ἁθνήναι σφόδρα ἡ λυπηθήναι ἐπὶ τῳ καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι περὶ τω ἀν νάλεστα αὐτὸν πάσχῃ, τουτο ἐναργεστάντος το εἶναι καὶ ἀληθεστάτω, οὕτω οὔτως ἔχον· ταῦτα δὲ νάλιστα <τά> ὀρατά. (83c)

It’s that everyone’s soul, when intensely pleased or pained at something, is forced to believe at that moment that whatever most affects it in this way is most clear and most real, when it is not so; and such objects are especially visible things

14 At this point in the text one might indeed speak of a metaphorical use of the word “death”, which does not coincide with what has been discerned above in the notions D1 and D2. More specifically: what we have here is a metaphorical employment of the concept of physical death (D1), which is intended to express the cancellation of logos or of philosophy already classified as D2. In other words: Although the passage on misology clearly belongs to the topic D2, the word “death” is not used here in this (positive!) sense, but as a metaphorical employment of the common (negative) sense D1, denoting thus a complete and irrevocable loss.
The greatest evil here is the wrong choice of an epistemological criterion, which even leads to erroneous ontological assumptions: Because visible beings are able to affect us more, causing pleasure or pain, we consider them as most evident and true. The two versions of the “greatest evil” not only are not contradictory, but in fact denote two aspects of the same evil; or, to be more specific, the one aspect always brings about the other. If we perceive the immediate fact as the most true, and if we content ourselves with it, then we no longer have any incentive to resort to logos. Conversely, the abandonment of any expectation from logos flows into our subordination to sensory immediacy.

The full and clear priority given by Socrates to the topic of philosophical inquiry over the consolation for death expected by his interlocutors is explicitly formulated later, when he asks them to “concern themselves less with Socrates and much more with the truth.” (91c).

This same Socratic preference will also force him to completely abandon for a while the expectations of his partners, in order to offer a comprehensive report of the Platonic philosophy of Forms, as it will appear in the Socratic autobiography (95e-102a); this autobiography presents the hypothesis of Forms as a culmination of a historical development and thus undertakes a first attempt at demonstrating the historicity of philosophy. I will not deal here with this passage, but turn instead to the last words of Socrates: his famous utterance in which he invites Criton and the others to settle a common debt and offer Asclepius a rooster owed to him.

The cock and the cure

Ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα· ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἄμελήσητε. (118 a)

Crito, he said, we owe a cock to Asclepius; pay [i.e. you all] the debt and don’t be careless (118 a).

Just as the autobiography constituted Socrates’ philosophical testament, this final sentence expresses the last wish of a condemned man. This debt to Asclepius can only be the result of a cure or perhaps, more broadly, of prophylactic treatment against a possible, severe disease. But which disease was prevented, what kind of healing occurred? The discussion of this question in the past two decades has taken place in the shadow of the seminal article by G. Most (1993). In my view, the most important impact of this article was its contribution to overthrowing the Neoplatonist spectre haunting the dialogue, which led to what Most called “allegorical and mystical” interpretations. According to these interpretations Socrates’ last words

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15 The “second sailing” as recourse to logos, after the failure of the preceding enterprise of immediate knowledge, was emphasized as the key element of the Socratic autobiography in Thanassas (2003). The compatibility and convergence of the two versions of the “greatest evil” has been noted by scholars such as Gallop (1975: 153-4) and Zehnpfennig (1991: 193).
16 Thanassas 2003.
17 I follow here Madison’s emphasis on translating μὴ ἄμελήσητε as “not be careless” (2002: 431); see also n. + below.
18 The fact that this Platonic conception coincides with that of Nietzsche is a paradox only on the surface; in fact, the whole reading of Plato by Nietzsche, as well as the whole scheme of Platonism he devises, is deeply imbued with Neoplatonic
are a reference to a cure for the sickness of life itself; but as Most underlines, Socrates “nowhere [...] adopt[s] the view that life is an illness or that death is its cure” (1993: 101).19

Most proposed to view the Socratic command as the fulfilment of a debt owed to Asclepius for healing Plato, who earlier in the discussion was mentioned as suffering from an illness (Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἠσθενεῖ, 59b). Although this proposal has not convinced the commentators, Most’s overall and comprehensive discussion of the various aspects of the issue, accompanied with an exhaustive analysis and integration of ancient and modern literature, gave rise to an interesting debate that is still on-going. One methodological advantage of Most’s interpretation, which has not been sufficiently assessed, lies in his stressing the role of Plato himself, as author of the dialogue, in the context of the hermeneutic situation that arises out of the last Socratic sentence. But this advantage is revoked again, when Most retreats from this insight and focuses on the pragmatic question as to how Socrates knew, just before he died, that Plato would be cured. Most solves this puzzle by invoking an alleged prophetic gift, which allowed Socrates to assert in advance a debt to Asclepius for a cure that would occur in the future.

Most insisted that “Plato’s is the only concrete case of illness mentioned in the dialogue”, describing all other allusions to an illness (such as in 66c1, 83c1, 86c4-5, 105c3-4, 110e6) as “general and unspecific” (1993: 102). In another important paper, Crooks (1998) counters with the numerous references in the misology passage to “health” or related words. Indeed, the adjective ὑγιής and the adverb ὑγιῶς appear there six times in a text of just over one Stephanus page (89d-90e). All these references reveal the πάθος (89c) of misology as a state that disrupts health, and thus as a disease; Socrates overcomes this state in the dialogue to follow, which thus functions as a cure for the disease of misology (1998: 122-123). Crooks also relates misology to the “Pythagorean eclecticism” represented in the dialogue by Simmias and Cebes, presenting it as a kind of disease, which the Platonic Socrates overcome.20

But Crooks’ interpretation met with the objections of D. Frede: In the passage on misology, she remarked, Socrates does not appear as a patient but as a doctor, who does not cure anybody but only warns his friends not to fall ill. Frede thus preferred perception. It is therefore not surprising that a scholar as deeply influenced by Nietzsche as Nehamas attempts to criticize Most by insisting on a position which evidently represents a philosophical and interpretive retreat: “the illness is life itself” (1998: 162). Wilamowitz had already stressed in 1920: “Life is not a disease, and Asclepius heals no evil of the soul” (1920, II: 57). An even greater regress against the entire work of the last decades in Platonic studies, which seek to highlight the dramatic enframement and the polyphony of the Platonic dialogues, is the position that “Phaedo’s animosity toward the body is so intense, so passionate, that it is difficult to believe that Plato is thinking of life –the time when the soul is trapped in a body– as anything other than a disease” (Nehamas 1998: 161).

19 Most avoids, however, any reference to the passage on the Genuine Philosophers, which might seem to support the view that life is a disease; on this see above.
20 See Crooks (1998: 121). In this point Crooks integrates and expands a position initially expressed by Mitscherling (1985), who had presented the words of Socrates as a challenge against Pythagoreanism, which is represented in the dialogue by Simmias and Cebes and seems to prohibit the sacrifice of a cock. – The position of Crooks seems to be shared by a growing number of scholars; indicatively, Balla (2014: 7) maintains that “Socrates’ gratitude to Asclepius concerns the immunity that both he and his interlocutors have exhibited against the disease of misology”.
to link the debt with a healing of the fear of death (1999: 171). One might respond to this objection that misology, as a disease of Socrates’ friends, would also be his own, since the dialogical practice always needs more than one participant, and Socrates would have remained without companions, if they had succumbed to the illness of misology. But this objection is not necessary: The validity of Crooks’ key position can be upheld, if it is reformulated by taking full advantage of the text and its details.

Let us ask anew the question: If Socrates orders the offer of the cock as a sign of his gratitude for a cure, what was the healing? If the references of the text to a disease are (according to Most) “general and unspecific”, if its references to health (as identified by Crooks) are considered (according to Frede) to be insufficient, and if, for a full understanding of the Socratic utterance, we need to link it to a real healing, then we should perhaps take into consideration that the text actually does include a single (but significant) explicit reference to a cure. It is provided within the misology digression, when Phaedo notes (88e-89a):

Καὶ μήν, ὦ Ἐχέκρατε, πολλάκις θαυμάσας Σωκράτη οὐ πώποτε μᾶλλον ἢγάσθην ἢ τότε παραγενόμενος. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἔχειν ἢ λέγοι ἐκείνος ἵσως οὐδὲν ἄτοπον· ἀλλὰ ἐγὼ ἐκεῖνο μάλιστα ἐθάμμασα αὐτοῦ πρῶτον μὲν τούτῳ, ὡς ἢδεος καὶ εὐμενῶς καὶ ἁγάμενος τῶν νεανίσκων τὸν λόγον ἀπεδέξατο, ἐπείτα ἡμῶν ὡς εὐ ἡμῖν ἰάσατο καὶ ὡσπέρ περευγώτας καὶ ἠττημένους ἀνεκαλέσατο καὶ προστεθεν πρὸς τὸ παρέπεσθαί τε καὶ συσκοπεῖν τὸν λόγον. (88e-89a)

Well, Echecrates, often as I’ve admired Socrates, I never respected him more than when I was with him then. That he should have had something to say isn’t perhaps surprising; but what I specially admired was, first, how pleasantly, kindly and respectfully he received the young men’s logos; then how discerningly he noticed the effect the logos had had on us; and finally how well he cured us and rallied us as if we were fleeing in defeat, and encouraged us to follow him in examining the logos together.

It is indeed striking that this explicit reference to a cure has not been noticed by Crooks or by other scholars dealing with the issue.21 The verb ἰάσατο here repudiates

21 With one single exception: a series of lectures given by Foucault in 1984, published for the first time in 2009 and in an English translation in 2011. In these lectures, Foucault indeed emphasizes that “there really is a cure in the Phaedo, the cure carried out by Socrates for the disease which consists of a false opinion. And we find here, with regard to the immortality of the soul, a schema, a problem, and a cure which are the same as in Crito” (2011: 107). But although Foucault acknowledges the connection between the misology passage and the last words of Socrates (intersecting thus with the interpretation offered by Crooks), he does not associate the cure of 89a with the misology passage, but presents the cure in a quasi concretistic way as a remedy of the objections previously raised by Simmias. Foucault also attributes importance to the fact that Socrates’ last words are addressed to Crito, in order to establish a reference to the dialogue Crito; the discussion presented there between Socrates and Crito is seen by Foucault as the key for understanding the last words of Socrates, which constitute an appeal to the necessity of taking care of one’s own soul. More persuasive is Foucault’s view that the very last Socratic word (ἀμελήσητε) marks a reference to the need for ἐπιμέλεια already stressed in 107b-c and 115b-c. The same point, i.e. the care for one’s own soul as the central suggestion of Socrates’ last words and of the dialogue in general, is also stressed in the interpretations of Madison (2002) and Kloss (2001). Madison mentions that she had access to a typescript of Foucault’s lectures; she relates the debt of Socrates to a cure of his friends from carelessness and to their escaping the threat of misology (2002: 432-3).
first of all Most’s insistence that the only explicit reference to a disease in Phaedo is the one pertaining to Plato. If the cock is owed to Asclepius because of a cure, then we do not need to give ground to the hypothesis of a Socratic prophecy which foresees a forthcoming healing of Plato; it is certainly preferable to look into the healing which is explicitly and plainly discussed in our text. Indeed, the evidence of the passage, in its association with the passage on misology to which it is obviously related, creates a complete picture of an ‘illness cured,’ which is denoted by the last wish of Socrates.

Phaedo describes here Socrates in the role of a doctor and distinguishes three stages of his activity. The first is a positive attitude towards Simmias and Cebe, an acceptance of their statements (τὸν λόγον ἀπεδέξατο), which underlines that Socrates takes any objection seriously. The second is a perception and deep awareness of the effects of these objections on the other interlocutors and listeners (ἡμῶν ὡς ὀξέως ἦσθετο ὁ πεπόνθημεν ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων); the allusion of this second point is not to Simmias or Cebe, but to the other listeners, who are apparently at risk – but from what? It is obvious that what they experienced with logoi is that very πάθος which, in the course of the text (89c, 90c), will be explained as the state of misology. This condition is described in terms of frustration and defeat (ὡς πεφευγότας καὶ ἡττημένος), just as it will be the case later on with the description of frustration that leads to misanthropy and misology. In the third stage, Socrates heals them by helping them to restore their confidence in logos (παρέπεσθαι τε καὶ συσκοπεῖν τὸν λόγον).

It is not, therefore, only (or mostly) Simmias and Cebe who are healed here, but in the first instance the listeners of the discussion. This is made clear through the textual contrasts of the double “we”/”us” (ἡμῶν, ἡμᾶς) to the objections of the two νεανίσκοι. In a more general sense, misology does not arise in someone who articulates an objection (and thus still believes in the power of logos, either as raising objections or as responding to them), but in someone who, under the influence of the shaking of a former certainty brought about by this or that objection, loses his faith in logos altogether. There is no need, therefore, to link the cure solely to the objections of Simmias and Cebe, let alone to enter into an adventurous interpretation that declares Socrates himself to be cured of an alleged illness. The cure is not a positive doctrine, or even the rejection of a specific erroneous theoretical viewpoint. It is the healing of the doubt caused by the turbulences of logos and by a complete loss of confidence in him.

Nor is there any need to include Socrates in the ‘cured’ or to undertake hypothetical constructions that make him empathize with the other ‘patients.’ Socrates is not one of those cured; he is the doctor. This insight explains both the

Kloss does not mention Foucault, but shows at length (and convincingly) that Crito bears no philosophical gift or importance; his role is confined to assisting Socrates in practical matters (2001: 234-9); addressing him has philosophical significance, and there is no apparent need to involve Crito in an interpretation of Phaedo.

22 As Madison seems to believe (2002: 433): “Socrates became aware of this healing, I suggest, when Simmias demonstrated at 107a8-b3 that he had overcome the threat of misology”. She follows here again Foucault, who however sees the recipient of healing not only in Simmias or Cebe, but also (and primarily) in Crito (2011: 108).

23 This option has been conveyed by D. Frede, but only in terms of an unreal conditional, i.e. as an option which she does not seem inclined to take seriously (1999: 171). Frede also argues that a connection to the last words with the passage on mi-
use of the plural in his last wish, but also its overall meaning. Both Socrates and his friends owe Asclepius a cock. Socrates himself has a debt as a doctor, his friends as recipients of the healing. The reading proposed here thus supports a complete and coherent interpretation which explains and expounds the last words of Socrates together with his analysis of misology and the depiction of his attitude by Phaedo as a cure. Only the joint examination of these three elements allows us to understand each of them. This interpretation of the last words of Socrates is not a version of an “allegoric reading” but an attempt to include them in the dramatic frame of the dialogue, which is decisively determined by the allusions to sickness and healing.

But what exactly is the cure? When and how did it occur? And who exactly was healed? The content of healing is not clearly stated in the dialogue, but it is not difficult to reconstruct it. The crucial prerequisite for adequately understanding it is to point out the fact that the reference to healing is made by Phaedo as part of the digression, while he addresses Echecrates; it belongs, therefore, not to the framed dialogue of Socrates with his friends in prison, but to that between Phaedo and Echecrates. The discussion of Socrates is thus subsequently characterized as a cure, in a way that brings the theme of cure closer to the reader of the dialogue. As part of the frame dialogue, passage 88b-91c does not constitute a superfluous parenthesis; we can assume that it marks an ideal field of proximity between Plato as author and the ideal reader of the dialogue.

If this is true, then we might also assume that the content and the intention of the dramatic presentation of healing is diverse and multiple. Simmias and Cebes recover from their insecurity and their fear of death, by means of the (deficient) Socratic arguments in support of immortality, as well as by the concluding myth. The other listeners, i.e. Phaedo’s addressees, are healed by a treatment that we might call homeopathic: The νάθος caused by logos is a suspicion against logos and can be cured only through logos. But through and behind these interactions there also exists Plato’s attempt to communicate with the reader of the dialogue. In this communication we meet again the levels mentioned beforehand: Some readers will find in the dialogue a series of proofs of the immortality of the soul which dispel their fear. Others will come close to a borderline experience of total mistrust towards logos and will be healed from this through the Socratic explications. Others, however, will be able to discern an intent that is no longer that of the persona of Socrates within the dialogue, but of the author Plato.

sology is not possible, because in the latter Socrates merely warns his friends about the risk of succumbing to misology, but never asserts that they really fell ill – and therefore neither could he have healed them. This assumption is refuted by the explicit textual reference to a cure in the text (ἰάσατο, 89a). But regardless of this, one might ask: If someone e.g., had just escaped an epidemic, avoiding thus a direct impending risk, would it be unthinkable to feel obliged to Asclepius?

As rightly pointed out by Madison (2002: 432-3 – who again expands on some thoughts by Foucault), the plural is here twofold: of the debt, but also of the expected payment.

The term occurs in Most (1993) and Kloss (2001), without (in my view) being sufficiently clarified. Especially Kloss classifies as allegorical not only those interpretations which identify as cure the relief from the life disease, but also the one by Crooks, who connects the debt of the last sentence with a cure from misology. In any case, what Kloss offers as a refutation of the supposedly allegorical interpretations does not seem prima facie less allegorical; see note + below.
The ideal reader is found at a certain distance from the dramatic plot of the dialogue. He is aware of the problematic character of the four arguments, and he may try to read anew (and more carefully) the Socratic analogy and comparison between misology and misanthropy. Most people, Socrates states, (90a), are neither very good nor very bad, but somewhere ‘in-between’ (τούς μεταξύ πλείστους). But then Socrates hastens to moderate this analogy:

ταύτη μὲν οὐχ ὅμοιοι οἱ λόγοι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἀλλὰ σοῦ νυνδή προάγοντος ἐγὼ ἐφεσπόμην. (90b)

In that respect *logoi* do not resemble men, but I was following the lead you gave just now (90b).

Socrates seems here to reject an aspect of the analogy which would imply that, in the context of *logos*, the very good and very bad *logoi* are few, while most of them are in the middle. The analogy might seem to call for a restriction, since bad *logoi* apparently are not as few as bad people.26 But then why did Socrates make an extensive reference to the classification of people, if it does not apply to *logoi*?27 And why does he charge Phaedo with the responsibility for over-accentuating this analogy, although Phaedo made no contribution to the debate, apart from the typical willingness to confirm all Socrates claims?

The qualification of the analogy is addressed to Socrates’ interlocutors and tries to emphasize their faith in the Socratic arguments which are addressed to them. It is not relevant for a competent reader of the text, for whom the analogy between misology and misanthropy remains valid: Like people, most *logoi* are ‘in-between.’ This intermediary status, however, does not make them unnecessary or harmful, but often useful and necessary in view of a specific audience. Regarding the expectations of Simmias and Cebes, for example, Socrates is forced to present a series of ‘intermediate’ *logoi*: the four arguments lacking formal validity, and afterwards the concluding myth. The quantitative analogy between misology and misanthropy

26 See also Hackforth (1955: 107) and Rowe (1993: 213). But Hackforth aptly adds: “It is not easy to see how Phaedo had led Socrates on”.

27 This question is also posed in a recent paper by Miller: “In this way, *logoi* do not resemble people. But if this is right, why does Socrates ‘follow Phaedo’s lead’ and explain at length precisely the fact about people that will be misleading in the context of the analogy with *logoi*? It is unlikely that Plato includes this *prima-facie* pointless eddy in the conversation without a reason. I take it that this false start covertly invites us to look for a way in which the rejected aspect of the analogy with people does hold, i.e. a way in which *logoi* are (mostly, at least) in between being ‘good’ and ‘bad’” (2015: 155). Yet, these accurate remarks ultimately lead Miller to support the rather adventurous thesis that Socrates does not attack the misologists, but “shows some covert sympathy for their position” (2015: 147) and “shares their pessimism” (2015: 169). – In any case, Socrates does not simply want to warn us that that *logoi* (or even, according to Miller: most *logoi*) might not be stable and persuasive; but that our own relation to specific *logoi*—whatever their quality or truthfulness might be—should never turn into a hatred for *logos* in general. Miller probably misses the point of the analogy as a whole, when he recognizes in misology not a *hatred* for *logoi*, but only a “pessimism about *logos* as a route to establish truth” (2015: 169). For while mere pessimism still allows for engaging with *logoi*, hatred causes an irrevocable cessation of dealing with them. We might therefore assume that the next step of a misologist would be to espouse not skepticism, but rather an extreme hedonism.

Miller finally tries to expand Socrates’ assumed epistemic pessimism even to the knowledge of Forms, and for this he invokes the passage on the Genuine Philosophers, whose position he considers to be Socratic (2015: 170).
points out for the reader the full Platonic awareness of the intermediary status of these arguments. It also stresses that the good *logoi* do fall short in quantity; in a sense, they are limited to the “naïve”29 and monotonous hypothesis of Forms and to the consequences resulting from it.

Several commentators have attempted over the past decades to present the last words of Socrates as a gesture of gratitude for the effectiveness of his appeal for a “care of the soul”, thus connecting it with passages 107b-c and 115b-c. The significance of this care to Socrates is of course undeniable. But this association remains, in my opinion, quite vague and inadequate for interpreting the whole scope of the connections between misology, healing and the request for paying the debt to Asclepius. Let’s look at the second of these passages:

> Ἅπερ ἀεὶ λέγω, ἔφη, ὦ Κρίτω, οὐδὲν καινότερον· ὅτι υμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι ὑμεῖς καὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς καὶ υμῖν αὐτοῖς ἐν χάριτι ποιήσετε ἅττ’ ἀν ποιήτε, κἂν μὴ νῦν ὀμολογήσητε· (115b)

> 'What I am always telling you, Crito,' said he, 'and nothing particularly new: If you take care of yourselves, whatever you do will be a favour to me and mine, and to yourselves too, even if you make no promises now' (115b).

Socrates refers here to care in a vocabulary that shows striking similarity to his reference, sometime earlier, to the Forms:

> Ῥδε λέγω, οὐδὲν καινόν, ἀλλ’ ἀπερ ἄει τε ἄλλοτε καὶ ἐν τῷ παρεληλυθότι λόγῳ οὐδὲν πέπαμη λέγων. (100b)

> It is nothing new, but what I have never stopped talking about, always in the past, but also in our earlier discussion (100b).

Although, *prima facie*, Socrates presents himself here content with a general reference to the care for one’s soul, which might be enough to comfort his friends, the expressions ἀεὶ λέγω and οὐδὲν καινότερον seem to mark a reference to the Forms. But also in 107b-c, “care” appeared as supplementing a previous reference to the hypothesis of Forms. This is the real cure for the reader, for only Forms will provide a solid ground to make him constantly invulnerable towards misology. This hypothesis belongs to the rare class of good *logoi*, while the general and quite imprecise allusion to the ‘care for one’s soul’ belongs rather to the ‘intermediate’ ones. In other words, the real cure for the philosophically competent reader of the dialogue is the hypothesis of Forms, as described in the Socratic autobiography. This is the connection of two digressions which mark the key passages of the dialogue in which Socrates allows himself to focus on D2.

To summarize: Socrates’ last words are pronounced in the context of his well-known playfulness – comparable to the reference to Aesop (61b), by which he had attempted to explain his occupation with music, in order then to allude to Evenus and draw attention to the dual meaning of “death”. But neither the playful mood of Socrates, which does not fade even at the time of his death, nor the observed “Socratic freedom in the interpretation of the meaning of religious symbols”29 deprives the last words of their philosophical impact. Their significance, however, emerges only in combining the analysis of the debt to Asclepius with both the risk of the illness of misology and Phaedo’s indication that healing finally did occur. The ‘added value’ of the reading presented here might be seen in the joint inquiry of these three issues, as opposed to other interpretations, such as that by Crooks, who only links misology and the last words, or by Foucault, who relates only the cure and the last words.30

30 +
Moreover, the full meaning of these last words is recognized only if we exploit the methodological advantage of the aforementioned interpretation offered by Most. Socrates’ request to settle the debt to Asclepius is directed towards a double audience and thus acquires a double significance. For its direct recipients, it is a manifestation of Socratic piety and may possibly be explained as a reference to the smooth influence of the drug, to the cure of the doubts concerning the posthumous fate of the soul, or to the success of his appeal to ‘care for one’s soul’ in view of the expected post-mortem judgment. For the readers of the Platonic dialogue, however, who are the main addressees of Phaedo’s references to misology and cure, the Socratic admission of a debt to Asclepius denotes his last disengagement from the agony before death as D1 and a final allusion to the need of philosophy as D2.31

Even at the time of his death, Socrates is neither interested in (his) physical death, nor anxious about his posthumous existence. He refers the reader once more to the need to protect or rescue *logoi* from any hatred or suspicion as a pre-requisite of philosophical life. The implicit emphasis of the final words of the Platonic Socrates on the need of a philosophy of Forms, as reconstructed through their association by Phaedo with misology and its cure, provides also an answer to a question which, to my knowledge, has never been raised: Why does Phaedo give his name to this dialogue? The *Phaedo* is entitled *Phaedo*, not because Phaedo narrates the discussion to Echecrates, but because his reference to averting the danger of misology restores the central theme of the dialogue: the philosophy of *logoi* as philosophy of Forms.

Double topic, for a double audience

The topic of the dialogue is ultimately death in a twofold way, while the Platonic Socrates addresses a double audience. The first audience is intratextual and includes the interlocutors of the Socratic persona: Simmias and Cebes, Phaedo and Crito, the silent listeners of the last Socratic discussion, but also the “lamenting Xanthippe” (60a). A key feature of this audience is its thematic (and existential) focus on death as D1: as decease. In view of the approaching demise of their beloved friend, death as passing away becomes their sole concern, a source of anxiety, and the origin of every query and request addressed to Socrates: ‘convince us that (your) death as termination does not mean a complete annihilation.’ The second audience is that of the competent readers of the dialogue,32 which Plato addresses by posing the

31 A distinction between the Socratic persona and the author Plato was attempted in this context by Kloss (2001: 231-2), who sees here an operation on a double level: Socrates expresses his gratitude to Asclepius “as the provider of the medical drug” (2001: 233), while Plato formulates through Socrates α λόγος προτρεπτικός, “a final urgent appeal to an enduring care for our own souls” (2001: 239). Since, however, Kloss believes that “the speaking and acting character of Socrates enjoys methodological priority over the philosophizing author Plato”, he does not sufficiently point out the Platonic intention, nor does he attribute to it the significance it deserves.

32 What we schematically call here a “competent reader” is mainly discerned by an awareness of the distinction between D1 and D2. Whoever neglects this distinction is expected to adopt the expectations of the internal, intra-textual audience and to demand from the dialogue proof of the immortality of the soul, or even consolation for death. – The distinction of the two audiences made here (inter-textual interlocutors of Socrates vs. readers of the dialogue) does not converge with the distinction between a “primary audience” (Simmias, Cebes) and a “secondary audience” (Echecrates et al.), as made by Madison (2002: 425). In my distinction, Madison’s
really crucial question: ‘How are we expected to practice philosophy?’; or, in other words: what does it mean to “verge on death” in the sense of D2? The entire Phaedo is first and foremost a dramatically outstanding elaboration of the coupling of these two topics, intentions and audiences, in the intersection of which we can locate the Socratic persona. Socrates thus assumes a dual role: On the one hand, he meets the need of his friends for a blend of consolation and hope vis-à-vis death (D1). On the other hand, however, he fulfils his own desire, which shortly before his own death still remains the same as throughout his entire life: the desire for philosophy (D2).

In consideration of the first audience, Socrates proceeds to a discussion which, in terms of its target and intention, is a conversation for ‘young children’. At an early point in the dialogue, addressing Simmias and Cebes, Socrates describes their fear of the afterlife of the soul as childish: δεδιέναι τὸ τῶν παιδῶν, “you fear what children fear” (77d). The fear is childish, not because what is at stake seems negligible or insignificant, but because the expectations of its definitive overcoming are naive and unjustified. This is the background against which the whole of Socrates’ conversation with his friends on D1 takes place, leading him to make wide use of a vocabulary which employs as its axis hope, faith, assertion and consolation: Socrates is willing to “affirm” (διισχυρισαίμην, 63c) that after his death he will meet other, even better gods, and he is “hopeful” (ἐλπίζω, εὔελπις, 63c) about what follows after death; he “feels confident” (θαρρεῖν, 63e), is again “hopeful” (εὔελπις, 64a); while personating the Genuine Philosophers, he appeals to “probability” (ὡς τὸ εἰκός, 67a, and again later in 70b) and has “plenty of hope” (πολλὴ ἐλπίς, 67b, and again three occurrences of ἐλπίς in 68a). Cebes also asks for some “hope” and “exhortation” (ἐλπὶς, παραμυθία, 70b), and Socrates meets this demand with his willingness to offer more “mythologizing” (διαμυθολογῶμεν, 70b) – as he had already declared in 61b and 61e. He later advises Cebes to “chant spells every day” (ἐπάδειν, 77e), in order to expel fear, and later he points out that he has availed himself of such “chanting” (ἐπάδειν, 114d) in the form of the concluding myth and in an extensive way, “which is just why I have so prolonged the tale”.

The four arguments cannot be viewed outside this background. I will not go here into a detailed discussion of these arguments; I will confine myself to the quite evident observation that none of these arguments is distinguished by formal or material validity – otherwise the history of philosophy would have documented the immortality of the soul as a proven thesis, and not e.g. (like in Kant) as a constituent of the dialectic of reason. The discussion on immortality is conducted in philosophical terms, modes and arguments, demonstrating at the same time the defectiveness of these arguments; this inadequacy, however, does not apply to philosophy altogether (D2), but only to the topic of this debate, to which only the language of hope is appropriate. Philosophy is unable to provide valid and convincing arguments for overcoming death (D1), and this is something Socrates seems to know well – hence he eventually takes recourse to myth. Moreover, some

“secondary audience” would lie between those primary audiences and its presence would occasionally support the shift from D1 to D2.

33 This observation has also been made by Zehnpfennig (1991: 187).
34 Gallop’s remark on διαμυθολογῶμεν (70b), that “the ensuing proofs are not, of course, ‘tales’ like that of the afterlife in 107c-114c” (1975: 228), means, “of course”, to beg or to avoid the question.
35 See on this, among many others, Ebert (2004: 417-8).
36 See also Madison (+): Socrates, as he repeatedly makes clear, is well aware of the insufficiency of his arguments.
aspects of this myth contradict fundamental points of the previous four arguments. The description of the fate of souls after death, for example, makes no reference to a revival, i.e. re-embodiment of the souls, as the argument of the opposites did; this results in a further, significant, mutual limitation of the authority and validity of the arguments and the concluding myth.

In the meantime, of course, after Cebes had accepted with some compliance that they had behaved like children and had expressed his worries that they would hardly find another enchanter (ἐπῳδόν, 78a), Socrates found another opportunity to contrast enchanting with his own conception of philosophy, as a dialectic art:

Πολλὴ μὲν ἡ Ἑλλάς, ἔφη, ὦ Κέβης, ἐν ᾧ ἐνείσι ποι ἀγαθοί ἄνδρες, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν βαρβάρων γένη, οὐς πάντας χρὴ διερευνᾶσθαι ζητοῦντας τοιοῦτον ἐπῳδόν, μήτε χρημάτων φειδομένους μήτε πόνων, ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν εἰς ὅτι ἄν εὔκαιρότερον ἀναλίσκοιτε χρήματα. ζητεῖν δὲ χρή καὶ αὐτοὺς μετ’ ἄλληλων· ἴσως γὰρ ἄν οὐδὲ ῥαδίως εὑροῦτε μᾶλλον ὑμῶν δυναμένους τούτο ποιεῖν. (78a)

Greece is a large place, Cebes, he said, which has good men in it, I suppose; and there are many foreign races too. You must comb all of them in your search for such an enchanter, sparing neither money nor effort, as there’s nothing on which you would be better off spending money. But you must search yourselves and with one another; you may not easily find anyone more capable of doing this than yourselves (78a).

Dialectic appears here as an alternative to the problems and limitations of enchanting, and in its familiar Socratic opposition to sophistic. Cebes, however, confines himself again to a concurrent consent, but refuses to follow Socrates in this way; instead, he effectively forces him to return to his own favourite subject:

Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ, ἔφη, ὑπάρξει, ὁ Κέβης· ὅθεν δὲ ἀπελίπομεν ἐπανέλθωμεν, εἴ σοι ἡδομένῳ ἔστιν. (78a-b)

Yes, that will be done, said Cebes. But let’s return to where we left off, if you like (78a-b).

Socrates seems therefore in his last hours to repetitively yield to the expectations and pressure of his friends and to join a discussion on death in the sense of D1. Amidst the presentation of the inadequate arguments for immortality, however, which only attempt to assuage the fears of his interlocutors, Socrates exploits every opportunity to make allusions to his own theme (D2) and to present it to the reader as the main topic of his own search and of the dialogue in general.

We have observed many of these references, the first of which was the very distinction between D1 and D2. It is worth adding that, all along the argumentation for immortality, and against the doubts and uncertainties that overshadow it, it is only the hypothesis of Forms that attains universal acceptance as utterly evident, certain and undeniable – when, for example, Simmias declares that he doubts everything except this:

οὐ γὰρ ἔχω ἔξωνη οὐδὲν οὐτὰ μοι ἔναργέες ὅν ὡς τοῦτο, τὸ πάντα τὰ τοιαύτ’ εἶναι ὡς οἷον τε μάλιστα, καλὸν τε καὶ ἄγαθον καὶ τάλλα πάντα ἄ ἐν νυνθῇ ἔλεγες. (77a)

For I have nothing that is as clear to me as that there exists, as much as anything could exist, everything of this sort: the Beautiful, the Good and all the other things you just mentioned (77a).

As already noted, it is only in two loci of the dialogue that Socrates is able to disengage from the childish expectations of his interlocutors and follow explicitly his own need and desire. The first is the passage dedicated to the discussion of misology (88b-91c) and the second is his extensive philosophical autobiography
especially the latter, although (for dramatic reasons) it appears to serve
the needs of the debate on D1, is actually a complete release from the question of D1
and gives Socrates the opportunity to explain, shortly before his own passing away,
in the most distinct and clear way, the hypothesis of Forms as the fundamental and
unconditional method of (“death” as D2, i.e. of) philosophy. One might therefore
speak of mutual transitions from the topic of D1 to that of D2 and vice versa. But a
more accurate description might diagnose an asymmetrical pressure of the topic D1
against D2, leading Socrates to seek possibilities for escape in order to discuss D2,
or sometimes to present it as serving the discussion of D1.

If, however, the dialogue proceeds on these two distinct levels, if it has two
different concepts of death as its topics, and if it is addressed to two different
audiences, why, then, does Socrates not explicitly distinguish between the two
concepts? The answer can only be found in the dramaturgy of the dialogue: If
Socrates had made the distinction, he would no longer have retained a contact
ground with his interlocutors; and Phaedo would not have been possible – or it
would have taken a completely different form; it would be a different dialogue. This
duality marks at the same time a continuous hermeneutic challenge for the reader,
inviting her to examine the appropriateness and validity of the Socratic μυθολογεῖν
both in its mythological and argumentative form, and to undertake the hermeneutic
task of diagnosing the presence, extent and significance of a different concept of
death (D2). In other words, the philosophically experienced reader will focus on the
“refuge to the logoi” and the establishment of Forms, while the anxious and scared
“child within us” will take refuge in the “proofs” of immortality and the consolation
they offer.

The interpretive accomplishment of the described transition from D1 to D2
presupposes, of course, our emancipation from versions of philosophy such as
those professed by the Genuine Philosophers. By presenting their views through
Socrates, Plato opens up the sphere of tensions dominating the dialogue and
explicitly addresses the reader with the question: Is D1 indeed the central topic of
the dialogue? Is philosophy a version of thanatophilia? The emancipation from this
attitude coincides largely with overcoming all Pythagoreanism. The Pythagorean
context is of course present in the dialogue, as shown by both the origin of Simmias
and Cebes and the narration in Phleious. This, however, does not indicate a Platonic
accession to Pythagoreanism, but rather a clear delineation. The implicit reference
of passage 82e-83a to the famous Pythagorean saying σῶμα-σῆμα is telling: The soul
is enslaved in the body only if it decides to give into its desires. “The prison is self-
created”.

As pointing to the same direction we might classify also the views by Kloss
(2001: 239) and Balla (2015: 3), who see Phaedo as a protreptic for the commit-
ment to philosophy.

We cannot follow, therefore, the position of Sedley, when he states (1995: 11)
that in the Phaedo Socrates persuades the Pythagoreans of the correctness of their
own teaching. Sedley perceives the immortality of the soul as the key issue of the
dialogue and argues that its proof needs the Platonic theory of Forms. Crooks,
instead, correctly regards “Socrates as an alternative to what we might call Pythag-
orean eclecticism” (1998: 121). One of the few commentators who have tried to
challenge the view that Simmias and Cebes are Pythagoreans was Rowe (1993: 7,
194-5).

On the grounds of the broad definition D, therefore, Platonic Socrates enters into a dialogue pertaining to a double topic and intention. In a certain way, the theme of the dialogue is indeed the "study of death" (μελέτη θανάτου, 81a). But this study takes two forms and is accomplished in two distinct ways: For those interlocutors of Socrates subjected to the childish fear of dying (D1), study means consolation; for addressees of the Platonic inquiry, however, this study urges a wise attitude towards bodily restraints, which (against the arguments of Genuine Philosophers) allows for knowledge within life, in the form of the dialectical philosophy of Forms (D2).40

Abstract in German

In 64a-b stellt Sokrates eine Beziehung der Philosophen zum Tod her; dieser Bezug verursacht das Gelächter von Simmias, der sich an die geläufige Ansicht erinnert, dass „die Philosophen tatsächlich zu sterben wünschten; und sie wüssten sehr gut, dass sie es auch verdienten, dies zu erleiden“. Diese weit verbreitete Vorstellung der Vielen, die übrigens mit der vorherrschenden interpretativen Einstellung zum Dialog zusammenfällt, wird aber ausdrücklich von Sokrates kritisiert, der deren mangelnde begriffliche Klarheit beanstandet: Die Vielen verstünden nicht, „inwiefern die wahren Philosophen zu sterben wünschen, noch, inwiefern sie den Tod verdienen und was für einen Tod“ (64b).

Das doppelte emphatische ὢ und das zusätzliche οἵου indizieren hier gemeinsam, dass „Tod“ ein pollachōs legomenon ist: kein einheitlicher Begriff, sondern ein Wort, das einer weiteren Analyse und begrifflicher Klärung bedarf. In der vorliegenden Untersuchung werde ich verschiedene Verwendungen des Wortes „Tod“ und verwandter Wörter untersuchen, um zu zeigen, dass die sokratischen Argumente eine doppelte Bedeutung von „Tod“ voraussetzen:

T1, „Tod“ ist Ableben: der Endpunkt des irdischen Lebens.

T2, „Tod“ ist die Befreiung von den Fesseln des Körpers/der Sinnlichkeit im Leben, wie sie vom Philosophen beabsichtigt und praktiziert wird.

Kein Zweifel: Sokrates vermeidet eine explizite Unterscheidung zwischen T1 und T2. Dieses Versäumnis scheint aber einen wesentlichen Bestandteil der dramatischen Entwicklung des Dialogs auszumachen. Während seine Gesprächspartner stets von der Frage beunruhigt werden, was nach dem Tod geschieht (T1), wendet sich Sokrates lieber der Frage zu, wie man zu leben habe (T2). Im Hinblick auf T1 und das Leben nach dem Tod kann Sokrates keine gültigen oder gänzlich überzeugenden Argumente liefern, sondern nur einige argumentativen Hinweise (und einen abschließenden Mythos), die benötigt werden, um eine gewisse Hoffnung auf ein Leben nach dem Tod zu bewahren; er sucht daher stets die Diskussion auf jenes Thema zu lenken, das ihn tatsächlich und eigentlich interessiert: auf „Tod“ im Sinne von T2 – und das heißt: auf die Philosophie.

In diesem Zusammenhang werde ich erneut die Schuld an Asklepios erörtern und nachzuweisen versuchen, dass Sokrates das Angebot des Hahns als Zeichen seiner Dankbarkeit für eine Heilung anordnet, die explizit im Dialog erwähnt und erläutert wird: Das Verb ἰάσατο (89a), in seiner Koppelung an die Passage über Misologie, mit der es sichtlich zusammenhängt, ergibt somit ein vollständiges Bild von der Heilung einer Krankheit, auf welche sich auch der letzte Wunsch des Sokrates bezieht. Sokrates selbst gehört dabei nicht zu den Geheilten; er ist vielmehr

40 Research for this paper has been made possible by research grants provided by DAAD and the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung.
der Arzt. Diese Lesart erlaubt eine kohärente Auslegung, welche den letzten Wunsch des Sokrates zusammen mit seiner Analyse der Misologie und mit der Schilderung seines Verfahrens als einer Heilung zu erklären vermag.

Als Teil des Rahmendialogs enthält die Passage 88b-91c kein überflüssiges Intermezzo;


La ‘prima navigazione’ nel *Fedone*

Trabattoni, Franco

1.

Il passo del *Fedone* in cui Socrate dichiara di aver dovuto adottare una “seconda navigazione” (99c-d) è stato oggetto nel corso dei secoli di attento studio, e ha anche dato adito a interpretazioni fortemente divergenti, sia per le difficoltà che si sono incontrate nel definire il significato preciso della metafora, sia per la generale complessità dell’argomentazione, che non sembra procedere in forma del tutto lineare. E’ dunque necessario, per capire bene che cosa Platone intenda dire con questa metafora, individuare la collocazione e la funzione esatta del passo all’interno della sezione più ampia del dialogo di cui fa parte. Il contorno in cui la metafora si trova inserita è la risposta di Socrate alla cosiddetta obiezione di Cebete (86e-88b), che attraverso un percorso lungo ed elaborato condurrà alla fine all’ultima e più impegnativa dimostrazione dell’immortalità dell’anima.

Cebete aveva obiettato a Socrate che anche ammettendo che l’anima sia in grado di sopravvivere alla morte (e in questo senso sarebbe appunto “immortale”), intesa come separazione di anima e corpo, ancora non si è dimostrato che l’anima non possa perire o essere distrutta in quanto tale, indipendentemente dal suo rapporto con il corpo. In altri termini Cebete denuncia l’equivoco inerente alla nozione “di immortalità”: se è vero che - come convenuto a 64c - la morte è separazione di anima e corpo, il compito della dimostrazione ne risulta facilitato, ma il successo così ottenuto è scarsamente soddisfacente: finché non si dimostri che l’anima è immortale (ἀθάνατος) nel senso di indistruttibile (ἀνώλεθρος), ancora non si è dimostrato niente.

Il carattere radicale, e per certi versi decisivo, dell’obiezione di Cebete, spiega il largo giro che Socrate è costretto a compiere per proporre una soluzione. Socrate osserva, anzitutto, che per affrontare il problema posto da Cebete è necessario indagare le cause del nascere e del perire delle cose (95a) e anche del loro essere stesso (96a). Il motivo per cui, preliminarmente alla prova - ossia alla dimostrazione che l’anima è in effetti indistruttibile - sia necessario questo tipo di indagine è facile da individuare. L’obiezione di Cebete, infatti, coinvolgeva il problema di capire se esiste o no in natura qualcosa di eterno e di imperituro, o se invece tutto quanto esiste è inesorabilmente soggetto a un processo alterno di generazione e di corruzione. Se in effetti non esiste niente di imperituro, allora è evidentemente impossibile che l’anima sia indistruttibile; se invece una realtà imperitura, cioè quella ideale, davvero esiste, allora si apre la duplice possibilità di dimostrare o che anche l’anima è un’idea, oppure che l’anima, pur non essendo un’idea, intrattiene con le idee un legame abbastanza forte da consentire il trasferimento della nozione di indistruttibilità dalle idee all’anima stessa. Scartata la prima possibilità (se Platone ritenesse che l’anima è un’idea non avrebbe certo avuto bisogno di cercare delle prove a favore della sua immortalità¹), non resta che la seconda. Per capire in che cosa consistono la prima e la seconda navigazione, che è poi lo obiettivo di questo intervento, non è necessario indagare il modo in cui l’argomentazione è portata a termine².


2 Per cui v. i miei lavori citati alla nota precedente.
che invece importa capire è che Socrate, affinché l’argomento sia portato a buon fine, ha bisogno di dimostrare 1) che esistono enti indistruttibili e 2) che questi enti indistruttibili intrattengono un ben preciso rapporto con quelli corruttibili.

Se si deve trattare di una vera e propria dimostrazione, e non di una banale *petitio principii*, Socrate deve provare l’esistenza di enti incorrottilibili senza in alcun modo supporla di già. Ed è esattamente per questo motivo che prende le mosse della generazione e della corruzione, ossia un dato di fatto empirico assolutamente evidente, che non solo non condiziona lo sviluppo auspicato della ricerca, ma addirittura sembra muoversi in direzione contraria: tutto nasce e tutto muore. Se però ci interroghiamo sulle cause del nascere del perire, si aprono due diverse possibilità: 1) la generazione e la corruzione sono sufficientemente spiegate da cause anch’esse corruttibili; 2) la generazione e la corruzione sono un effetto che trova una spiegazione solo mettendo in gioco cause incorrottilibili. Socrate, ovviamente, intende mostrare che la soluzione corretta è la seconda. Come ben si vede, formalmente parlando si tratta dello stesso ragionamento che ha condotto Aristotele, in *Fisica* VIII e *Metaph. XII*, a postulare l’esistenza del motore immobile: entrambi gli argomenti deducono, sulla base dell’analisi dell’esperienza e delle sue cause, l’esistenza di un ente che si sottrae alla presa della conoscenza empirica. Ecco dunque delineato qual è il primo passo dell’agenda di Socrate, se vuole sviluppare il suo tentativo di confutare Cebete: dimostrare che esistono dati d’esperienza giustificabili solo mediante l’introduzione di cause incorrottilibili.

Sul modo in cui Socrate procede nel costruire questa dimostrazione sarò piuttosto sintetico, limitandomi qui a proporre i risultati di un’indagine che ho svolti piuttosto altrove. Socrate racconta che inizialmente ha preso in considerazione le soluzioni proposte dai cosiddetti fisiologi, ma poi ne è rimasto profondamente deluso, e ha dunque deciso di cercare altrove. Anche sulle ragioni di questa delusione la critica ha assunto posizioni diverse. Una delle spiegazioni più diffuse consiste nel dire che a parere di Socrate le cause di tipo meramente fisico si rivelano contraddittorie; ma poiché non pare proprio che questa interpretazione sia applicabile a tutti i casi che Socrate cita come esempio, non è raro imbattersi in commentatori che lamentano la scarsa precisione e compattezza dell’argomento platonico. In realtà la contraddizione non c'è affatto. Il vero problema è che le esperienze percettive riferibili al mondo della generazione e della corruzione non hanno per oggetto soltanto mutamenti materiali, siano essi quantitativi o qualitativi; ma anche la comparsa e la scomparsa delle cosiddette “proprietà”: ad esempio, il “piccolo” scompare per fare posto al “grande”, l’“unità” scompare per fare posto alla “dualità”, ecc. L’accertamento di queste proprietà, come si ricava dal celebre passo del *Teeteto* in cui sono introdotte come “qualità comuni” (184d-186c), non è infatti qualcosa che accade a parte dalla percezione sensibile, ma è qualcosa che avviene sempre in comconitanza con essa, e che dunque non può esserne disgiunto. Se dunque si vogliono trovare le cause della generazione e della corruzione, non basta dire che una persona da piccola è diventata grande per aumento di materia, perché in questo modo non si spiega come è possibile che il “piccolo”, che prima c’era, ora sia diventato nulla; e che il “grande”, che prima era nulla, ora sia improvvisamente comparso all’esistenza. Il problema su cui Socrate mette l’accento, in altre parole, è schiettamente parmenideo. Una volta accertato che tutto quello che può essere pensato e detto in qualche modo “è” (tali sono il “grande” e il “due” del *Fedone*, ma anche i *koinà* del *Teeteto*, o addirittura il “non bello” del *Sofista*, che in quel dialogo è detto esistere esattamente nella stessa misura del grande, 257e), occorre trovare una spiegazione della generazione e della corruzione (e più in generale del divenire)

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3 Trabattoni 2012.
in cui nulla di quello che muta passa contraddittoriamente dall'essere al non essere e viceversa. Ora, se per gli elementi materiali questa condizione è rispettata appellandosi al procedimento, tipico dei filosofi della \textit{physis} scolasticamente chiamati pluralisti, dell'unione e della separazione degli elementi (in cui le cose mutano senza che alcunché diventi nulla o proceda dal nulla), questo però non vale per enti come il grande o il due, che sono evidentemente privi di parti. Dunque è necessario ritenere che il grande e il due esistano come enti incorruttibili, che compaiono e scompaiono negli enti sensibili senza essere soggetti essi stessi a processi di generazione e di corruzione (secondo un modo di ragionare che anche Aristotele ha applicato alla forma, senza però la necessità che essa possieda le caratteristiche attribuite da Platone alle idee), ma semplicemente in concomitanza con la partecipazione o non partecipazione dei sensibili ad esse. In sintesi, se il ragionamento funziona, è necessario porre l'esistenza di enti incorruttibili come "il grande in sé", il "due in sé", ecc.

A margine di tutto questo si collocano la menzione di Anassagora e la discussione delle cause finali che vi è collegata. Anassagora, infatti, da un lato sembra essere l'unico tra i filosofi della \textit{physis} consapevole del fatto che i procedimenti meccanici di aggregazione e disgregazione non sono efficaci per salvare, in senso parmenideo, il fenomeno dell'apparire e dello scomparire delle qualità (e infatti per Anassagora tutte le qualità sono incorruttibili); dall'altro aveva introdotto come causa ultima un principio separato e qualitativamente diverso dalla realtà sensibile, ossia il \textit{nous} (incamminandosi così verso la conclusione che le vere cause non possono essere materiali). Se c'è una cosa davvero singolare in tutta questa sezione è che Anassagora non è criticato, come ci si aspetterebbe, per non aver saputo giustificare in modo sufficiente la permanenza della forma (nulla di ciò che appartiene al mondo materiale, avrebbe potuto obiettargli Platone, può essere incorruttibile) o per l'ambiguo statuto ontologico da lui attribuito al \textit{nous} (che ha la doppia caratteristica di essere un seme come gli altri ma anche separato da essi). Anassagora viene criticato, invece, per non aver introdotto le cause finali, ossia per una ragione che è del tutto irrilevante in rapporto alla funzione che ha la determinazione delle cause all'interno dell'argomento platonico, ossia quella di produrre non una causa finale (cosa che del resto le idee non possono essere) ma una causa formale. Probabilmente Platone voleva segnalare il difetto che a suo avviso impedisce in modo più appariscente alla dottrina dei principi di Anassagora di essere genuinamente metafisica - posto appunto che una dottrina di questo genere debba occuparsi anche delle cause finali - anche se poco rilevante per l'assunto in questione. Il fallimento di Anassagora proprio in quel luogo in cui la sua posizione sembrava più promettente dimostra che egli era del tutto alieno da una prospettiva metafisica e dualista; altrimenti non avrebbe esitato a compiere il piccolo passo che mancava, una volta compreso che il vero principio è il \textit{nous}: ossia considerarlo una causa immateriale e intelligente, del tutto separata dal resto della natura,

2.

Sia come sia di questo problema (che non possiamo trattare qui), dall'analisi che abbiamo condotto si ricava quanto segue:

5 Cfr. fr. 3, 10, 17, 42.
6 Cfr. fr. 11, 12.
7 La causa finale, in Platone, non può essere solo (passivamente) intellegibile, come lo sono le idee, ma deve essere, in quanto provvidenza, intelligente, e dunque attiva. Infatti nella metafisica platonica il ruolo della causa finale è occupato non già dalle idee, ma dalla causa della mescolanza nel \textit{Filebo} e dal demiurgo nel \textit{Timeo}.  

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1) la ricerca delle cause della generazione e corruzione richiede, per essere davvero soddisfacente, che le cause cercate non siano meccanico/materiali;
2) le indagini dei filosofi della *physis* non sono soddisfacenti, perché mettono in campo solo cause meccanico/materiali;
3) nemmeno Anassagora, che pure introducendo il *nous* sembrava aprire l’indagine alla ricerca di cause non meccanico/materiali, riesce davvero a trovare le cause immateriali richieste.

Supponiamo ora che la seconda navigazione vada interpretata nel modo genericamente metafisico ampiamente divulgato in Italia (ma non sono in Italia) dal compianto Giovanni Reale: la seconda navigazione sarebbe l’indicatore di un cambiamento radicale di prospettiva, che lasciandosi definitivamente alle spalle il mondo monodimensionale della filosofia presocratica, ammette la necessaria esistenza di una dimensione immateriale, ad essa superiore, provvista di caratteristiche sue proprie (non sensibile, eterna, incorruttibile, ecc.). In altre parole la seconda navigazione rappresenterebbe il primo passo nella storia millenaria della metafisica occidentale. E se così stanno le cose, la prima navigazione non potrebbe che essere intesa come un orizzonte di ricerca che limita il suo oggetto a ciò che è materiale, sensibile, diveniente, perituro, ecc.

Ma se così fosse, la seconda navigazione sarebbe per certi versi già avvenuta quando Socrate dichiara insufficiente il metodo meccanico/materiale adottato dai filosofi della *physis*. In alternativa si potrebbe ritenere che la seconda navigazione consista precisamente nel superamento del materialismo presocratico mediante la dottrina “platonica” delle idee. Ma questo confligge apertamente con la lettera del testo, in cui la seconda navigazione è descritta come una “fuga nei logoi” (99e5: εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυφόντα) e i *logoi* non sono ovviamente identificabili con le idee. Qui *logos* significa, piuttosto, “discorsi che si sviluppano in forma di argomentazione”, e se è ben plausibile che questi discorsi argomentati siano, alla fine, in primo luogo proprio quelli che conducono alla posizione delle idee (nel senso di *logos* utilizzato da Aristotele in *Metaph. A* 9), la seconda navigazione riguarda pur sempre i discorsi, e non le idee.

C’è poi una difficoltà probabilmente ancora più grave, che concerne il significato stesso della metafora. Che la metafora sia inserita in un contesto in cui accade il passaggio dalle cause sensibili a quelle puramente intellegibili, non c’è dubbio. Crea invece molti problemi l’ipotesi che con questa metafora Platone intendesse descrivere, propriamente e direttamente, questo passaggio. Infatti “seconda navigazione” è una espressione proverbiale che indica un procedimento di ripiego e di seconda scelta, dunque in linea di principio peggiore di quella che sarebbe la prima navigazione (qualunque cosa essa sia): un procedimento che si deve adottare come una specie di second best, dal momento che il primo, per quanto migliore, purtroppo è impraticabile. Non è dunque sorprendente che i fautori dell’interpretazione “metafisica” che abbiamo citato sopra abbiano cercato degli argomenti per dimostrare che la seconda navigazione costituisce un miglioramento, e non un peggioramento, della prima. Il principale di questi argomenti fa appello a ciò che si legge negli scolii al testo platonico, che offrono un’interpretazione concorde di tutti e tre in passi in cui compare la metafora in oggetto (oltre al *Fedone*, *Filebo* 19c e *Politico* 300c): la seconda navigazione sarebbe “più sicura” in rapporto a una prima navigazione che si è rivelata invece impraticabile.

Tuttavia, come ha esaurientemente dimostrato Stefano Martinelli Tempesta in uno studio pubblicato più di dieci anni fa8, e purtroppo quasi ignorato dalla critica, questa interpretazione è assolutamente insostenibile. Dall’articolo in questione,

8 Martinelli Tempesta 2003.
infatti, risultano praticamente accertati i seguenti punti:

a. Tutte le occorrenze nella letteratura antica (in tutto 79) della *iunctura* δεύτερος πλοῦς, fino alle pochissime che solo superficialmente potrebbero apparire controverse, sono concordi nel mostrare che il suo significato è peggiorativo.

b. Le altre due occorrenze in Platone oltre a quella presente nel Fedone indicano senza possibilità di equivoci che la formula “seconda navigazione” esprime un peggioramento, sia pure nel senso del second *best*.

c. L’interpretazione proposta negli scolii è con tutta probabilità una costruzione creata con lo scopo di contrastare una possibile interpretazione scettichéggiente della filosofia di Platone. E’ molto verosimile, infatti, che sia nata a margine del passo del Fedone, dove una lettura peggiorativa dell’espressione significherebbe appunto che il metodo di ricerca a cui si deve attenersi il filosofo è comunque destinato a rimanere approssimativo e lacunoso (ossia, un metodo di seconda scelta). Poi lo scoliaste sarebbe stato costretto, per coerenza, a confermare la medesima interpretazione anche per gli altri passi platonici, nonostante che in questi due casi la lettura peggiorativa sia difficilmente contestabile⁹.

d. Infine, non regge neppure una possibile interpretazione mista, come quella che dice che da un lato la seconda navigazione è un peggioramento (dal momento che è più faticosa), mentre dall’altro è un miglioramento, in quanto è più sicura. Poiché infatti si tratta di un proverbio, e non di una metafora (o di una analogia), il significato della frase non può essere incerto, o ambiguo.

Se questo è il vero significato della metafora, non ne consegue tuttavia, a differenza di quanto spesso si ritiene, che sorga un grave problema per la comprensione del testo. E’ vero che rispondendo a Cebete Socrate mette in luce la necessità di ricorrere a cause superiori a quelle fisiche. Tuttavia non c’è nessun bisogno di intendere che questo passaggio dal “peggio” al “meglio” sia rappresentato proprio dalla seconda navigazione. Il contenuto della seconda navigazione, come abbiamo anticipato, è l’atto di rifugiarsi nei *logoi* (99e, εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα). E poiché i *logoi*, come pure abbiamo detto, non sono le idee, rimane aperta la possibilità che con l’espressione “rifugiarsi nei *logoi*” Socrate intenda riferirsi al metodo, non al contenuto, e segnalare in proposito un’asimmetria: per quanto le idee siano un fondamento del conoscere assai più solido di quello offerto dalla realtà sensibile, non è detto che si offrano alla conoscenza con la stessa facilità immediata con cui si presentano le realtà materiali; e se così fosse, allora la metafora della “seconda navigazione” sarebbe assolutamente appropriata.

Ma che cosa sarebbe, in questo caso, la “prima navigazione”? Un’idea molto diffusa è che essa coincida con la ricerca delle cause finali. Per dirimere la questione il passo decisivo è 99c5-9, che qui riportiamo insieme alla traduzione italiana di Martinelli Tempesta:

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⁹ In *Phil*. 19 c Protarco dice che se è bello conoscere tutto quanto, seconda navigazione vuole che non si dimentichi di se stessi (in altre parole qui la seconda navigazione è un appello alla limitatezza umana contro la pretesa di acquisire un sapere assoluto); In *Polit*. 300c la seconda navigazione consiste nel far rispettare sempre e comunque la legge, con gli inconvenienti che questo tuttavia comporta, da adottare come seconda scelta in mancanza di persone che possano governare in modo perfetto sulla base del loro sapere (e dunque al di sopra della legge e delle sue inevitabili imperfezioni)
Secondo Vlastos 1969 e gli altri autori che seguono questa linea, oggetto dei due infiniti eureîn (trovare) e matheîn (imparare) sarebbe il tautês (questa) alla riga c8, che si riferisce alla causa finale. Perciò Socrate vorrebbe dire che ha adottato la seconda navigazione proprio perché incapacace di trovare la causa finale. Ma secondo Ross 1981 si tratta di una lettura scorretta. A suo parere l'uso dei verbi eureîn e matheîn richiamerebbe direttamente il programma enunciato da Simmia in 85c7-8 (anche qui riportiamo il greco e la traduzione di Martinelli Tempesta):

dεῖν γὰρ περὶ αὐτὰ ἕν γέ τι τούτων διαπράξασθαι, ἢ μαθεῖν ὅπῃ ἔχει ἢ εὑρέιν ἢ, ἐὰν ταῦτα ἀδύνατον, τὸν γοῦν βέλτιστον τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων λόγων λαβόντα καὶ δυσεξελεγκτότατον κτλ.

Quando si ha a che fare con questi argomenti bisogna andare sino in fondo con almeno una di queste alternative: o imparare come stanno, o sciprirlo; oppure, se queste alternative sono impossibili, prendere allora il migliore fra i ragionamenti umani, cioè il meno confutabile ecc.

La “prima navigazione” sarebbe il tentativo da parte di Socrate di applicare il programma enunciato da Simmia nel passo ora citato: egli ha cercato le cause della generazione e della corruzione tentando prima di trovarle da sé, nella dimensione fisica, e poi di apprenderle da un altro, ossia da Anassagora. Ma Socrate ha fallito in entrambi i casi. La delusione patita riguardo alla causa finale dimostra appunto l'insuccesso del secondo tentativo; il quale insuccesso, unito al primo, lo convince a cambiare metodo: la seconda navigazione è alternativa, dunque, non alla ricerca delle cause finali, ma ai due tipi di approccio indicati dai due infiniti.

Questa spiegazione è però convincente solo a metà. Sono d'accordo sul fatto che la seconda navigazione non sia la rinuncia alla ricerca delle cause finali, ma la rinuncia al doppio metodo di cercare le cause, vuoi tramite l'eureîn vuoi tramite il matheîn. Se questo è vero, però, è praticamente certo che l'eureîn e il matheîn devono avere un difetto in comune, dal quale appunto Socrate prende le distanze con la “seconda navigazione”. Ma se, come vuole Ross, l'eureîn è il tentativo di Socrate di fare da sé, cercando la causa nel mondo fisico, mentre il matheîn è il tentativo di apprendere da un altro, l'elemento comune evidentemente non c'è. Inoltre è abbastanza problematico ritenere che per Socrate il fare da sé consista nel cercare le cause nel mondo fisico: se la seconda navigazione deve essere in qualche modo un second best in rapporto alla prima, questa condizione è ottemperata dal confronto con le cause finali, non certo dal confronto con le cause fisiche (in rapporto alle quali l’indagine tramite i logos non può in nessun modo essere considerata un second best). Per entrambe queste ragioni, rimarrebbe dunque più plausibile l’ipotesi di Vlastos, secondo cui la seconda navigazione rigetti solo la ricerca delle cause finali.
Per risolvere il problema occorre a mio avviso mettere in secondo piano, sia in 85c7-8 sia in 99d8-9, l’idea che eureîn significhi trovare da sé e matheîn imparare da un altro. Preso di per sé, il verbo eureîn significa semplicemente “trovare”, ossia imbattersi in qualche cosa che di per sé è accessibile alla conoscenza (anche se può trovarsi in un luogo che ci è ignoto, o anche in un luogo noto, ma nascosto: si pensi a un fungo porcino accuratamente celato nel muschio in uno zinga impervia del bosco); matheîn, a sua volta, indica l’aiuto di chi ti dice dove cercare e dove guardare. Su questa base non è difficile rintracciare il nesso che accomuna i due metodi: entrambi si reggono sull’ipotesi che la cosa cercata sia direttamente visibile, e che dunque sia possibile trovarla semplicemente sapendo, o perché ci siamo arrivati da soli o perché ci ha insegnato qualcuno, dove cercare e dove guardare.

Se così stanno le cose, l’articolazione tra prima e seconda navigazione diviene chiara. Una volta stabilito che le vere cause della generazione non ci colgono con i sensi, come procedere per tentare in qualche modo di conoscerele? Socrate dichiara in proposito che non è stato in grado di trovarle né da sé né mediante l’aiuto di un altro, ossia facenosi insegnare da quest’altro dove l’oggetto cercato si colca e dove si deve guardare per trovarlo (come si può fare, per continuare con l’esempio che abbiamo proposto sopra, quando si va in cerca di funghi). Questa doppia delusione certifica a Socrate che il metodo guisto per rintracciare l’oggetto cercato sia quello dell’ eureîn, inteso precisamente come un trovare qualcosa che c’è, che è lì, e che può essere colto in modo indiretto orientando correttamente lo sguardo (si pensi di nuovo all’esempio dei funghi). Illuminante, in proposito, è la seconda metafora che compare nel passo in questione, ossia quella dell’eclissi (99d-e). Socrate spiega che il metodo della seconda navigazione, da lui adottato, è analogo a quello usato da quanti vogliono vedere il sole durante un’eclissi, che per non essere abbagliati sono costretti a guardarlo in modo riflesso e indiretto (ad esempio in uno specchio d’acqua). Questa seconda metafora mostra ancora meglio della prima che la causa cercata non è un oggetto che possa essere colto dalle facoltà umane in modo immediato e diretto; ma che è una cosa a cui ci si può accostare solo con un metodo indiretto, e di ripiego, che fuor di metafora coincide appunto con il filtro dei logos. Detto in termini ancora più netti, significa se da un lato esistono facoltà umane capaci di cogliere direttamente gli oggetti materiali, ossia i sensi, non ne esiste invece nessuna capace di cogliere direttamente gli oggetti materiali. Ciò del resto è significativamente confermato da quel passo del Teeteto (185d-e) in cui Socrates mostra che non esiste una facoltà specifica capace di cogliere i caratteri comuni, intelligibili e formali dell’esperienza; ma è l’anima stessa che lo fa, attraverso logos e doxa.

Né deve destare sospetti il fatto che sia lo stesso Socratico, nel passo citato, a mettere in dubbio la piena pertinenza delle metafore che usa, dichiarando innammissibile che conoscere la realtà attraverso i logos sia un conoscere per immagini più di quanto non lo sia conoscerci nei fatti. Con questi fatti (ἔργοις, 100a2) Socrates intende ovviamente la realtà sensibile, e pertanto il ragionamento diventa il seguente. Il testo implica l’ipotesi che vi siano differenti gradi di immagine (ἐν εἴκοσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν), e che l’immagine della vera realtà procurata da logos sia comunque superiore a quella procurata dagli oggetti sensibili. In altri termini, chi si limita ad osservare la realtà sensibile ha una conoscenza diretta di essa, superiore dal punto di vista del metodo (dunque “prima navigazione”) a chi cerca di conoscere le idee, che deve invece accontentarsi del metodo indiretto offerto dai logos (”seconda navigazione”). Tuttavia anche le cose sensibili sono immagini (o imitazioni), delle idee, ma molto meno affidabili dei logos (come agevolmente si

10 In accordo con l’immagine indubbiamente riduttiva dell’epistemologia platonica resa famosa da Martin Heidegger.
ricava dalla metafora della linea divisa nella Repubblica\textsuperscript{11).} Ne consegue perciò che la conoscenza sensibile non è a nessun titolo una conoscenza migliore di quella intellettuale, dal momento che essa è metodologicamente migliore solo quando ha per oggetto l’irrilevante realtà sensibile (nella misura in cui è in questo caso una conoscenza diretta, e non per immagini), mentre quando è usata per conoscere la realtà intellegibile è metodologicamente inferiore all’uso dei logoi, dal momento che le cose sensibili sono immagini della realtà vera in misura maggiore di quanto non lo siano i logoi; e poiché essere “immagine di” equivale a “essere diverso da”, gli oggetti sensibili sono strumenti di conoscenza meno affidabili dei logoi - ancorché questi ultimi, in quanto “seconda navigazione”, non siano comunque conclusivi.

Tutto questo collima perfettamente con il programma enunciato da Simmia nel passo parallelo 85 c-d. Non solo anche qui, come in 99c, vengono proposte e scartate le alternative dell’	extit{eureîn} e del 	extit{matheîn}; ma anche qui l’unica possibilità che rimane consiste nell’uso del logos, descritto con la stessa cauta consapevolezza che anima la metafora della seconda navigazione. Anzitutto si tratta di un logos unamó, e non divino; così come umana è la filosofia, mentre la 	extit{sophia} è esclusivo appannaggio degli dei (cfr. Lys. 218a, Symp. 204a, Phdr. 278d). Poi non si tratta di un logos infallibile, o inconfortabile: il logos su sui l’uomo può contare è, semplicemente, il “meno confutabile” (δυσεξελεγκτότατον) tra quelli che egli riesce a trovare con le sue forze (dal momento che non è disponibile alcuna rivelazione divina, come Simmia farà capire subito dopo) nella sua indefessa attività di indagine, superando la tentazione della misologia alla continua ricerca di un logos migliore (Phaed. 90c-e). Questo logos, infine, non offre alcuna garanzia assoluta di verità, esattamente come accade al logos indiretto e irriflesso verso cui Socrate decide di fuggire con la seconda navigazione. Così prosegue il passo che abbiamo citato sopra:

...e lasciandovisi trasportare (sc., dal logos) come su una zattera, lanciarsi nella traversata della vita affrontandone i pericoli, a meno che non si possa attraversare in modo più sicuro e meno pericoloso su una imbarcazione più solida, come su un logos divino.

Difficilmente si potrebbe trovare una la metafora più appropriata per istituire un collegamento con la seconda navigazione: così come il logos è secondo, e dunque fallibile, nei confronti dell’evidenza procurata dalla visione diretta del vero, allo stesso modo la zattera è un mezzo insicuro, ben lontano dalla certezza che potrebbe essere procurata da un logos divino, per definizione infallibile. Anzi, a me pare proprio che in questo modo Platone voglia segnalare che la cetezza è cosa divina, mentre agli uomini non resta che lo strumento approssimativo e fallibile del logos.

Sembra che tutto congiuri, dunque, verso il medesimo risultato. L’ambiziosa pretesa della filosofia, che vorrebbe conoscere nientedimeno che le cause della generarsi, del corrompere e dell’essere delle cose, non è la tracotante aspirazione dell’uomo a travalicare i limiti della sua natura; è ciò che all’uomo dovvero importa conoscere per condurre a buon fine quel viaggio incerto e pericoloso che è la sua vita\textsuperscript{12}; perché il significato nel nascere e del perire, e dunque ciò che ci aspetta dopo la morte, per la buona conduzione del viaggio hanno un significato essenziale. La metafora della zattera, più ancora di quella della seconda navigazione, coglie assai bene la grande sporporzione che esiste tra la gravità e la difficoltà dei problemi, come quello di spiegar le cause della generazione e della corruzione - e dunque

\textsuperscript{11} Cfr, Trabattoni 2016, pp. 167-188
\textsuperscript{12} Sarebbe bello conoscere tutto, dice Protarco nel Filebo (v, supra, n. 9); così come non c’è ragione di credere che Platone accetterebbe volentieri, se ci fosse l’assistenza di un logos divino.
di svelare il segreto della vita e della morte - e la povertà dei mezzi di cui l'uomo dispone. Ma purtroppo gli uomini non ne hanno altri, e dunque devono sforzarsi di usarli nella maniera migliore possibile.

Resumé

La métaphore de la “seconde navigation” dans le passage du Phédon 99c-d a souvent créé des problèmes aux interprètes parce que d’un coté il semble que dans le lieu en question Platon est en train d’élever le niveau de la recherche du domaine du sensible au domaine de l’intelligible, tandis que d’autre coté “deuxième navigation” est une expression proverbiale qui indique la nécessité de trouver une solution “seconde” (en anglais on l’appellerait second best), à laquelle on est obligés de se conformer lorsque le premier choix n’est pas disponible. À travers une confrontation avec un autre passage du Phédon (85c-d), cette intervention entend montrer que la métaphore de la seconde navigation signale une asymétrie, entre connaissance sensible et connaissance intellectuelle, par rapport (respectivement) à la méthode et à la matière de la connaissance: la connaissance directe de son propre objet (première navigation) n’est accordé qu’à la connaissance sensible, tandis que la connaissance qui vise la réalité purement intelligible est obligée de se servir d’une méthode indirecte (deuxième navigation), qui passe à travers l’usage de logos. Ce qui ne signifie pas, d’ailleurs, que la connaissance sensible soit en général meilleure que la connaissance intellectuelle, du moment que seulement la deuxième à pour cible la réalité dans le sens véritable du terme (c’est à dire la réalité éternelle et non sensible des idées).

Bibliografía

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Introduction

The paper investigates two respects in which comparison of the new, post-Strasburg papyrus Empedocles with parts of the *Phaedo* with can illuminate the philosophical, historical and literary background of that dialogue.  Two points of interest that I will concentrate on are:

1) The theory of reincarnated but non-immortal soul advanced by Simmias and Cebes at 85ff;

2) The concluding cosmological myth (107c-115a8), especially the notion of different cosmic levels for souls.

The order of exposition is as follows. I will begin by introducing the new Empedocles revealed to us by the Strasburg papyrus in Section I. In section II, the main bulk of the paper, I will compare Empedocles’ account of soul to the alternative theory or theories of soul advanced by Simmias and Cebes. In section III, I will compare the final myth with what now looks like a very similar scheme in Empedocles. Because of time constraints, however, Section III is limited to an outline. In the conclusion I will try to consider —very briefly— what light this may shed on Plato’s literary goals for the dialogue as a whole.

To start, however, it may be appropriate to say a few words to justify my choice of Presocratic.

Why Empedocles?

It us uncontroversial that the *Phaedo* has a general Pythagorean flavour. The dialogue frame (Phaedo as narrator/focalizer to Echecrates), the setting in Phlius and early mention of Philolaus at 61d all create an expectation that Pythagorean doctrines will be examined. But the dialogue does not thereafter engage with Philolaus, at least openly, while our knowledge of Philolaus on soul is very limited. By contrast, we do have a relative abundance of evidence for ‘Pythagorean’...
Empedocles on soul, reincarnation and transmigration. Whether Empedocles actually was a Pythagorean or merely styled himself one does not matter for my purposes. Much more significant is that Empedocles and Parmenides (of the doxa) are both ‘Pythagorean’ predecessors of Plato who produced works of literature. Most important of all, the new Empedocles revealed to us by the Strasburg papyrus (1999), and in particular its demonstration of the unity of his thought, has refined our understanding of his views on soul and transmigration and its relation to the cosmos. A reassessment therefore is timely.

I. The new Empedocles and the unity of his thought

The standard reconstruction of the Empedoclean corpus as found in Diels-Kranz and going back into the 19th century is based on the evidence for two titles in Diogenes Laertius (8.77). This standard reconstruction attributes to one work, the On Nature, all the ‘scientific’ fragments, those dealing with the cosmic cycle, four-element lore and biology, while a second work, the Purifications features the tale of Empedocles’ exile from the gods and his struggles to return to their blessed company over several reincarnations. How these two stories do or do not match up is a great, longstanding problem, the classic formulation of which was given in E. Zeller’s critique of reincarnation versus physics in the mid 19th century. Let me quote him. After giving Empedocles some credit for successfully reducing all else to combinations of the four elements under the opposite powers of Love and Strife, he then targets this difficulty this creates for transmigration and reincarnation:

‘For if the life of the mind is but a consequence of the composition of bodily material, so that it is determined as something particular in terms of this precise composition, the soul can neither have come into existence before the construction of its body, nor can it outlast its body...’


Since 1999, however, the Strasburg papyrus of Empedocles has conclusively demonstrated the unity of Empedocles’ thought. Here is the new evidence.

Strasburg Papyrus, section d ed. Trépanier, forthcoming. From column 12 of the original roll? At any rate, from the On Nature.

| d 5/ I.335 | Ἄθυμ[οι] ὅτ(ι) οὐ πρόθεν με διὰκόλουθ[ε]ν νη̚δε[ὲς ἡμαρ,] |

4 Here is the key evidence: Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers 8.77. 'Τὰ μὲν οὖν Περὶ φύσεως αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ Καθαρμοὶ εἰς ἑπτά τείνουσι πεντακισχίλια. 'The material On nature and the Purifications extend to about five thousand hexameters.' Does this imply 1 or 2 original works? Are the italics above justified?
... to fall apart from one another and meet their fate
much against their will, following under harsh
necessity. But all those that already now have Love
Harpies, the lots of death, will not be upon them.

Woe that the pitiless day did not utterly destroy me sooner,
before I plotted horrible deeds with my claws for the sake of food!
But now in vain on account of that law have I drenched my cheeks,
For we have come to a very deep cave, I reckon,
and against our wishes torments will beset our hearts
while down here. But to these teachings we will ascend
another time. When, then, an inextinguishable flame happened
to have stood out from the earth, leading up a much suffering-mixture...

The key point is the reference to reincarnation, in lines 3 to 7, which requires
no supplements to confirm. Empedocles wishes that he had been ‘completely
destroyed’, but complains that he committed horrible acts ‘with claws.’ In other
words, Empedocles suggests that death is only a partial destruction, and that there is
continuity between himself and some past incarnated self, one at the time equipped
with claws. It is undeniable therefore that a transmigrating soul was part of the
system. Beyond that, the text given above contains some suggestions of my own
that I cannot argue here, but I merely point out that if I am right, then line d 7 is a
reference to fragment B 115 on the exile of the daimones and d 8 refers to our place
of exile as a cave. I will return to the last point in section III.

For now, however, two remaining unresolved or open questions are
1. The debate on the number of works On Nature versus Purifications. As
it happens, I devoted a whole book (2004) to the single work approach, but most
editors still posit two works. I think that is wrong but will leave that aside here.

2. The details of that unity. That is, how it all actually fits together. I will give
my answer to that in section two.

To recap, then, the one certainty to emerge form this new material is that
Empedocles’ account of transmigration must be accommodated within his physics
and cosmology. In point of fact, the doxography has always (correctly) ignored
the modern division of Empedocles’ though and offers a number of descriptions
of Empedoclean soul. The most important of these is a doxographic testimony on
soul from Theodoret, Graecorum affectionum curatio V.16.10-19.1: Empedocles says
it is a mixture of a certain aither-like and air-like nature (ὁ δὲ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς μῖγμα
ἐξ αἰθερώδους καὶ ἀερώδους οὐσίας). Although Diels rejected this testimony, his
grounds for doing so were very doubtful. I think the testimony is accurate and I will
also return to it below.

Let us now move to the Phaedo.

II. Empedocles on soul, compared with Simmias and Cebes’ Objections
(85a3-88b8)
First, let us situate the context of Simmias and Cebes' objections. The earlier conversation about suicide and then the arguments on soul (cyclical, recollection, affinity) all establish certain properties for soul that are agreed upon before adding further properties to the definition of soul.

a) Common ground: Separation of soul and body as a purification.

We can start with the (Pythagorean?) definition of death as the separation of the soul from the body, not the simultaneous destruction of both (Gorgias 524b, Phaedo 64c and 70a). This is something shared with Empedocles. Death at Empedocles B 15.4 is a not described as a destruction, but a 'release': <ἐπεὶ> λύθεν. B 2 also assumes that souls leave the body (like smoke?). That this separation is a purification (sc. of the soul) from the body is also evocative of the Purifications, the alternative title of Empedocles' poem.

b) The affinity argument: unchanging and invisible, but incomposite?

Socrates next argues that the soul is immortal by its affinity to the unchanging and incomposite Forms. Obviously, this is not something Empedocles can have done: Empedocles was not a Platonist! The argument claims that like Forms, the soul does not belong to the class of the changing, nor to that of the visible. But it is less clear if ‘incomposites’ is also part of the attributes of soul derived from the comparison with Forms. We recall of course the tripartition of soul in the Republic, while in the Timaeus even the immortal soul has parts, assembled by the demiurge (41d-42d). Here, only invisible and unchanging are argued (79a14; 79e5). The conclusion/recapitulation adds (or sneaks in) some other, un-argued claims: ‘soul is most similar to what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, unvarying and constant in relation to itself.’ (80b; transl. Gallop). But once more it is unclear just how many of those attributes of Forms can be transferred to souls. What is clear, however, is that the soul can be corrupted by the body. We now get to the objections of Simmias and Cebes.

c) Simmias' 'harmony' theory of soul (85e-86d)

Simmias objects that Socrates’ description of the soul as invisible, incorporeal and divine could equally well describe the state of attunement or being in tune (ἁρμονία) of a lyre and its strings. In that example, however, the harmony or attunement clearly cannot outlast the lyre itself. Simmias and others are inclined to believe that the soul is a kind of attunement of the body's constituents. The soul is not something added to the body, but a description of the state of tension (between opposites?) within the body. And as such it is more fragile than the body, and cannot outlast the body's destruction.

In Empedocles, there is evidence for the harmony theory. But there it applies to all body parts, rather than to the body as a whole or to the soul alone. For Empedocles, all body parts are harmonies of the elements:

Aristotle, De anima 408a10-24... ‘that the soul is a harmony in the sense] of a composition of the parts of the body is easily refutable. For the compounding of the parts are many and various... But one might also put this question to Empedocles: for he says the each of the parts [of the body] is so by means a certain ratio...’]

More broadly, the Empedoclean structure of living beings is as follows:

Whole organisms, a combination of several body-parts
Individual body-parts with specific elemental harmonias or ratios

The four elements

In Empedocles’ zoogony, the parts come before the whole and were assembled by chance. In the fantastic zoogonic imagery of (B 59-62) Empedocles imagines separate limbs assembling by chance and creating mostly monsters. In the present age, during sexual reproduction the parents’ body-parts are recombined to form new organisms (B 63 with Aristotle’s comments), so that Empedocles can speak of ‘wandering limbs’. The idea is that the limbs are substantial beings who, through reproduction, outlive the bodies they currently compose. On example: Juan Carlos of Spain’s Bourbon nose. Is it the same nose, merely reincarnated from generation to the next?

Some questions to consider:
- Is the soul a body part? I have argued elsewhere that yes, it is, but only one body part among others. Note that the testimony above says it is a mixture or compound: μίγμα ἐξ αἰθερώδους καὶ ἀερώδους οὐσίας. I think the best comparison is to say that it is a type of pneuma theory, before the letter. As for later pneuma, in life, it resides in the blood. Is this anachronistic? No: compare Diogenes of Apollonia and see B 134 quoted below. Is it invisible? Maybe: B 133 denies that ‘the divine’ can be grasped by the senses.
- The scope of Simmias’ position: does the harmony theory apply to the body as a whole or only to its parts? Or to the harmony of its harmonised parts? Not defined in the passage at all.
- Emergence/supervenience issues cannot be considered here in detail. Among many problems for Empedocles is that he seems to assume hylozoism (see B 109 with Aristotle’s critique), that is, for him the elements are already alive and sentient. Nevertheless:
  - Duration: as an emergent property of the compound, soul would be fragile and dependent on the state of the body. And so:
  - Active and passive: the lyre image implies that the soul as harmony is a passive property, not an active one. Lyres do not play themselves...

d) Cebes’ Weaver analogy, (87a-e) and his correction of Simmias’ image
Cebes’ accepts reincarnation based on the cyclical and recollection arguments. But he rejects (without argument) the active and passive scheme of Simmias’ image and the implication that soul and mind is dependent on (and does not govern) the body. This sounds like Plato (cf. the Protagoras 352bc on the power of knowledge to rule the body). Cebes insists that the soul must be stronger than the body and compares the soul to a weaver who, although more long-lived than any one cloak, must nevertheless perish before the last one he weaves is worn out. Just so the soul might outline many bodies, and be no more immortal for all that.

Some questions to consider:
- Do we drop harmony in the second image? Apparently not: Both the cloak and the tailor are composites and destructible.
- Does the soul ‘weave’ the body? This is closer to embryological theories found

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in medicine and Aristotle, but NOT as in Plato and Empedocles. In the *Timaeus*, the immortal, reincarnated soul is made by the demiurge and is placed in the body. There is little discussion of embryology in the *Timaeus* (91bd), but in Empedocles the soul appears to be ‘placed’ in the body, which is already made. In reincarnation, the general picture is of the soul being placed into different species according to merit, not being told to ‘make’ e.g. a man or lion.

- Most importantly, why the stress on long life? Here is where the connection to Empedocles seems clearest.

Empedoclean long-lived gods and souls. Empedoclean long-lived (compound) gods are generated from the elements, confined to the world and (only) ‘long lived’, *On Nature* I.272:

and even gods of long life, mightiest in their privileges.
(καὶ τε θεοὶ δολιαίωνες τιμῆις φέριστοι.)

Why? If there is a cosmic cycle, then even the gods can at most only be long-lived. At fragment B 115.5 the *daimones* who transmigrate are described as ‘those that have received long life’, δαίμονες οἵτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο. In B 59, daimones are described as body parts. Thus, B 115 can be understood to offer a definition of soul as ‘long-lived body part.’ In practice this means that the limbs are reproduced from generation to generation, but souls are merely relocated from body to body (there is no time to go into details but see below). In other words, neither are they immortal. Transmigration and reincarnation do not equate with immortality.

Let us go back to reincarnation and embodiment. The definition of soul: ‘Empedocles declares the soul to be a mixture of aetherial (= fire?) and airy substance.’ Cf. the new edition of B 9 in Primavesi (2011):

οἱ δ’ ὅτε μὲν κατὰ φῶτα μιγὲν φῶς αἰθέρι
<ον βῆι>
ή κατὰ θηρῶν ἀγροτέρων γένος ἢ κατὰ θάμνων
ή κατ’ οἰωνῶν, τὸ γε μὲν <καλέουσι> γενέσθαι,
εὕτε δ’ ἀποκρινθῶσι, τὸ δ’ αὖ δισδαίμονα πότμον·
ή θέμις <οὐ> καλέουσι, νόμιοι δ’ ἐπίφημι καὶ αὐτός.

But they, when mixed aitherial fire descends into a man, or into the race of wild beasts or of bushes or that of birds, that they call ‘coming into being’; and when it is separated out, they say it is ‘an accursed fate’; which it is not right for them to say, but I too will assent to the custom
B 9 confirms the validity of the doxographic testimony. How do Empedoclean souls and other body parts relate? Both compounds, so both destructible. Yet, it is equally obvious that soul must also differ, somehow, from the other body parts. For one thing, a transmigrating soul must also have the capacity to survive outside a body, at least for a time, whereas a body part cannot now survive outside the body.\(^6\) In support of this notion, one strong piece of evidence is fragment B 134, our sole positive description of an Empedoclean god. Empedocles starts by insisting that the god has no head, nor arms, feet, swift knees or privates or other body parts, then at lines 4-5 he tells us:

\[
\text{ἀλλὰ φρὴν ἱερὴ καὶ ἄθέσφατος ἔπλετο μοῦνον}
\text{φροντίς κόσμον ἅπαντα κατασσουσα θοῆισιν}
\]

*It is nothing but a holy and ineffable organ of thought, Soaring through the whole cosmos on swift thoughts.*

By calling it ‘a holy organ of thought’, φρὴν ἱερὴ instead of a ψυχή, a term that Empedocles appears to have avoided, his intent is surely to recall or hint at its former connection to embodied life, as one body part among others.

e) Socrates’ reply (91c6-95a3)

Socrates recapitulates both arguments, and takes up Simmias’ objections first.

1) The harmony theory is incompatible with recollection, which Simmias simply accepts.

2) Souls differ from one another, but there can be only one harmony. Soul cannot partake of harmony in varying degrees.

3) The soul controls the body and not vice-versa. For example, the soul can oppose the desires of the body, which it could not as the passive result of the body’s constitution.

All of Plato’s moves here I find highly questionable. The alternative theories are rejected in the first instance because of their incompatibility with recollection. For one possible response, see below.

Conclusion to part II:

Let us try to sum up and draw some conclusions to part II.

The common elements: soul is long-lived, not eternal; a harmony of elemental parts, cf. Aristotle above. Body is the ‘cloak’ of the soul: Empedocles B 126 σαρκῶν ἀλλογνῶτι περιστέλλουσα χιτῶνι, wrapping it in a tunic of foreign/other-knowing fleshes. Cebes says it a himation not a chiton. (the himation is an outer garment, the chiton the under garment) Perhaps the soul is in the blood, so inner garment?

Differences: there is no evidence that Empedoclean soul, as opposed to Love, weaves or itself creates its own body. Cf. *Timaeus* and contrast Aristotle *De gen. animalium* (but not *De anima*)

Simmias/Plato also distinguishes more clearly between the activity/energeia of the lyre and its components. Is this a refinement from later Pythagoreanism, from Philolaus? One possible pay-off: could reincarnation, and not immortality per se,  

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\(^6\) According to Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 722b7-17, the primeval limbs were much larger than current ones, and Empedocles apparently invoked this to account for their ability to survive prior to inclusion in a body, during the original stages of Love’s zoogony.
have been the central claim of earlier Pythagoreanism? Plato’s decisive contribution was immortality, helped along by his new metaphysics.

Substantial souls and a possible Empedoclean reply?

In the *Phaedo* the two images Plato uses are at odds, as he has Kebes point out at 87a. In the first, 85e-86d the lyre is compared to a *krasis* of the elements of the body as a whole, the main idea being that the harmony is dependent on the body (as a whole?) and thus more fragile or passive than it. By contrast, the weaver simile used by Cebes, 87a-88b is meant to illustrate the point that even if the soul is longer lasting than the body, it is not immortal for all that. It is thus tempting to fold the first picture into the second: if the soul itself, as a separate or separable body part, like the holy *phren* of B 134, has its own distinct *harmonia*, then the first objection has no purchase. *Mutatis mutandis* this would also answer the objection from recollection. Relatedly, the Empedoclean account of soul as substance, despite its bizarre ness in other respects, does help show that this reading can figure on the conceptual horizon of Plato and should be taken into account in discussion the final argument. Indeed, the worry that the soul was a compound and thus dissolvable/not immortal never really left Plato. The whole final proof is aimed at it. Does it succeed? It is certainly up for debate. Against it, in the *Timaeus* 41b the immortal gods/perfect souls are in fact dissolvable, but only the goodness of the demiurge prevents them from ever being undone.

Part III. The *Phaedo* myth and the Empedoclean cosmic Habitats of soul

This section is in fact a whole separate paper. But because of its importance I will give an largely unargued outline, and can take up any further issues during questions.

**a) life in Hades and escape to higher levels**

Empedocles frequently suggests that our life is in fact situated in Hades, or that life is a *katabasis*, cf. B 9, where the mixture of fire and air descends κατὰ...βῆι. Thus each life in B 9 is framed as a ‘death’, a *katabasis*. Most of his pessimistic statements tend to hint at life as accursed because located in sorrowful Hades. Obviously, if we are in Hades, then there must be a life to be led above us. So for Empedocles there must be at least two cosmic levels of life. In fact the evidence suggests 3: life in Hades; life above us; escape as a (star) god?

Let us first consider some testimonies. I won’t read all of them:

Plutarch at *De Iside et Osiride* 361c: ‘Empedocles says that the daimones pay the penalty for their sins and their faults ... until, thus chastened and purified, they regain their natural place and station’ (κολασθέντες οὕτω καὶ καθαρθέντες αὖθις τὴν κατὰ φύσιν χώραν καὶ τάξιν ἀπολάβωσι).

Plutarch, *De exilio* 607cd: ‘because [the soul] does not recall or remember ‘from what honour and magnitude of blessedness’ (Empedocles B 119, 1) it has departed, not exchanging Athens for Sardis, nor Lemnos for Corinth, but life on earth for heaven and the moon... ’ἐξ οἵης τιμῆς τε καὶ ὅσσου μήκεος ὄλβου’ μεθέστηκεν, οὐ Σάρδεων Ἀθήνας οὐδὲ Κορίνθου Λήμνον ἢ Σκύρουν ἀλλ’ οὐρανοῦ καὶ σελήνης γῆν ἀμειψαμένη καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ γῆς βιον...

Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 1.3 Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ μετὰ τούτους (Pythagoreans) γενόμενος καὶ <αὐτός> περὶ δαιμόνων φύσεως εἶπε πολλά, <καὶ> ώς ἀναστρέφονται
Refutatio omnium haeresium 1.4.3. ed. Marcovich (= DK A62): καὶ ὥσπερ ὁ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς πάντα τὸν καθ’ ἡμᾶς τόπον ἔφη κακῶς μεστὸν εἶναι καὶ μέχρι μὲν σελήνης τὰ κακὰ φθάνειν ἐκ τοῦ περὶ γῆν τόπου ταθέντα, περαιτέρω δὲ μὴ χωρεῖν, ἅτε καθαρωτέρου τοῦ ὑπὲρ τὴν σελήνην παντὸς ὄντος τόπου… Similarly Empedocles says that our whole level if full of evils, and that the evils reach up to the moon from the space around the earth, but go no further, in that the whole place above the moon is more pure.

The question is how far we should accept the validity of these testimonies. They speak consistently of two levels, one below the moon, one above it. These division of course reflect post-Aristotelian cosmology and there is undeniably some anachronistic contamination via Platonist and middle Stoic influence. In the past, the tendency has been to ignore them, or at least downplay them as part of the Platonist and the Neoplatonic reception of Empedocles, especially in Hippolytus. But if we are to take seriously the idea of a substantial soul made of fire and air, then it is not so easy to dismiss these testimonies as entirely made up. Why should we consider them wholesale fictions? They seem too precise for that. So the question becomes, can we find confirmation of these claims in the fragments?

A cosmic destiny for the soul is clearly implied in the setting of B115. I quote 5 to 14

daiμονες οἶτε μακραίωνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
τρίς μιν μύριας ἀρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
φυομένους παντοία διὰ χρόνου εἴδεα θνητῶν
ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
pόντος δ’ ἐς χθονὸς οὖδας ἀπέπτυσε, γαῖα δ’ ἐς αὐγάς
ἠελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ’ αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις
ἄλλος δ’ ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
tῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
νείκει μαινομένωι πίσυνος.

the daimones who have obtained a life of long span,
he wanders away from the blessed for thrice ten thousand seasons
growing over time into all kinds of mortal forms.
For the might of the aither pursues him to the sea,
sea spits him onto the threshold of earth, and earth into the gleams
of flashing sun, who throws him into the whorels of aither.
Each one in turn hosts him, but they all hate him.
And I too am one of them, a fugitive from the divine and a vagrant
having put my trust in raving Strife
Other passages imply some sort of recollection of higher levels, B 118: ‘I wept and I wailed when I saw the unaccustomed place’; B 120 ‘we have come to this roofed cave’. In B 121 he describes ‘a joyless place’ (ἀτερπέα χῶρον B 121.1) where disease and death run rampant along the ‘plain of Ἀτη’ (‘Ἄτης ἀν λειμῶνα). B 135 in turn is from Aristotle in the Rhetoric and is used to illustrate the notion of a universal law (here: to not kill ‘ensouled’ animals) but specifies that the range of the law is the full cosmos, including its upper reaches:

ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πάντων νόμιμον διά τ’ εὐρυμέδοντος
αιθέρος ἤνεκέως τέταται διά τ’ ἀπλέτου αὐγῆς.

Lastly there are some mysterious comments in B146/7, which most editors now print together.

B 146, Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis. IV.23.150: φησὶ δὲ καὶ Ο Ἑ τῶν σοφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεοὺς γίνεσθαι ὡδὲ πως γράφων· ‘Empedocles says that the souls of the wise become gods, writing thus:

eἰς δὲ τέλος μάντεις τε καὶ θυμοπόλοι καὶ ιητροὶ
καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποις ἐπιχθονίοις πέλονται,
ἐνθὲν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆισι φέριστοι.

And in the end they become seers and poets and healers
And leaders among earth-bound men
Whence they sprout into gods, mightiest in honours.

B 147 (Stromateis V.14.122) ἢν δὲ ὅσιος καὶ δικαίως διαβιώσωμεν, μακάριοι
μὲν ἐνταῦθα, μακαριώτεροι δὲ μετὰ τὴν ἐνθένδε ἀπαλλαγήν, οὐ χρόνωι τινὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἔχοντες, ἀλλ’ ἐν αἰῶνι ἀναπαύσεις δυνάμενοι ἀθανάτοι ... ἀτειρεῖς. ἡ φιλόσοφος Ἐμπεδοκλέους λέγει ποιητικῶς. If we live holy and just lives, we are then blessed thereafter, and more blessed still after the exchange from down here, obtaining happiness for no given time, but able to rest for all time ‘sharing …’ says the philosophical poetry of Empedocles:

ἀθανάτοις ἄλλοισι ὁμέστιοι, αὐτοτράπεξοι
ἀνδρείων ἄχεων ἀπόκληροι ἐόντες, ἀτειρεῖς.

sharing hearth and table with other immortals,
without any allotment of human griefs, unwearied
Clement’s paraphrase suggest 3 levels. Time prevents a survey of Empedocles’ cosmology, but here as well we can find many suggestions that reinforce the picture of cosmic habitats for souls.

**b) In the Phaedo myth, how many ‘cosmic habitats’ are there for souls?**

‘But lastly there are those that are deemed to have made notable progress on the road to righteous living; and these are they that are freed and delivered from the prison-houses of this interior of the earth, and come to make their habitation in the pure region above ground. And those of their number who have attained full purity through philosophy live for evermore without any bodies at all, and attain to habitations even fairer than those others; but the nature of these it would not be easy to reveal, even were time enough left me.’ 114 bc; transl. after Hackforth (1952)

So, 3 layers at least: our earth (in bodies), upper aither-dwellers, and then ‘even fairer habitations’ (Stars?). But Plato also has a more traditional Hades in the underground depths of the earth, so more likely 4, unless the bottom two (our Hades and underground Hades) are the same (?).

Conclusion to section III

What are we to make of these striking coincidences? It seems clear that Plato expects his audience to recognize the myth as his (teleological) reworking of the Pythagorean tradition.

Plato and his audience were aware of Empedocles and Parmenides (in the doxa) as predecessors. Not until the Strasburg papyrus, however, and the demonstration of the unity of Empedocles’ thought, had we realized how closely the Phaedo myth maps on to Empedocles’ account of the cosmic habitats of soul.

General Conclusion: Scare-quote or Literary Pythagoreanism?

In the Phaedo, in both the main argumentative section and the myth, Empedocles is a significant presence, even though he remains just under the surface. No knowledgeable contemporary reader of both can have failed to notice some striking similarities between parts of the dialogue and Empedocles. (Empedocles was widely known and read in the Classical period. He was not an obscure author, as sometimes now assumed: Aristotle quotes Empedocles more than nay other author except Plato). The key difference is that Plato openly calls it a myth and is wholly explicit about the soul’s post-mortem travels. Empedocles by contrast mostly hints at doctrines that his audience may already have known.

[IF time, or during questions:

What does Plato intend by this? Briefly, two further lines of possible investigation.

1. Such use of a predecessor has some relation to the opening sections of the dialogue and Socrates’ discussion of the poet as myth-maker, 61b. Looking ahead to Republic 2-3, it suggests a suitable topic for purified Platonic myths.

2. Ebert (2004) and Rashed (2009) have made strong recent cases for the
deliberate ‘Pythagoreanizing’ of Socrates in the Phaedo. Rashed adds the Aristophanic Clouds as a predecessor and suggest that Plato tries to answer criticism of Socrates found in Aristophanes by topping him and making him even more Pythagorean. My story does not seek to negate theirs but I think we can now see an even more direct engagement with Empedocles as a main, not obscure Presocratic predecessor to Plato, if not necessarily Socrates.

Résumé. Ce travail tente d’éclaircir l’arrière-plan historique, philosophique et littéraire du Phédon par le biais d’une comparaison avec le nouvel Empédocle mis à jour depuis la publication du papyrus de Strasbourg en 1999. La comparaison se concentrera sur deux aspects du dialogue: 1) la théorie de l’âme réincarnée mais mortelle avancée par les deux interlocuteurs Thébains, supposément pythagoriciens, Kébès et Simmias et 2) le mythe final, tout particulièrement la notion de différents niveaux cosmiques comme lieu de séjour des âmes désincarnées. La forte ressemblance entre Platon et Empédocle sur ces deux points permet de conclure que Platon reconnaît en Empédocle un prédécesseur important qu’il cherche à dépasser, mais aussi à intégrer dans sa propre synthèse. L’exposé commence par un examen rapide du texte de l’ensemble du papyrus afin de situer le bien-fondé de ce nouveau regard sur Empédocle et Platon.

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In the *Phaedo*, Socrates disparages the senses as a path to the truth, but does not give any definite explanation of why they are so unhelpful. He gives us plenty of metaphors: they are deceitful, neither clear nor precise; they confuse the soul; we risk blinding the soul by using them; but how we are to cash out these metaphors is unclear. My project here is to determine what the epistemological critique in the *Phaedo* actually amounts to, and what its philosophical justification is. As we shall see, despite the apparent blanket rejection of the senses early on, the dialogue actually allots some role to the senses in the acquisition of knowledge. What the dialogue is concerned to deny the senses is any role in the process of constructing theories of explanation. That is to say: the dialogue rules out allotting any explanatory role to what is perceived by the senses.

The dialogue implicitly offers two different (though related) grounds for the refusal to allow the senses any role in constructing explanatory theories. The first of these is what is sometimes called the “compresence of opposites”:\(^1\) what the senses offer as a possible explanatory entity for a phenomenon turns out to have an equally good claim to be responsible for the opposite phenomenon. While this well-studied Platonic critique of the senses does figure in this dialogue, I am here more interested in a second and (I think) more important one: the fact that the senses are unable to make sense of wholes. Through our senses we become aware of certain features present in the world, such as equality or beauty, but when we try to understand those features by means of the senses, we inevitably fasten on items as possible explanantia that are in some way merely constituents or parts of what we want to understand. The problem with what the senses suggest as explanantia is not just that the same things also offer themselves as explanations of contrary phenomena. Rather, the problem is that the phenomena we want to explain are either themselves wholes, or are essentially features of wholes, and the unity that characterizes these wholes cannot be accounted for in terms of what perception makes available to us. The only way to explain them is by positing non-sensory principles of unity. Thus I suggest that one source of Socrates’ objection to sense perception in the *Phaedo* is his rejection of reductionist explanations.

The so-called “Defense” of the philosophical life in the beginning of the *Phaedo* contains some of the harshest criticisms of the epistemic value of the senses to be found in the dialogue. Socrates endorses the claims of the poets that the senses are unclear and deceptive, and that when the philosopher uses them in his effort to understand the forms, they “confuse” (ταράττοντος, 66a) the soul. How they work this deception and confusion, however, Socrates does not spell out. While the recollection and affinity arguments give a little more substance to the critique of the senses, I will pass over these here and proceed to the reflections on philosophical method and the role of the senses in it that we find in Socrates’ philosophical autobiography and his discussion of Anaxagoras. Socrates describes his early enthusiasm for and initial forays into natural science as follows:

And I was always shifting up and down (ἄνω κάτω), examining, for a start, questions like these: is it, as some said, whenever the hot and the cold give rise to

\(^1\) Fine calls it “narrow compresence of opposites,” to distinguish it from *broad* compresence of opposites, where *different* features of a thing are responsible for its being qualified by opposites in different contexts/circumstances.
putrefaction, that living creatures develop? And is it blood we think with, or air, or fire? Or is it none of these, but the brain that provides the senses of hearing and seeing and smelling, from which memory and judgment come to be; and is it from memory and judgment, when they've acquired stability, that knowledge comes to be…? (96b).

Socrates goes on immediately to say that from his investigation into these questions he ended up “blinded” (96c5), to such an extent that he unlearned things he (thought he) knew before.

In this initial description of his infatuation with physical science, Socrates does not explicitly remark that he had relied on the senses in any methodologically vicious way. He does not specifically link the “blinding” of his soul here with reliance on the senses. At the end of his autobiography, though, he finally does connect his unsatisfactory early attempts at inquiry into nature with the criticisms he earlier made of using the senses in inquiry. Returning to the metaphor of blinding, Socrates now compares the epistemic result of his earlier inquiries to the literal blinding suffered by those who try to study the eclipsed sun by looking at it directly with their eyes. His own “blinding,” he now says, resulted from “looking at objects (τὰ πράγματα) with my eyes and trying to lay hold of them with each of my senses” (99e). In future he will be more careful: just as careful investigators of solar eclipses examine the sun through its images in media such as water, so Socrates will inquire into the truth of beings “in theories” (ἐν λόγοις, 99e). In explicitly describing his new method as one by which he hopes to avoid the soul’s being disturbed by the senses, Socrates gives us a clue as to how to understand the denigration of the senses that is so prominent earlier in the dialogue. That he is in effect giving us the origin story for his current epistemological views is further supported by the fact that his first step in his new method is to posit Forms – which, in the defense, figured precisely as the objects of the philosopher’s inquiry which the senses cannot help him grasp.

After explaining the scientific questions he had investigated and asserting that the investigation had “blinded” him, Socrates goes on to tell us some of the things that he said that this blinding caused him to “unlearn.” These should provide some clue as to what this blinding – which we later learn to be due to reliance on the senses – amounts to. The things Socrates says he unlearned, and which he formerly thought “obvious” and “clear,” are the following:

It was because of eating and drinking that a human being grows: from food, flesh accrues to flesh, bone to bone, etc.
One man (horse) is taller than another by a head.
Ten is greater than eight because of the accruing of two to the latter.
A two-cubit length is larger than a one-cubit length because it exceeded by half of itself.

Stephen Menn² has pointed out that three of these examples are versions of examples present in a fragment of the comic poet Epicharmus that presented one of the earliest versions of what became known in later Greek philosophy as “the growing argument.” The Epicharmus fragment’s examples are as follows:

Adding a pebble to a number of pebbles makes the number a different number.
Adding or subtracting a length from something one-cubit long makes it no longer one-cubit long.
Adding food to a person so that he grows, or generally exchanging the material parts in a person, makes him a different person. (DK B2; Kassel-Austin fr. 276)

It will be seen that these are all problems of identity-through-change.

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Epicharmus starts with the clearest cases, which are mathematical: a number of objects does not remain that very number when a pebble is added or subtracted; something one-foot long does not remain one-foot long when some length is added to it or cut off of it. So too, Epicharmus argues (or rather, the character in Epicharmus argues), a person who grows after eating is no longer the same person she was before she grew. As Epicharmus develops this last example, it becomes clear that the actual change in size is incidental to the philosophical heart of the matter. If indeed the various processes of absorption and expulsion of material parts in a person result in a change in the material parts that constitute the person, then, the character in Epicharmus’ play insists, we have to say that we have to do with a different person; indeed, one who should not be held responsible for the debts contracted by a differently-constituted person yesterday.

I think that the correspondences between the Epicharmus passage and the passage in our dialogue where Socrates recounts what his foray into physical science caused him to “unlearn” are striking and significant. They show, I think, that in the *Phaedo* Plato is concerned with philosophical problems at least closely related to those that inform the paradoxes in Epicharmus. Menn has suggested that the question of identity-through-change is of special importance to the circumstances of the dialogue and its concern with the immortality of the soul: will the soul that survives Socrates’ death be identical to Socrates or not? While this may be so, but I also think that the Epicharmus passage, and in particular the way Plato’s text varies from it in its presentation of similar material, are particularly relevant to the question which I am concerned with in this paper: the dangers that are supposed to lurk in the use of sense perception in inquiring into the nature of reality.

One of the differences between the Epicharmus passage and Socrates’ similar-sounding puzzles is that while all of Epicharmus’ examples are framed in terms of change, all but the first of Socrates’ examples are formulated so as to apply to a non-changing state of affairs. So, whereas Epicharmus points out that when an additional unit is added to a certain number of units the number of units changes, Socrates wonders whether a pile with ten units in it is bigger than a pile with eight units in it in virtue of its having two additional units. And instead of wondering whether a one-cubit length remains the same length when part of it is cut off or more added, Socrates wonders whether a two-cubit length is longer than a one-cubit length in virtue of that half of itself to which the other has nothing corresponding. This difference between Epicharmus and Socrates’ versions parallels a change that takes place within the *Phaedo* itself: when beginning to respond to Cebes’ objection Socrates remarks that “it calls for a thorough inquiry into the whole question of the cause (αἰτίαν) of coming-to-be and perishing” (95e); then, when beginning his autobiography, he says that as younger man he was interested in “knowing the causes of each thing, on account of what each thing comes to be, and on account of what it perishes, and on account of what it is” (96a). That is, he adds to the questions concerning change, a question concerning what accounts for a thing’s simply being what it is. Indeed, the initial “safe” answer about causes concerns explanations for why things are a certain way; it is only when Socrates introduces his “more subtle” answers that he begins to explain why things come to be and perish. As we shall see, Socrates’ concern with explaining certain kinds of being that things have is something that a reliance on the senses obstructs, and is one of the reasons for his “flight to theories,” and his positing of Forms.

We may approach this issue by going back a little further in Socrates’ intellectual

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3 Socrates presents the cases in reverse order. When he begins his last (corresponding to Epicharmus’ first), he comments: “And still clearer (ἐναργέστερα) than these examples, …” (96e2).
autobiography, looking first not at what Socrates says he eventually came to unlearn, but rather at the three questions that were the initial focus of his enthusiasm for natural science:

Do living creatures develop whenever the hot and the cold give rise to putrefaction?

Are we conscious (φρονοῦμεν) by means of blood, or air, or fire?

Does the brain provide the senses of hearing and seeing and smelling, from which memory and judgment come, and from memory and judgment, when they acquire stability, knowledge comes to be?

All of these theses are well-attested inPresocratic speculation. The first and third of them concern types of coming-to-be, and in particular, coming to be of something that has a certain order from previously unorganized and un-unified constituents. The first concerns the coming to be of living things from quasi-elemental powers. As commentators point out, conspicuous by its absence here, at least viewed from the perspective of the Socrates narrating the story, is any reference to the soul, which has been treated in the dialogue as that whose presence to the body makes the body alive in the first place. Equally important, in the present context, is another aspect of the soul's function that is brought to bear here: namely, the unification of the various material components into a single unified living thing. Indeed, we might think of the conception of the soul that is at the center of Cebes' objection: for him, the soul is that which weaves the material parts of the body, provided in food, into the unified living body. In Socrates' physicalist phase, he did not see the need for any such unifying element.

So too in the third of Socrates' initial questions. The empiricist theory of knowledge he there entertains is strikingly at odds with the theory of recollection Socrates earlier expounded in the dialogue. That empiricist theory has memory and judgment arising from an accumulation of sense perceptions, and knowledge arising when these are further solidified over time. The theory lacks any account of how these disparate epistemic constituents are unified into higher-level states, and ultimately into knowledge. Socrates' current recollection-epistemology holds that an epistemic element of a different order is necessary to unify the lower-level deliverances of sense: namely, the cognition of a Form, which must be delivered by an epistemic route different from the senses.

The second of Socrates' initial questions constitutes a sort of bridge between the first and the third. Unlike them, it does not ask how an organized whole develops out of more primitive constituents. Rather, it asks a question about a thing's being: how our mental life is related to the physical elements that are part of our body's material make-up. Of the three answers Socrates considered, blood is clearly at a higher level of organization than air or fire. Nonetheless, following the pattern of the other questions, we can see that thinking is something over and above the physical components it may require. In the terms that Socrates uses in his discussion of Anaxagoras, blood may be that without which an animal cannot be conscious, but it is certainly not the cause of its consciousness.

I would like to suggest, then, that all three of Socrates' initial interests in natural science indicate a willingness to entertain reductionist explanations of these phenomena, explanations in terms of lower-level items that are also readily perceptible to the senses. This characterization of Socrates' first approach to scientific matters slightly different from that which holds that its fundamental feature was an interest in mechanistic causes, as opposed to teleological ones. Mechanistic causes are generally reductionist, and it is true that the theory that captures Socrates' enthusiasm as a possible way out of his impasse is one that he construes, at least, to be teleological. But to style his earlier approach “mechanistic” is to view it too
narrowly from the perspective of the Anaxagorean position Socrates ultimately abandons it for, and obscures the possibility of a non-reductive, non-teleological third position.

We have looked at the sorts of explanation Socrates was initially tempted by, and then at the Epicharmus-like puzzles that his researches eventually led him into confusion. Socrates finishes up his report of these puzzles with one last one: “Why, I can’t even persuade myself any longer that I know why it is that anything comes to be one.” I do not think that this is simply one more puzzle, but rather expresses the general difficulty of which the others are specific cases: the impossibility of adequately explaining a unified whole on the basis of the parts that went into it or that currently constitute it. After presenting the central core of all his difficulties in this way, Socrates goes on to say that, because he was dissatisfied with the method of the natural scientists he had been following so far, he “jumbled” together a method of his own (97b).

Socrates does not immediately proceed to outline this new method of his own; first, he launches into what looks like a digression in which he reports his initial excitement for, and ultimate disappointment with, the suggestion of Anaxagoras that Mind was “what ordered things (ὁ διακοσμῶν) and was responsible (αἴτιος) for all things” (97c). Here, if my anti-reductionist reading of Socrates’ puzzles is right, we should locate the appeal of Anaxagoras’ thought in his promise to make the ordering of the world an object of explanation. Anaxagoras adds Mind to the panoply of elements and elemental forces the other Presocratics (as reported by Socrates) used. Interestingly, Socrates reports it as his own deduction that any ordering that Mind may do must be oriented towards producing something good. It is perhaps then not a surprise that Socrates finds that Anaxagoras did not deliver the teleological account that, as Socrates figured, any invoking of intelligent ordering was committed to providing.

After the interlude of his discussion of Anaxagoras, Socrates seems to pick up where he left off. Indeed, as commentators have remarked, one could excise the entire Anaxagoras ‘digression’ without disturbing the flow of the argument or otherwise leaving a noticeable gap in the text. Socrates simply picks up again and begins to give an account of the new method that, as he told us before the digression, he ‘jumbled up’ in order to avoid the “blinding” produced by his earlier method of inquiry. That blinding, we here learn, was produced by the earlier method’s reliance on the senses. I think we can now cash out the metaphor of blinding: If the aim of inquiry is to understand the unified wholes we meet in experience, as well as the one overall whole that is our cosmos, attempting to do so by only in terms of those things readily perceptible by the senses inevitably fails. The restriction to sensible entities necessarily occludes the larger wholes that we want to understand; it blinds us to them.

Socrates new method, the famous “second sailing,” is designed to avoid such blindness. It is for this reason that I believe that it essentially involves positing Forms (or some other higher-level, non-sensible unifying entities), and that such positing is not just one of any number of hypotheses the method would allow. Be that as it may, it is certainly true that Socrates introduces this new method without any reference to Anaxagoras’ Mind, or to his own earlier hope to acquire teleological explanations. We may well wonder whether Socrates’ new method owes anything to Anaxagoras at all, and if not, why he felt the need to discuss Anaxagoras’ views at all. One way of answering this question is to suppose that Socrates holds that the method of hypothesizing forms eventually leads to teleological explanations – that the τι ἱκανόν (101e1) which Socrates seems to suggest is the ultimate goal of the method is in fact the good, or even the Form of the Good. Without taking
a position on that large question, I would like to suggest a more modest way in which the method of hypothesis can be seen to be a product of Socrates’ encounter with Anaxagoras. Socrates, I suggest, saw two attractions in what he thought was Anaxagoras’ method. First, that method invokes a non-sensible ordering principle, which might make it possible to explain wholes in a way that Socrates’ previous method, with its reliance on the senses and consequent confinement to the parts or features of things, could not. Second, the specific ordering principle Anaxagoras used, Mind, prompted Socrates to think of a different ordering principle that would be prior to Mind, namely the good. When Socrates’ search for a teleological ordering principle fails, he formulates a method of hypothesizing less ambitious ordering principles, ordering principles which are, however, still non-perceptible – as he learned, from Anaxagoras and his own prior empirical attempts, they had to be.

That in Anaxagoras’ theory it was particularly the good’s role as a unifying principle that appealed to Socrates emerges, I think, from the word-play Socrates engages in in the following passage:

Yet the power by which [things] are now situated in the best way that they could be placed, this they neither look for nor credit with any supernatural strength, but they think they’ll one day discover an Atlas stronger and more immortal than this, who does more to hold everything together (συνέχοντα). That in truth the good and binding (τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ δέον) is what binds together and holds together, this they believe not at all. (99c)

The good is what binds, that is, unifies, both at the cosmic level and at lower levels (see 98b). Socrates failure to find satisfactory teleological explanations led him to give up (perhaps temporarily) the search for that type of unifying explanation, but he kept his new commitment to explaining wholes, which his earlier reliance on the senses had made impossible. The positing of Forms is a way of invoking non-sensory explanantia that can explain the unities that our senses make us aware of but cannot explain.

Put more succinctly: Socrates was attracted by Anaxagoras’ anti-reductionism as well as by his teleology. The method of hypothesis gives up the teleology, but embodies the anti-reductionism. Only with a method of this sort, which posits non-perceptible explanatory principles, does Socrates think he can avoid the blindness to which his earlier empiricism had led.

Résumé: Dans le Phédon, Socrate déprécie la valeur épistémologique des sens, mais la plupart du temps il se contente de métaphores négatives sans les justifier: les sens sont trompeurs, ni clairs ni exacts; ils confondent l’âme, et risquent de l’aveugler si nous les utilisons dans nos recherches scientifiques. Mon projet est d’exposer la critique philosophique des sens qui inspire ces métaphores. Malgré l’apparence d’un rejet total des sens dès le début du dialogue, en effet le dialogue attribue un rôle aux sens dans l’acquisition des connaissances. Ce que le dialogue tient à refuser aux sens, c’est aucun rôle dans la construction des théories explicatives. Il leur refuse ce rôle parce que les sens sont incapables de fournir un principe de totalité ou d’unité. J’étaye cette suggestion en examinant les difficultés auxquelles ont abouti les premières recherches en philosophie naturelle de Socrate. Ces difficultés sont proches de certains sophismes trouvés dans un fragment d’Epicharme, lequel nos aide à comprendre que pour Socrate, l’insuffisance épistémologique des sens réside dans le fait qu’ils ne peuvent nous livrer que des explications réductionnistes, et donc inadéquates. La téléologie supposée d’Anaxagore et la position des Formes sont deux manières d’éviter ce résultat.
If you want to refresh someone's memory — especially in the case of somebody who has been convicted to death penalty (unjustly!) by a tribunal — you may find it convenient to inform him about less known favourable circumstances of his case. A benevolent view, we may say, of the man, his life and the way he died. The new generations in Plato's Academy could be demanding something like that, and shortly a decade after it could be the occasion for a more creative report. It was time to do something κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον, 'a likely account', for a younger generation. Plato makes of Phaedo a reliable reporter (57a-b). He intends in this dialogue, as it seems, to defend his master's life, keeping the historical nucleus under a fresh design. For the convicted was a philosopher and a just man, the author ought consequently to inform (τι ἀγγεῖλαι) the public opinion about the particulars of his last words and of his death. What did he say and how did he die?

The scene is actually set out when Socrates is loosened from his chains on the day of his death. I guess there is here a prolepsis or anticipation of two main themes: the fact that the Phaedo is the second most comprehensive apology of Socrates written by Plato, and that the philosophical subject about the soul and his intelligible capacities are connected with the Republic's Cave. Besides its use in the Phaedrus (with a different meaning), ἀπολογία is used in Plato only twice: in the Apology of Socrates and the Phaedo. Besides, in Phaedo 60a1 Socrates was 'just now being freed from his ties' (ἄρτι λελυμένον) and starts to comment about the consequences on his leg 'due to the bond'. In the Republic this is the starting point of the prisoner's liberation, in the Phaedo it is the beginning of his death, namely, the freedom from his body. Men are 'from childhood in bonds', while the message of Socrates insists in a soul being released from his body 'as from fetters'.

Now, when Simmias asks Socrates to express and not to keep to himself 'that thought' since this will become a blessing for them and a 'defence' for himself (σοι η ἀπολογία ἐστίν, Phd. 63c-d), the dialogue seems to gain a new impulse. The entourage of friends become 'judges' and Socrates turns his words into an 'apology'. It seems reasonable to him that 'a man who has really spent his life in philosophy' may feel confident when he is about to die (63e9-10). In this phrase: ἀνὴρ τῷ ὄντι ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διατρίψας τὸν βίον (while starting his logos addressed to his new 'judges') the core of his defence is manifestly revealed. For those faithful friends, on the other hand, the way to participate of that life is being 'next to Socrates' (παρὰ τὸν Σωκράτη, Μετά τὸν Σωκράτη).
Actually the verbal form διατρίψας reveals that unique attitude of the philosopher Socrates, namely, his dialogic, personal and constant compromise with the entourage of friendly disciples. The Socrates portrayed here is more reminiscent of the ideal of an scholar of Plato's Academy. So the dialogue leads to an apologia pro uta sua, since Socrates has spent an entire life philosophsing and sharing his time ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ with those 'next to Socrates'. It is a defence of philosophical life in the way the Master used to practise it. In the Phaedo, philosophical life and Socrates are almost synonymous. So philosophy becomes practical wisdom (φρόνησις), that is to say prudence in government of the proper affairs throughout life.

Just like Death is deliverance, a sort of liberation (ἀπαλλαγὴν, 64c5), there is a πράγμα (61c8), an act that consists in committing oneself to philosophy. These are the two consequent aspects of a life in accordance with phronesis. The main concern now is about the liberation of the soul from the body, and in this way the philosophical character is revealed (δῆλος ἐστιν, 64e8). Thus, philosophy consists in this separation and ἀπολύων is 'to get <soul> free' in order to set forth the search for truth. This means that the activity of philosophy consists in 'turning towards the soul' (πρὸς ψυχὴν τέτραφθαι, 64e). This is a turning point in the path towards truth and wisdom. In fact, a shift towards the inner self, followed by a search for reality (ζητήσει, 65a7, cf. 65c9).

I dare to say that this was the way the Neoplatonic School used to understand some passages of Plato, and perhaps it is here in the Phaedo where the main source for this turning to intimacy lies. Indeed, if we compare this process of the Phaedo with the allegory of the Cave we will find useful clarifications, since those Forms at the exit of the Cavern are here intelligibly in the soul, something like νοητὸν δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίᾳ αἱρετόν (81b 7). On the other side, the prisoner of the Cave, when nearing reality, 'having turned towards more real things (πρὸς μᾶλλον ὄντα τετραμμένος, Rep. VII 515d3) would see more truly'.

He will approach those real objects of knowledge 'by thought', that is, τῇ διανοίᾳ χρώμενος (66a2). Now, in both cases there is an intentional gyre, but in the Phaedo is more clearly defined, as we may find, towards the inner self. This change of direction means here the process of an entire life, and those Forms of Republic lie 'intelligibly' in the soul, viz. 'in thought itself' (αὐτῇ τῇ διανοίᾳ, 65c8). In other words that means: 'by the agency of mind itself'.

For we cannot think (φρονῆσαι) because of the body, and to do so we ought to move away from it to be able to think. To think should mean here 'to have understanding, to be wise'. This way of engaging in philosophy is then revealed, that is to say, the object of a philosophical life is to grasp truth itself. Search for truth is achieved 'through our thinking' (τῇ διάνοιᾳ) by undertaking the 'hunting of beings' (66a3); and it is the body that prevents that hunting for reality (τὴν τοῦ ὄντος θήραν, 66c2). Through this detachment it is possible to achieve the objects of thought which make us wise. This means that 'body' indicates at this stage an epistemological rather than a moral category, because the fundamental issue here lies in a truth that makes the acquisition of wisdom (φρόνησις) possible. Nevertheless, especially when it is about the afterlife of unpurified souls, Socrates will insist in the 'bodily desires' as well. There is then a truly presence of desire by the subjection of the soul to the powers of body and the corporal.

12 Phd. 64c4-5: ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀπαλλαγὴν.
13 Cf. Phd. 65e9, 66a1-2.
14 Phd. 60a3: θηρεύειν τῶν ὄντων.
15 Phd. 82c: τῶν κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἐπιθυμιῶν πάντων. Cf. 66c7: 'the body and its desires'.
16 Cf. Phd. 81b4, e1.
For the soul to apprehend truth, then, a change of route is required, namely it is necessary to undertake a methodical path. I call this philosophical procedure the ‘inner cave’, which recalls the investigation (ζήτησιν) of the σμικρὰ γράμματα of Rep. II 368d. There the μείζω γράμματα replace the smaller ones in the process of searching for justice in the city. Here in the Phaedo, Socrates deals with the small ones, taking his search of truth into his own cave by isolating the soul. It is the inner turn, I would say, that the <neo>Platonic surely found here (but not only here), and established a method that sometimes seems to confuse our exegesis of Plato. We will see that it is a type of shortcut.17

Truth is still hard to acquire and we need more than this life to grasp/reach it. Here, this cave is the method of the inner search for being and truth. It is a path without dialectics (in the strict sense of the Republic) since this type of philosophical method is absent in our dialogue. I mean dialectics as he dialectikē methodos (Rep. VII 533c, cf. 534e), a kind of objective search for truth with the aid of paideia. But all the same in the Phaedo it is about the searching of truth; and truth consists here in those inner intelligible objects (αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα, 66e1) as beauty, good or just itself.18 In our dialogue truth is deployed within the self, and it begins with an act of liberation of ties.19 The fetters are symbolised here by the ‘body’.

They are chains of ignorance,20 and lack of virtue. In 65d the soul meets τὰ ὀντα, which probably reveals the property (quality) of everything seen in itself.21 The ‘right itself’ it is the kind of thing that can now be accessed τῇ διάνοιᾳ (perhaps better: ‘by the intellect’). It is clear that what is at stake is τὴν τῆς φρονήσεως κτήσιν (from 65a: ‘the acquisition of wisdom’), because it is those entities themselves that are the material that shapes φρόνησις in us. Those entities are the very object of thought. Thanks to dianoia they are known, while the access to the other things is through the ‘body’. What dianoia does is διανοηθῆναι (‘to think’, ‘to understand’), the means through which the soul ‘thinks’ the objects of thought proper. Now, the act of recollection of soul (its inner turn) is put into play by the act of deliverance by means of dianoia.22 This is an act of ‘recueillement’ of the mind. We may say, then, that philosophy in us consists in the ‘acquisition’ of phronesis.

This being so, there are three converging events:

(a) A methodical isolation, whereby the soul is prepared to ‘escape’. This means, ‘separation’: ἀπαλλαγῆ; in other words, deliverance of the soul (Phd. 64c). Man, ‘having been isolated from the body is αὐτὴν καθ᾽ αὑτὴν’.23 It is the inner track of soul toward truth.

(b) A state of ‘deliverance’, that is, of ‘isolation’ of the mind itself (αὐτή τῇ διάνοιᾳ, 65e), whereby man tracks down the realities that are pure and simple ‘by means of a pure and simple’ mind (Phd. 66a);24

(c) A state of ‘separation’ of the very entities which are the objects of the mind, namely ‘each pure being by itself’ (= αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ εἰλικρινὲς ἕκαστον (66a2-3). That explains why διάνοια, the mind as intellect in action, acts as the axis of all these three themselves and converge in a soul itself.

17 Here also the soul comes across the Ideas.
18 Phd. 75c-d.
19 This act of liberation concludes with death as λύσις καὶ χωρισμός ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος (Phd. 67d).
22 Phd. 65e-66a, 67c, see αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν regarding συναγείρεσθαι τε καὶ ἁθροίζεσθαι, Phd. 67c8, cf. 83a8.
23 Phd. 64c, cf. ἀπαλλαγῆ, ἀπαλλαγεῖσαν.
24 Phd. 66a2: αὐτὴν καθ’ αὐτὴν εἰλικρινὲς τῇ διάνοιᾳ χρώμενος.
This methodical withdrawal for the acquisition of truth is a type of rehearsal of death, the final deliverance. All three merge finally in the soul when the philosopher undertakes the hunting of beings. \(^{25}\) When this happens to be in a man’s life, we may say, we can recognize ‘those who have been true philosophers’, because when (a) and (b) are attained, the soul can understand the objects of mind itself. \(^{26}\) In other words, it is able to attain (c). So, (a) and (b) correspond to the activities of the true philosopher, and (c) to the object of thought itself. Thus, ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ comprises the three. That being so, namely, when ‘we will be nearest to see with the mind’ (Phd. 67a2: τοῦ εἰδέναι), \(^{27}\) we will live ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ (Phd. 63e10, 59a3, 68c11).

This method is called by Socrates ἀτραπός τις (66b4), a type of ‘shortcut’. This is because the methodical progress is here an inner experience, namely, a walk of life. \(^{28}\) It is not properly the same as in Republic, where Plato refers to the dialectical method as ‘a way of enquiry’ (μέθοδος ὁδῷ). \(^{29}\) Socrates is held in jail and imprisoned in his body, and he hopes death will free him from both. This method means here the acquisition of a systematic curse of action, the way of engaging in spending one’s own life philosophising. In Phaedo Socrates has spent his life ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ; therefore, he has been in a process of deliverance throughout his life by means of the liberation of body and his continuing chase of the true being. In this sense, ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ epitomizes the steady progress of soul in the acquisition of wisdom (φρόνησις).

These acts redeem soul from body’s ἀφροσύνη. \(^{30}\) For this to happen man must turn to his soul, \(^{31}\) and as in the Republic, the prisoner –closer to being (or to reality)– has ‘turned toward more real things’ (Rep. VII 515d: πρὸς μάλλον ὅντα τετραμμένον). The more real in the Republic is there, in leaving the Cave, as something to be seen; in the Phaedo is here, in the soul when turning inward. There is a similar intentional dynamics, which consists in a process of liberation by means of the objects of thought; and the final steps set as the chief objective the discovery and attainment of truth. In the Republic the process is more political, in the Phaedo it is more personal.

Living in philosophy is returning to an inner path to liberation and a persevering attitude of searching the real things. Socrates has given himself time to contemplate truth. \(^{32}\) Withdrawal into oneself is rather connected with κάθαρσις: ‘purification’ (69b-c), with χωρίζειν: ‘to separate’ (67c7), συναγείρεσθαι: ‘to collect oneself’ (67c8), and ἁθροίζεσθαι: ‘to concentrate’ (67c83,8a8). This is a methodological way of reaching truth by means of the activity of thought in the soul. The ‘body’s fetters’ (67d1) may be compared with Republic 515c5 and 532b6; like ἀφροσύνη (‘thoughtlessness’, 67a7) with Republic VII 515c5; φλυαρία Phaedo 66c3 with Republic VII 515d2; the bigger letters of justice in Republic II 368d might echo the small ones (I would say) of liberation in Phaedo (67d4, 9). So I want to call ‘οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες ὀρθῶς’ Phaedo’s inner path.

This path is the ‘shortcut’ (ἀτραπός τις), but it is also the ‘journey’ (πορεία)\(^{33}\).

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25 Phd. 66a3: ἐπιχειρεῖσθαι θηρεύειν τῶν ὄντων.
26 Phd. 69d2: οὕτωι δ’ εἰσίν κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ὄδηγον οὐκ ἄλλοι ἢ οἱ περιφλοσοφηκότες ὀρθῶς.
27 ἐγγιτάτω ἐσόμεθα τοῦ εἰδέναι.
28 Plt. 258c. Plato uses only twice the word ἀτραπός. In the Politicus it is about a ‘political path’.
30 Phd. 67a7, Rep. VII 515c5.
31 Cf. Phd. 82d6: τρέπονται, 
32 Cf. Phd. 66d: καθορισθὲν τάληθες, cf. 67c1
33 Phd. 107d5, e5, 115a2.
of the myth of the destiny of souls and of Socrates' final travel to the Hades. Those 'πορείαι' reappear in the Republic precisely to indicate the dialectic way (VII 532b4) or to point out the happy path of the journey wise man's soul to heaven or to this life. And indeed, it is worth mentioning 'that journey of a thousand years', at the end of the Republic. We should take into account the verbal expressions of πορένεσθαι in Phaedo's text. The inner sense of all this, I surmise, is to show the meaning of philosophical life as a continuous progress towards wisdom and virtue. To make this journey we ought to travel through a path, that is to say —philosophically speaking— by means of a methodological disposition.34 From this perspective Phaedo is a dialogue about philosophy: of how to live ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ.

Resumen

ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ: una propuesta sobre la disposición metodológica del Fedón.

Simias pide a Sócrates no guardar ‘ese pensamiento’, pues servirá de bien para ellos y de ‘defensa’ para él (Fd. 63c-d: σοι ἡ ἀπολογία ἐστίν). Los amigos se vuelven jueces, Sócrates convierte sus palabras en apología. Es razonable que ‘un hombre que realmente ha pasado su vida en filosofía (ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ) se sienta confiado al morir, esperanzado de bienes mayores cuando perezca’ (63e-64a). ‘ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διατρίψας τὸν βίον’ es el corazón de su defensa. Para el grupo de amigos participar en esa vida es estar ‘junto a Sócrates’ (παρὰ τὸν Σωκράτη, 59d2, 7, e6). El diálogo se vuelve apología, y Sócrates y la filosofía se confunden con un ‘pasar la vida’ en ella. Es defensa de la vida filosófica como la practicaba el maestro.

La muerte es liberación, separación (ἀπαλλαγήν, 64c); un πράγμα (61c), que es ocuparse de la filosofía, πραγματεία (64e). Se identifica el carácter filosófico. La filosofía consiste en el apartamiento del alma del cuerpo, y ese ἀπολύων es ‘liberarla’ para la búsqueda. Significa que el acto de la filosofía es ‘estar vuelto hacia el alma’ (πρὸς ψυχὴν τέτραφθαι, 64e). Este es el ‘girar’ decisivo del alma en su encaminamiento hacia la verdad. Un giro hacia el interior, proseguido por una ‘investigación’ (ζητήσει, 65a7, cf. 65c9); para ‘pensar’ (φρονῆσαι), debemos apartarnos. Se revela qué es hacer filosofía: asir la verdad. Porque esta búsqueda es mediante el pensamiento (τῇ διάνοιᾳ) que emprende ‘la caza de los seres’ (66a). El cuerpo impide ‘la caza del ser’ (τὸν ὄντος θήραν). Mediante ese apartamiento se alcanza el objeto del pensar. Significa que “cuerpo” señala más una categoría epistemológica que moral: lo fundamental está en una verdad para adquisición de sabiduría (φρόνησις).

El alma debe cambiar rumbo para aprehender la verdad: una vía metódica. Llamare a este método “caverna interior”, que rememora la investigación de las γράμματα σμικρὰ de R. II 368d, reemplazadas por γράμματα μείζω. Aquí Sócrates ensaya con las pequeñas, llevando su investigación dentro de su caverna mediante aislamiento del alma. Es el giro interior, que los <neo>platónicos encontraron seguramente también aquí. Llamo “caverna” al método interior de búsqueda. En el Fd. se despliega dentro, con un acto de liberación. Ellas son representadas por el “cuerpo”. Cadenas de ignorancia (82d6, cf. R. VII 518a7) y de falta de virtud. Algo ‘justo en sí’ es el tipo de cosa a lo que se puede acceder τῇ διάνοιᾳ. Lo que está en juego es τὴν τῆς φρονήσεως κτῆσιν (desde 65), porque esas entidades en sí son material que da forma a phrónesis. Gracias a διάνοιᾳ se conocen estas entidades, mientras se accede a las otras por el “cuerpo”. Así διάνοιᾳ: διανοηθῆναι, es el medio por el cual el alma ‘piensa’ los objetos del pensar, y el acto de recogimiento de alma (su gir o interior) es liberación por διάνοιᾳ (65e-66a).

34 Cf. Rep. VII 533b3: ἔλλη τις... μέθοδος ὀδὸς, (‘that there is another form of inquiry’, Shorey), καὶ τίνες αὐτῶν ὀδοῖ, 532e2 ss.
Hay tres actos convergentes:
1) el alma está en situación de “escape” (= separación: ἀπαλλαγὴν = aislamiento, Fd 64c). Un aislamiento metódico: es la vía interior hacia la verdad;
2) un estado de “liberación” del pensamiento, que está “solo” y αὐτῇ καθ᾽ αὑτήν (66a2);
3) estado de “separación” de las entidades = αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ εἰλικρινὲς ἕκαστον (66a2-3) del conocimiento. De ahí el papel fundamental de la diánoia, que hace de eje de estos en sí que convergen en un alma en sí.

Este método es un ἀτραπός τις, un ‘atajo’. En R. la dialéctica es como un camino (μέθοδος ὁδῳ VII 533b3). Sócrates, prisionero en su cuerpo, escapará de ambas con su muerte. Ambas “cavernas” son un gesto de liberación. Pasó su vida ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, por tanto, en proceso de liberación por la caza del ser, que es verdad que redime de ἀφροσύνη (Fd 67a7, R. 515c5). Para esto hay que volverse hacia el alma (Fd 82d6). Como en R. el prisionero, más cerca de lo real, ‘se ha vuelto’: πρὸς μᾶλλον ὄντα τετραμμένος (R. 515d3). En R. lo más real está allá, al salir; en el Fd. está aquí, en el alma: una dinámica intencional semejante; un proceso de liberación que es más política (R.) o más personal (Fd.).

“Egli si rialza re! Infatti é questo Il versante positivo del riconoscimento nell’istante della morte. Qui il riconoscimento ha l’ultima parola. Questa virata improvvisa sul bordo del precipizio e del nulla ha tutta l’aria di un miracolo soprannaturale. Ma questo ovviamente é solo un modo di esprimersi....” (Vladimir Jankélevitc, Il non-so—che e il quasi niente)

Perché Socrate si presenta ai suoi amici straordinariamente felice a poche ore da una morte ingiusta nella prigione di Atene? É questa la domanda nascosta che apre il Fedone, é lo sconcerto dei presenti davanti alla conturbante serenità del filosofo il prologo teatrale necessario per introdurre la questione centrale del dialogo: che cosa é la morte e perché non dobbiamo temerla.

Sappiamo come nel Fedone il momento dello scioglimento dell’anima dal corpo é decisivo. Presentato come il compito del filosofo (Fedone, 67d) (attraverso esempi e metafore provenienti dal repertorio semântico dei riti orfici e delle convinzioni pitagoriche bem presenti nel mondo culturale degli amici che attorniavano Socrate negli ultimi momenti di vita) tale separazione puó essere considerata una esigenza precisamente epistemológica, determinata per una chiara decisione etica: solo quando l’anima si ritira concentrata in se stessa per aver rinunciato alle passioni del corpo riesce a conoscere la saggezza e la verità stessa (Fedone, 66a). È attraverso questa scelta propedeutica e questa postura etica che chi avrà fatto filosofia correttamente potrà coltivare in vita la speranza di contemplare pienamente la dimensione divina che, fino a quando resterà legata al corpo, non potrà realizzare compiutamente. Questa buona speranza (Fedone, 67c) porterà il frutto etico dell’eudaimonia, la piena felicità che Socrate testimonierà nelle ultime ore di vita, irradiando una serenità e una pace che lascia confusi i presenti. (Fedone, 59a)

Fatta questa introduzione entro nel merito della mia ricerca: interpretare la proposta epistemológica della teoria delle idee proposta nel Fedone a partire dall’anticipazione della morte, proposta come autentica vita filosofica in 64a. Propongo una lettura del dialogo che studi la profonda e complessa articolazione epistemológica della teoria delle idee e della valorizzazione cognitiva dell’attitudine dell’anima a riconoscerle, a partire esattamente dalla scelta filosofica di preporsi a morire, esplicitamente proposta all’inizio del dialogo. (Fedone, 64a)

Non pretendo pertanto concentrare l’analisi del testo nella verifica della consistenza logica degli argomenti che dimostrerebbero l’immortalità dell’anima o che spiegherebbero cosa é, di fatto, l’anima (spiegazione, quest’ultima, assente nel dialogo, come ha ben spiegato Giovanni Casertano nel suo ultimo lavoro dedicato al Fedone). A mio avviso, nel Fedone, la morte anticipata del filosofo – intesa quindi in senso metaforico – si presenta come l’esperienza decisiva capace di mostrare la vitalità divina dell’anima, la sua propria essenza, offrendo, quindi, una prova etica e non logica della sua connaturale imortalità e capacità di riconoscere le idee.

In questo percorso, etico e teoretico allo stesso tempo, al discepolo dell’Accademia é offerta l’esperienza decisiva che mostra come la conoscenza pura e la saggezza possono essere raggiunte e riconosciute per il duplice potere che l’anima e le idee condividono: se è l’anima a identificare le idee, sono quest’ultime
a determinare i confini ontologici della sua attività cognitiva, continua e immortale.

ESSERE COME MORTI DAVANTI ALLA MORTE

Il mio interesse è approfondire il senso possibile di questa paradossale e controversa proposta platonica: il Fedone presenta, nelle parole e nei gesti di Socrate, l’esito felice di una vita scelta liberamente davanti alla dimensione ultima e ultimativa del destino voluto dagli dei (Fedone, 58e). Una vita filosofica che è un “morire e essere morti” (Fedone, 64a), difficile da comprendere per il senso comune, così come per il lettore, invitato a scoprire in che senso i filosofi “siano degni di morte e di quale morte” (Fedone 64c).

Ma dunque: di che tipo di morte si tratta? E quale è il ruolo di questa morte specifica (Fedone, 64b) nel processo della conoscenza proposto nel dialogo? Il monumentale esempio della morte di Socrate, secondo l’espressione usata da Natorp, non appare sufficiente per spiegare l’esperienza della morte in se stessa. Ancora una volta siamo davanti alla proposta propedeutica di affrontare la propria morte come serietà filosofica sapendo dire e vivere ciò che la morte è in quanto tale. Qui sta, a nostro avviso, il rischio (Fedone, 107c) piú volte presentato nel dialogo) di accettare la proposta socratica di cercare il bene di una vita etica definita per la forza persuasiva dei discorsi che potranno ricondurre l’anima a se stessa. Se l’interlocutore del maestro accetta l’invito alla pratica dialogica da quel momento lui stesso accetterà il bel rischio della pericolosa traversata della vita, l’unica esperienza che lo potrà condurrire a riconoscere le virtù, i beni invisibili che alimentano l’anima nel suo cammino spirituale.

PREPARARSI A MORIRE, FORMA DI PURIFICAZIONE ETICA E TEORETICA

Se la vita filosofica consente all’anima di contemplare la verità senza che il corpo impedisca questo tentativo, è proprio questa possibilità in continua realizzazione che Platone presenta come un viaggio esistenziale, una graduale purificazione di atti e pensieri, a nostro avviso un viaggio etico e gnosiologico allo stesso tempo. Infatti, in questo viaggio, i pensieri purificati (volti alle cose in se stesse senza la partecipazione ingannevole dei sensi) sanno legittimare atti anche loro purificati (dalle passioni che offuscano la visione contemplativa dell’anima). E il processo può anche essere visto al contrario: Il filosofo che purifica la propria anima dalle passioni sta determinando la condizione etica necessaria per riconoscere le idee e contemplare così pensieri puri.

In questo modo etica e conoscenza possono specchiarsi e alimentarsi in un unico movimento di reciproca purificazione: la ricerca della verità si presenta come una condivisione ideale, progressiva e contemporanea tra atti che provocano pensieri che a loro volta producono atti che producono pensieri, in una spirale continua e virtuosa. Il Fedone sembra presentare così il cammino dell’anima: una catena logico-ideiativa che unisce pensieri e atti, infinita quanto infinite sono le potenzialità del linguaggio umano. In altre parole: l’esperienza di filosofare è presentata come una incessante purificazione del pensare, una forma di agire che è allo stesso tempo una forma di pensare.

LA MORTE METAFORICA

Ma se questa lettura della proposta filosofica di Platone è perlomeno plausibile resta la domanda: qual è la necessità di presentarla come una esperienza di morte? Si tratta a mio avviso di leggere questa proposta platonica in chiave metaphorica. Che cosa vuol dire questo? Che non si tratta di una vera morte? No, certamente. Il fatto è che nessuno - e Socrate lo sa benissimo, è in condizione di definire cosa sia la morte in se stessa e quale la sua determinazione etica (Apologia 37b; 42a). Certamente si
può contemplare come la morte si presenti agli uomini – attraverso la separazione dell’anima dal corpo – ma questa non é ancora tutta la morte, é solo una parziale visione della morte. mancando ancora, appunto, la mia morte. Il pensare la morte, per quanto purificato potrà essere questo atto, non arriverà mai all’esperienza piena e radicale della separazione dell’anima del corpo, almeno fino al momento esatto della loro separazione, momento che non potrà essere pensato ma solo vissuto, in quel momento ultimo - senza il pensiero.

PENSARE LA MORTE, UN ATTO POSSIBILE?

Se questa supposizione che guida la nostra ricerca è plausibile, pensare la morte, si presenta nel Fedone come un atto noetico che tenta definire tutto quello che si puó pensare quando l’oggetto del pensiero – la morte - é, infatti, non pensabile, se non, appunto, in modo anticipatorio. Anticipare la morte é l’unica strategia etica e cognitiva, possibile e coerente, per circondare noeticamente la morte, definendo tutto quello che si può pensare sul suo continuo incombere che (si noti bene) permette, di fatto, lo stesso atto cognitivo: l’uomo platonico pensa perché la sua anima é viva e legata al corpo mortale. Le immagini visibili sottoposte all’interrogazione filosofica si trasformano in immagine discorsive per aprirsi – grazie all’ordinato processo dialettico che verifica le condizioni di possibilità dell’ipotesi poste – alla realtà ultima e definitiva delle forme pure, le idee. In questo processo, e ancora una volta cito Giovanni Casertano, la partecipazione del corpo all’attività cognitiva dell’anima é fondamentale.

PENSARE IL TUTTO CHE NON SARÀ MAI TUTTO

Dentro questa condizione umana si puó pensare e contemplare il Tutto, anche la morte, certamente. Sapendo bene che questa esperienza unica e necessaria di pensare (e vivere eticamente) é il tutto non é e non potrà essere, esattamente, il Tutto. Il veramente Tutto é nascosto dalla densità del (proprio) corpo che permette di vedere solo la morte degli altri come un fatto reale: una anima che si separa da un corpo. Ma pensare la propria morte é impossibile se non, come sosteniamo, solo grazie a un atto propedeutico e anticipatorio.

L’atto etico dell’uomo socratico, sembra infatti presentarsi nel Fedone come la “retroazione dell’ultimo istante” proposta dal filosofo francese Vladimir Jankélévitch, una anticipazione libera e decisiva della morte in vita. Un atto, quest’ultimo che realizza, dunque, il destino della stessa anima. Se il potere della morte, infatti, é quello di non permettere agli uomini una sicurezza indebita sul proprio futuro, l’anticipazione dell’atto etico toglie alla morte il suo artiglio, l’oscura presenza del suo incombere inesorabile sulla vita umana: la morte, in questo modo, é sottratta a se stessa e l’anima si conferma immortale.

La morte, onorata cosí felicemente da Socrate, non perde il suo carattere radicale e drammatico ma si trasforma in evento esistenziale per i personaggi del dialogo: la serenità radiosa dell’uomo esprime la vita autentica della sua anima, Socrate é capace di entrare senza timore nella morte del corpo, perché sa che l’anima nella quale si sente vivo, ora, esattamente, in questo momento, non scomparirà, realizzando così la sua immortalità. Se il Fedone é un dialogo che pensa la morte, pensa allo stesso tempo l’anima e la sua particolare natura, il suo modo di manifestarsi nelle relazioni unan, il suo essere e restare viva oltre al corpo che nel mondo la ospita. Il destino dell’anima sembra essere la precisa angolatura esistenziale dalla quale Platone pensa la morte.

MORTE METAFORICA E DESTINO DEL FILOSOFO

Pensare il destino, dunque: é forse, questo, l’atto che più caratterizza la particolare avventura che l’uomo compie sulla terra. Si tratta di un atto teorico decisivo che proviene dall’antica coscienza greca che ad ogni individuo appartenga un’esistenza transitoria, un tempo indefinito e limitato di vita sulla terra, la quale é.
La percezione che l’uomo greco ha sempre avuto del suo essere fugace dona nobiltà esemplare all’atto etico: i principi razionali che lo ispirano potranno solo realizzare azioni rischiose, definite nell’indeterminato flusso degli eventi. Una volta scelto il miglior argomento possibile, il filosofo, “come su una zattera, affronta il rischio della traversata del mare della vita” (Fedone, 85d). Così la figura esemplare di Socrate mostra tutta la bellezza intrinseca a una scelta morale che conosce il suo intento, definisce il suo scopo, ma non potrà conoscere completamente la forma ultima della sua realizzazione, il suo destino: “E’ ora di andare: io verso la morte, voi alle vostre vite; chi avrà più fortuna? Solo gli dei lo sanno” (Apologia, 42a).

Platone chiarisce che la dinamica propria dell’anima, allo stesso tempo cognitiva e etica, quando educata filosoficamente a seguire i “passi del ragionamento” per sviluppare opinioni sulla base di ipotesi stabili, può riconoscere ciò che le è connaturale: le idee eterne e invisibili.

In conclusione: il destino di Socrate, davanti alla morte imminente, in quanto apertura di vita, frutto di una risoluzione razionale, appare ora come un orizzonte possibile alla pura libertà umana, capace di attingere, in vita, ai beni invisibili che alimentano l’anima, fino a quando questa non sarà completamente distaccata dal corpo (Fedone, 84b). La vita filosofica può essere quindi pensata come una vita autentica dell’anima riportata a se stessa, capace di realizzare virtù e riconoscere e idee simili alla sua natura immortale.

Nel Fedone, dunque la “morte” appare come necessaria in vita per accedere alla piena felicità, come vero destino dell’anima purificata dalle passioni corporali. In altre parole, quando nell’esercizio etico l’anima si separa dal corpo attraverso il dominio temperante delle passioni, è come se fosse morta. Lo stesso atto etico, tuttavia, sta dischiudendo la vita autentica dell’anima che in verità, muore soltanto alle passioni corporali che forzosamente la abitano tenendola come in prigione.

La morte metaforica prepara quindi il filosofo, già in questa vita, alla contemplazione etica e noetica del sapere assoluto: è attraverso l’esercizio del ragionamento corretto, che l’anima illuminata riconosce le idee giungendo, ancora legata al corpo, a realizzare il suo destino.

Summary (English)
Destiny and metaphoric death in the Phaedo
From the beginning, the Phaedo presents framed by an extraordinary atmosphere: in his last hours of life, Socrates seems to be happy with an attitude that radiates strength and tranquility. Although waiting for death, Socrates shows have no doubt about the good that awaits him in the future, to be held “aided by a divine contest” (Phaedo, and 58) in the invisible, where will be happy “as no one ever”.

But why Socrates presents to his friends remarkably happy on the eve of his unjust death in Athens prison? The present troubled reaction before the philosopher serenity is the prologue necessary for introducing the issue that we consider central in the dialogue: knowing how to say what is death and why we should not fear it. In the Phaedo the time of the release and the Body Soul separation is a key topic in the dialogue. Only when the soul can remain isolated and “concentrated on itself” for having resigned to engage with bodily passions is fulfilled the true task of the philosopher presented in Phaedo, 67c, the epistemological condition that allows to achieve wisdom and truth. But why do Plato decide to submit this proposal as a death experience? (Phaedo 64a) In what sense philosophers are like those that prepare themselves for dying? We propose to define this experience as metaphorical
death, a radical experience of the skilful practice of living the philosophical life with insight and temperance, which will allow the philosopher to face, without fear, the very death of the body - just as it is happening, in fact and not metaphorically, with master Socrates.

So, between physical death - culmination of human life - and the philosopher fate, to recognize virtues and pure and eternal ideas, establishes certain causal link. After all, in the Phaedo, as the philosopher arrives in the Hades completely purified, he will reach the divine life. From this eschatological perspective, the choice of removing the soul from the pleasures is an attitude that, in fact, can anticipate the experience of physical death itself. It is as if that were some kind of “Orphic” death of the body, as if it permitted the philosopher to know the divine world from the material world.

Thus, the philosophical life is presented to the disciple as a constant dialectic between a symbolic dimension of existence (i.e., to prepare itself for dying and living philosophically a death that is not definitive but no less real) and an experiential dimension (i.e., to effectively die for the body's demands, which end up being totally removed to allow the cognitive life of the soul). Thus, the ethical life is defined as a metaphorical anticipation of physical death through the removal of physical defects, even when it comes to know things how they are themselves. This experience not only anticipates strategically the death, but also anticipates the good (Orphic) that death brings. And it does so in a fully way: by the fact that the philosopher have loved knowledge throughout his life, he deserves to experience the contemplation of pure wisdom, then fulfilling his destiny.
I. In what follows, I briefly sketch the outline of a revisionary reading of the aims of Plato’s *Phaedo*. On traditional readings, the dialogue provides Socrates’ defense of the soul’s unqualified immortality, i.e., the soul’s capacity for eternal existence as a numerically identical individual in post-mortem separation from the body. On such traditional readings, Socrates aims to fulfill Cebes’ demand that he show “that the soul still exists after a man has died and that it still possesses some capability and intelligence” (70b).\(^1\) I agree that the *Phaedo*, through the figure of Socrates, endorses the thought that we are potentially immortal. But the sort of immortality that Socrates endorses, I argue, is only the qualified immortality that he explicitly defends in the *Symposium*, i.e., a mortal soul’s capacity to persist post-mortem in an extended sense through reproduction (206e-208b). The *Phaedo’s* arguments fail, I suggest, because Socrates wishes to steer his interlocutors toward, and because Plato wishes to remind his readers of, this other kind of immortality. Socrates’ having taken steps to immortalize himself in this sense better explains his justified equanimity in the face of death.

Consider the multiple ways in which Plato links the *Phaedo* dramatically with the *Symposium*. In both works, events that happened many years ago—Socrates’ last hours in the *Phaedo*, Agathon’s party in the *Symposium*—are preserved by the rehearsal of those whom Socrates deeply influenced.\(^2\) More significantly, both works are crucially centered around drinking. This point is clear enough in the *Symposium*’s case. But in the *Phaedo*, reference to Socrates’ drinking the potion initially appears in the dialogue’s opening line (57a). In his final moments, Socrates treats the potion as akin to wine, his death as a drinking party. He asks the guard “What do you say about pouring a libation from this drink? It is allowed?” (117b). Uniquely in both works, Socrates shows up bathed to his special events.\(^3\) In both of these events, women, who otherwise never appear in Platonic dialogues, are sent away.\(^4\) Instead of depicting ordinary symposia, Plato describes relatively sober affairs that emphasize *logoi* over intemperate eating, drinking, and sex.\(^5\) At Agathon’s party, so too at Socrates’ execution, Socrates stays moderate while drinking \(^6\) and courageous when facing the cold.\(^7\) And if the *Phaedo’s* Socrates should prove immortal, then he once more shows himself impervious to the effects of drink.\(^8\)

Reading the *Phaedo* through the lens of the *Symposium*, reading the *Phaedo* as a symposium—as Socrates’ final symposium—promises us a new understanding of the *Phaedo’s* views on immortality and on Socrates’ equanimity in the face of death. It also pays other interpretive dividends.

II. In his discussion with Simmias and Cebes, Socrates discusses multiple arguments for the immortality of the soul. Given time constraints, I lack space to

\(^1\) I use Grube’s translation in Cooper (1997), sometimes with slight emendations.

\(^2\) Cf. *Phaedo* 57a-58e with *Symposium* 173a-e.

\(^3\) Cf. *Phaedo* 116b with *Symposium* 174a.

\(^4\) Cf. *Phaedo* 60a with 116b and *Symposium* 176e.

\(^5\) Cf. *Phaedo* 116e-117a with *Symposium* 176a-b.

\(^6\) Cf. *Phaedo* 117c-d with *Symposium* 214a.

\(^7\) Cf. *Phaedo* 117e-118a with *Symposium* 220b-221b.

\(^8\) Cf. *Symposium* 220a; 223c-d. I owe the last point to Neil Sinhababu.
address each of these arguments individually. Yet I offer a bold conjecture: I contend that each of these arguments fails to meet the hopes of Socrates’ interlocutors, and that Plato is aware of their failure. For each of these arguments faces problems that emerge more or less explicitly within the dialogue itself.  

9 Bostock (1986) impressively demolishes each of the Phaedo’s arguments, yet assumes that Plato is committed to these arguments. Gadamer (1980:22) writes that the Phaedo’s arguments “all have something deeply dissatisfying about them.” For doubts that Plato is committed to any of the Phaedo’s arguments for immortality, see, e.g., Cobb (1977); Arieti (1986); Bolotin (1987); Ahrensdorf (1995); Zuckert (2009: 784-794; 801-803). Briefly, here is why I deny that we deny that Plato is committed to the Phaedo’s arguments:

(1) According to the Argument from Opposites (70d-72a), whatever has an opposite comes to be from its opposite. Hence, “the living come to be from the dead” (72d). For the living to come to be from the dead, and for the dead to come to be from the living, the argument suggests, the soul must be immortal.

Plato’s dramatic details hint at one problem with the argument’s premise that the living things come to be from dead. For just a few pages earlier, Plato introduces us to Socrates’ wife, Xanthe, who holds Socrates’ young child (60a-b). Therefore, Plato suggests one obvious alternative to this premise: the living thing to come to be from the living. (Cf. Ahrensdorf [1995: 64].) More pressingly, this first argument proves both too little and too much for Cebes. Too little: If successful, the argument shows only that the soul as a principle of life persists post-mortem, not that its “capability and intelligence” persist. (Cf. Roochnik [2000: 160]. On the soul in this sense, see Gallop [1975: 89].) Too much: If successful, it shows the souls of all living beings are immortal and numerically separable from their bodies (70d; 71d). (Bostock 1986: 43) notes this problem. As he points out [57-58], the argument implies the indestructibility of everything [whether animate or not]. In response, Cebes shows some hesitancy (70d-e). The argument’s conclusion is unhappy for Cebes, for it massively inflates the set of unqualifiedly immortal souls capable of post-mortem existential separation from their bodies beyond just the set of intelligent souls. Although Cebes latches on to the conclusion, he apparently finds the Argument from Opposites insufficient. For Cebes quickly introduces another argument that restricts immortality only to intelligent beings. (Cf. Gadamer [1980: 26].) Cebes’ companion, Simmias, also shows doubts: he is so eager to hear the second argument that he interrupts Cebes with his request (73a).

(2) According to the Argument from Recollection (73c-76c), the soul can now exercise certain kinds of knowledge only on the condition that the soul originally learned what it knows in a pre-embodied state. Hence, Cebes asserts, “the soul is likely to be something immortal” (73a).

Yet Simmias identifies a problem with this argument. It shows, at most, that we must have some kind of grasp of the Equal Itself before embodiment. But the soul’s post-mortem existence and immortality needn’t follow (77a-c). Cebes agrees with Simmias that more argument is necessary (77c). Socrates offers that the Argument from Opposites provides supplementary proof that the soul must persist post-mortem. Yet that argument, as already explained, won’t work for Socrates’ interlocutors. Cebes seems unconvinced, as Socrates’ observations about Cebes’ evident fear of death indicate, and as Cebes’ embarrassed admission confirms (77d-e).

(3) The Argument from Affinity (78c-80b) argues that what is invisible and like the Forms is apt to be free from change and destruction. Since the soul is invisible and like the Forms, the soul is apt to be free from change and destruction. Hence, the soul is apt to be immortal.

Yet Socrates explicitly calls out this argument’s weakness (84c). One problem emerges in the immediate conversational context: this argument clashes with the Argument from Opposites. For according to that previous argument, the soul does engage in movement and change. It cycles back and forth between life and its contrary.

A similar problem arises within Socrates’ presentation of the Argument from Affinity itself. When the soul attaches itself to the body, Socrates says, “it is dragged by the body to the things that are never the same, and the soul itself strays and is confused and dizzy, as if it were drunk” (79c). By contrast, “when the soul investigates by itself it passes into the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal, and unchanging, and being akin to this, it always stays with it whenever it is by itself and can do so” (79d). Yet if the soul can transform itself from straying, dizzy, and confused (on the one hand) to pure and stable (on the other), then the soul is subject to change and flux. (Gallop [1975: 140-141]; Bostock [1986: 119]; Ahrensdorf [1995: 95]; Roochnik [2008: 183] all notice this problem.) Socrates points out how the soul changes just while insisting on its changelessness.

(4) According to the Argument from Forms (102b-107a), items that necessarily instantiate a certain Form cannot instantiate that Form’s opposite. The soul necessarily instantiates the Form of Life and cannot instantiate the Form of Death. The soul, then, is deathless. And if something is deathless, then that thing is indestructible. Therefore, the soul is indestructible and immortal.

Even traditional commentators willing to grant that Plato doubts some of the earlier arguments...
Assume, for the purposes of this paper, that my bold conjecture is right. Why, then, does Plato give space to these arguments? In the *Phaedo*’s dramatic context, Socrates faces the demand to defend his equanimity in the face of looming death (63a-b). For the anxious Simmias and Cebes assume that Socrates is justified in so facing death only if Socrates can show that the soul is immortal without qualification (70a-b). Unless one has proof of the soul’s unqualified immortality, they contend, one is “foolish” to be confident death approaches (88b).

This assumption, however, is problematic. It displays, and is motivated by, an excessive “clinging to life” (117a) and a childish fear of death (77d-e). Worse still, if it turns out, as seems likely, that we cannot prove the soul’s unqualified immortality, this assumption threatens to produce misology, the worst evil of all (cf. 85c and 89d-e).

By presenting these arguments for immortality, which gain his interlocutors’ assent, Socrates provides Simmias and Cebes a kind of therapeutic space in which they can safely begin (i) to reexamine some of their taken-for-granted views about how one may properly confront death with equanimity and thereby (ii) quell their fears about death. More specifically, Socrates aims to confront Simmias and Cebes with the initially disquieting, but ultimately liberating, possibility that human beings may well not be unqualifiedly immortal.

For Simmias and Cebes are like sailors on a windless sea. If they assume that the only way to sail forward with justified equanimity is with wind (i.e., with assurance of the soul’s unqualified immortality), then a lack of wind (i.e., their lack of such assurance) invites despair. But such sailors, like Simmias and Cebes, can also reconsider their assumptions. They can consider otherwise overlooked alternatives. They can embark on a second sailing, using oars (i.e., different logoi). Socrates invokes just this second sailing metaphor when recounting his own dashed hopes at Anaxagorean natural philosophy’s failure to resolve his questions about the causes of generation and good arrangement in the cosmos (99d).

Socrates confronts Simmias and Cebes with a full range of arguments for immortality, and he allows the weaknesses of these arguments to bubble to the surface. By revealing that his interlocutors lack any good reason to accept that human beings possess unqualified immortality, Socrates compels Simmias and Cebes to face their basic options. On the one hand, they can conclude that equanimity in the face of death is unjustified for anyone (and that despair is the only proper outlook). On the other hand, they can open themselves to the possibility—that their excessive hopes for unqualified immortality have led them either to overlook or repress—that justified equanimity may well be possible even if one lacks unqualified immortality.10

suggest that, here, if anywhere in the *Phaedo*, Plato presents his considered view. (See, e.g., Bluck [1955: 18]; Frede [1978: 27].) Yet Socrates never accepts the key premise that if something is deathless, then that thing is indestructible. He simply raises a set of provisional if-then statements. Cebes, however, affirms the antecedents (106a-e).

Why does Plato present Socrates’ speech in such a hypothetical, non-committal way? On my reading, Plato strongly wants to leave open the possibility that even if Cebes answers Socrates in the affirmative, perhaps we shouldn’t. Indeed, commenting on the argument, Simmias admits his own “private misgivings” about it (107a-b). Socrates affirms this skeptical stance; more strongly, he insists that their assumptions require further, and clearer, examination (107b). (Cf. Cobb [1977: 178]; Gadamer [1980: 36]; Zuckert [2009: 803-804].) For even if the Argument from Forms goes through, it faces the same problems as the Argument from Opposites: it fails to show that the individual persists with capability and intelligence, just as it implies that all living beings, and not just intelligent beings, possess souls capable of existential separation from their bodies and unqualified immortality. Hence, the Argument from Opposites itself cycles back to our attention, so to speak, as Socrates’ discussion with Simmias and Cebes concludes. (On the Argument from Forms’ under- and over-inclusiveness, cf. Bostock [1986: 189].)

10 Cf. Cebes’ hopes at 70a-b with Socrates’ remarks on his similar dashed hopes at 98b. Socrates
The various arguments for immortality, then, serve as charms for Simmias and Cebes to begin to relieve their fears (77e-78a). As Socrates’ interlocutors think through them, and come to see their limitations, they are in a position gradually to free themselves from the anxiety- and misology-conducive assumption that the only way to face death with justified equanimity is to have proof of unqualified immortality.11

In the frame dialogue, Phaedo recounts to Echecrates how those assembled with Socrates faced despair when they came to recognize these early arguments’ limitations (88c). But Phaedo affirms that Socrates was enable to enact a cure (89a). At the end of the Phaedo, Socrates’ other mourners begin the task of working through Socrates’ logoi (116a). To this extent, they—and those of the rest of us who read the Phaedo—can ultimately be healed from closed-mindedness about how one may justifiably face death with equanimity. To the extent that they (and we) have resources for considering alternatives, Socrates believes it fitting to owe a cock to Asclepius (cf. 118a).

III. If, contrary to the various arguments discussed in the Phaedo, we lack any proof of our unqualified immortality, then what can justify equanimity in the face of death? What second sailing is available to Simmias, Cebes and Socrates’ other friends?

My proposal: once freed from a fixation on unqualified immortality, Simmias and Cebes are open to consider—and to pursue—the prospects of a qualified immortality. One attains such immortality through reproduction, which enables one to leave behind replacements for oneself (Symposium 207d-208b). Such is the immortality that Diotima assures Socrates is the only kind available for mortal nature. Such a conception rules out unqualified immortality. Still, it allows living beings to attain an immortal possession of the good, as far as they can, by generating offspring.

In the case of human beings, some people are “pregnant in body” and attain a qualified immortality by generating biological children. Others, by contrast, are more “pregnant in soul” and attain a qualified immortality by generating progeny of a more perfect kind (Symposium 206c). Among those more pregnant in soul, philosophers attain a qualified immortality most fully. They possess the good immortally as far as possible, not by propagating mere images of virtue, but by propagating true virtue—i.e., what is truly good about themselves—and by winning the love of the gods (Symposium 212a). Philosophers, as Diotima suggests, can propagate true virtue by making a spiritual ascent from merely bodily concerns, and by pursuing the “higher mysteries” that bring them to a glimpse of Beauty Itself, the cause of all particular beauties (Symposium 210a-211c).12

Roochnik (2001) and (2008) also accepts that the Phaedo’s Socrates is committed to something like Diotima’s view. Our readings of qualified immortality differ, however: Roochnik suggests that such immortality consists in activity, such as philosophical activity, marked by leisure and not bounded by time (2001: 163). Cf. Bury (1932: xlv n2) and Sheffield (2006: 151). I agree that the philosopher in the Symposium may well attain immortality quia heavenliness (in Bury’s terms). Yet Bury notes that earlier in Socrates’ speech immortality “denotes only duration.” (See Symposium 207d.) Hence, keenly discerns his interlocutors’ hopes for unqualified immortality: see his repetition of “hope,” and Simmias’ responses, at 67e-68b.

I deny the thesis—defended by Bolotin (1987: 54-55) and Ahrens (1995: 201)—that the Phaedo’s various arguments for immortality are intended to be either purely consolatory or ways of showing the piety of philosophers to those suspicious of philosophy. For a different consolatory reading, see Cobb (1977: 175-176). (Nor do I accept Arieti’s proposal [1986: 129-131] that the arguments for immortality must fail if Socrates is to be truly courageous in the face of death.) Yet I agree with Bolotin (1987: 54) and Ahrens (1995: 201) that the arguments for immortality invite Simmias and Cebes to reflect further on their hopes. Hence, the arguments may lead them to a more adequate stance toward mortality.

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In the *Phaedo*, Socrates holds that “those philosophizing in the right way practice dying” (οἱ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντες ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσι: 67e; cf. 64a). As Socrates notes, however, this description of philosophers is ambiguous (64b-c). Socrates’ ultimate view, I suggest, goes as follows: those who philosophize correctly practice dying by philosophizing in *this life*. On the one hand, such philosophers, qua virtuous and happy, thereby live fully and well in the stretch of time leading up to their physical deaths, i.e., in the living that is, from another perspective, also a dying. On the other hand, physical death does not bring about their final end. On the contrary, their valuable features persist beyond their physical deaths in the virtues that they generate and nurture in others, and, in turn, in any virtues that these others generate in others still. In both ways, philosophers possess the good immortally as far as anyone humanly can. Hence, philosophers have the most justification, of anyone, for equanimity in the face of death.

Does any evidence show that the *Phaedo*’s Socrates endorses the *Symposium*’s turn to qualified immortality, and that he thinks such immortality supports the philosopher’s justified equanimity? Does he offer his friends any conceptual resources—any oars—for moving forward? The answer, I think, is yes.

(a) In the conversation in which Socrates explains why philosophy is a practice of dying, Socrates endorses three points learned from Diotima. (i) The philosopher displays erôs, not for bodies, but for thoughtfulness and wisdom (64d-e; 68a-b; cf. *Symposium* 208e-209a; 210d-e). (ii) The philosopher thus attains a kind of freedom from a certain enslavement to the body (64c; 66d; cf. *Symposium* 210d), and disdains a certain body-obsessed way of life (65d; 66d; cf. *Symposium* 210b5), one organized around the pleasures of clothing, money, and sex (64d; 68c; cf. *Symposium* 211d). (iii) Wisdom, in turn, enables the philosopher to attain true virtue as opposed to mere “paintings,” or imitations, of virtue (69b7; cf. *Symposium* 212a).

True, Simmias understands point (ii) about the soul’s liberation from the body differently from how I take Socrates to intend it. Simmias construes point (ii) as a *metaphysical* claim about the philosophical soul’s existential separability from the body, whereas I read Socrates’ claims about the philosophical soul’s separability as having an *ethical* sense. In this latter sense, philosophers separate their souls from I take it that Socrates thinks that philosophy confers a kind of qualified temporal extension as well. Some commentators—Luce (1952), Bluck (1955: 27-28), and Price (1990: 30-31)—argue that the *Phaedo* is committed to the immortality of the human soul, but that the *Phaedo*’s account (so construed) is compatible with the *Symposium*’s conception of immortality. For problems with such compatibilist readings, see Hackforth (1950); cf. Sheffield (2006: 147n47). Like Hackforth, I accept the thought that Socrates is ultimately committed to Diotima’s view from the *Symposium*, and that this view is incompatible with unqualified immortality. Unlike Hackforth (1950: 45), however, I deny both that Socrates is committed to any of the *Phaedo*’s arguments for immortality and that Plato’s philosophical development best explains the apparently different views concerning immortality in the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium*.

Traditional readings of the *Phaedo* often appeal to some kind of developmental thesis to explain how Plato can accept both unqualified immortality in the *Phaedo* and only qualified immortality in the *Symposium*. One problem: it would be striking for Plato to change his mind on such an important matter in works that, on usual developmental stories, both belong to the same period. (O’Brien [1984: 191-192], who favors compatibilism, points out the difficulties that developmental stories encounter.) On the general lack of evidence on behalf of any particular compositional chronology, see Cooper (1997, xiii-xiv). Here, I adopt Cooper’s principle (1997: xiv) that “it is better to relegate thoughts about chronology to the secondary position they deserve and to concentrate on the literary and philosophical content of the works, taken on their own and in relation to others.” Here, I examine the *Phaedo* and the *Symposium* in terms of their dramatic chronology, an approach recently defended by Zuckert (2009: 1-19).

On qualified immortality through propagating virtue in oneself and others, see, e.g., Hackforth (1950: 44); Price (1989: 54); Irwin (1995: 306-311); and Rowe (1998: 257). Hooper (2013: 549-50) holds that one’s fame for virtue generates in others a desire to cultivate the kinds of virtues that one possessed while alive. In response to the worries of Sheffield (2006: 146), I take it that generation of virtue in both oneself and others confers immortality qua qualified temporal extension.
their bodies by freeing themselves from a base way of life organized around gratifying bodily desires. But Plato foregrounds the possibility that what Socrates means by the soul’s “separability” differs from his interlocutors’ own understanding. For Socrates begins his exchange with Simmias by explicitly highlighting ambiguities of the claim that philosophers practice dying and death (64a-b).13

(b) Consider the conversation that immediately precedes the arguments for immortality. Here, Socrates’ remarks recall Diotima’s language of the mysteries in the Symposium’s account of the philosopher’s ascent.14 Thus, Socrates expresses his confidence that, insofar as one is initiated in the mysteries, one can die well and live with the gods (69c; cf. 108c; cf. Symposium 212a). “There are indeed,” Socrates says, “as those concerned with the mysteries say, many who carry the thyrsus, but the Bacchants are few. These latter are, in my opinion, no other than those who have practiced philosophy in the right way. I have in my life left nothing undone in order to be counted among these as far as possible, as I have been eager to be in every way” (69c-d). Socrates’ reference to the thyrsus—a traditional fertility symbol in the Mysteries—recalls his views on pregnancy in the Symposium. Only philosophers ascend to the Higher Mysteries and bring their psychic pregnancy, true virtue, to full term (cf. Symposium 212a). Here, Socrates affirms that he’s done all he can to be generative in this way. Hence, he can die peacefully.15

(c) When Socrates, Simmias, and Cebes discuss the initial arguments for immortality, Socrates subtly slips themes from Diotima’s speech into these arguments. He thus prepares Simmias and Cebes to think more fully though how generation, erōs, beauty, and immortality interrelate. (i) The Argument from Opposites, for example, links something’s being immortal with its participating in cycles of generation (cf. Symposium 207d-208b). The argument suggests that all life, in some way at least, may thereby have access to a certain immortality. (ii) In the Argument from Recollection, Socrates introduces the notion of recollection by indicating that lovers “recollect” the boys they love erotically by reference to the lyres, garments, and other items that such boys use (73d).16 (iii) The Argument from Affinity distinguishes sensible particular beauties, which are subject to change, from Beauty Itself, which is not (78d-e; cf. Symposium 211a-b). Further, the argument makes a crucial point that the Symposium develops independently: to the extent that the soul is “like” such a Form—to the extent that the soul becomes truly beautiful—to that extent the soul is apt to attain a kind of immortality, albeit of a qualified sort.17

(d) In his intellectual autobiography, Socrates invites his interlocutors to consider the cause of generation and destruction (95e9). Socrates recounts his old hopes that natural philosophy might reveal “on account of what” (διὰ τί) such processes occur (96a9-10). But despite their occasionally tantalizing reference to Mind—which, to Socrates, initially seemed capable of arranging (κοσμεῖν) all things for the best (97c-d)—figures such as Anaxagoras could not supply Socrates the sort of explanations that seemed necessary. To explain fitting arrangement in the cosmos, Socrates discovered, one must invoke teleological principles, instead of


14 Belfiore (2012: 27) accounts for the Phaedo’s “exceptional use of erotic vocabulary” by reference to the Phaedo’s comparing philosophy to initiation into the Mysteries.

15 At Symposium 218b, Alcibiades insists that all of those attending Agathon’s drinking party, by virtue of conversing with Socrates, “have all shared in the madness, the Bacchic frenzy of philosophy” (trans. Nehamas and Woodruff in Cooper [1997]).

16 On Socrates’ erotically charged imagery in this passage, see Gordon (2012: 186-187).

17 Cf. Socrates on the “immortal” soul and its kinship to Forms (Phaedo 80b1-3) with his description of Beauty Itself (Phaedo 78d-79a and Symposium 211a-b).
merely material-mechanistic ones (98b-99c).

In the Symposium, however, Socrates identifies just the sort of teleological principle capable of causing all generation (207a-c). This principle turns out to be Beauty Itself, the ultimate object of *erôs*. Beauty Itself serves as an ultimate cause of fitting arrangement (i.e., beauty) throughout the cosmos (210a-211d). 18 In the Phaedo, Socrates invokes this view in his prelude to the Argument from Forms. There, he identifies his turn to Forms as his own second sailing (99d-100a), and he reiterates his belief that Beauty Itself is the cause of beauty in all beautiful things (100b-e). 19

(d) The Phaedo’s concluding myth develops a self-consciously symbolic description of the qualified immortality open to the philosopher through the pursuit of wisdom and true virtue in this life. (Socrates explicitly emphasizes the myth’s non-literal character at 114d.) With this myth, Socrates exhorts his friends not to give up on philosophy. If we propagate vice in this life, both in ourselves and in others, we attain a surrogate post-mortem existence akin to being cast into Tartarus (113e-114b). If, by contrast, we cultivate true virtue in this life, we can attain a kind of surrogate happiness in the afterlife. For the virtue we propagate in this life can persist after our physical deaths and will enable us, in a qualified (and metaphorical) way, to occupy a beautiful dwelling (114b-c). This “beautiful” (114c8) prize of pursuing wisdom and virtue is fitting. For by “adorning the soul” (κοσμήσας τὴν ψυχήν) with virtue in this life, we prepare ourselves well for the afterlife (114e-115a). We persist in the virtues we can thereby nurture in others.

(e) Thus, Socrates asks his friends to care for themselves as a favor to him, to his own, and to themselves (115b). Socrates’ very final words to his gathered friends are an admonishment: “and do not be careless” (καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσῃ: 118a8). 20 He thereby hopes to secure his efforts to attain a choiceworthy qualified immortality through his ethical progeny. Plato portrays those attending Socrates’ death as, in a sense, Socrates’ children. Phaedo recalls to Echecrates, “We all felt as if we had lost a father and would be orphaned for the rest of our lives” (116b). As if highlighting the ways in which Socrates immortalizes himself reproductively, Plato immediately follows Phaedo’s remark with a vignette of Socrates saying goodbye to his three biological sons (116b). Although Socrates will die, he nevertheless lives on in an extended sense, through his biological and ethical children (and most fully in the virtue that he has nurtured in the latter). Socrates himself passes away; yet he persists, in a qualified form, in the next generation.

At the same time, the way that Plato introduces Socrates’ biological children

18 In the ascent passage, I assume that the steps are ordered according to a causal progression. Thus, one stage on the ascent Y is higher than another stage X if beauty at Y causes the beauty at X. Cf. Sheffield (2006: 126); Scott and Welton (2008: 147).


19 Gordon (2012: 211) argues that “Socrates continuously uses beauty and the beautiful as a touchstone in the Phaedo.” Passages she cites on behalf of this claim include Phaedo 65d7; 70e3; 75c11; 76d8; 76e9; 77a4.

20 This line is often mistranslated (e.g., by Grube) as “do not forget.” On Socrates’ last words and his admonishment to show care, see Madison (2002). As Socrates insists earlier in the Phaedo, “[I]f the soul is immortal, it requires our care not only for the time we call our life, but for the sake of all time, and that one is is in terrible danger if one does not give it that care” (εἴπερ ἡ ψυχὴ ἀθάνατος, ἐπιμελείας δὴ δεῖται οὐχ ὑπὲρ τοῦ χρόνου τούτου μόνον ἐν ᾧ καλοῦμεν τὸ ζῆν, ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ τοῦ παντός, καὶ ὁ κίνδυνος νῦν δὴ καὶ διάξειν ἄν δεινός εἶναι, εἰ τις αὐτῆς ἀμελήσει: 107c). This point is true even if, or especially if, the only kind of immortality is qualified immortality: if one fails to care for oneself in this life, one propagates vice in oneself and others, and thereby secures a bad form of immortality.
indicates the superiority of the qualified immortality attainable for Socrates through his ethical children. Earlier in the dialogue, Socrates’ wife Xanthippe makes her sole appearance in the Platonic dialogues, holding their baby. Socrates’ impending death devastates her, as her wailing, lamenting, and breast-beating suggest (60a-b). Thus, Socrates sends her away, as he later says, “to avoid such unseemliness” (117d-e). Xanthippe’s response to Socrates’ death mirrors that of Socrates’ mad disciple, Apollodorus. Although not an attendee at Agathon’s symposium, Apollodorus recounts the events that transpired there, and he now shows up at Socrates’ final symposium. As Socrates drinks the potion, Apollodorus cries noisily and rages at Socrates’ death (117d). Socrates chastises Apollodorus for his inability to control himself (117d).21

The behavior of Xanthippe and Apollodorus deserves notice. On the one hand, these characters do engage reproductively with Socrates. Whereas Xanthippe gives birth to Socrates’ biological children, Apollodorus, by rehearsing the story of what happened at Agathon’s symposium, exhibits the mechanism by which reproduction preserves, viz., replacing what is old with something new (cf. Symposium 172a1; 173c1 with 207c5-208b6).22 While the Phaedo portrays Xanthippe in a respectful light, the dialogue’s linking Xanthippe with Apollodorus suggests a shortcoming in Xanthippe. Like Apollodorus, she seems trapped in an all-too-exclusive love of individual people. The similarly excessive responses of Apollodorus and Xanthippe to Socrates’ death dramatize these characters’ failure to make the philosopher’s ascent.23 These characters’ tendency toward harshness elsewhere suggests this failure. Such harshness appears more fully other symposia, Apollodorus’ in the Symposium of Plato (173d), Xanthippe’s in the Symposium of Plato’s contemporary, Xenophon (2.10). Remaining at the first level of the ascent, they fail to cultivate in themselves the surest way of assuring their own capacity to face death with equanimity, viz., by philosophizing and generating true virtue.24

If my reading of the death scene is right, then Socrates’ final admonishment bears another, previous unnoted resonance. Socrates’ very last words—“do not be careless” (μὴ ἀμελήσητε: 118a8)—recall the very opening line of the Symposium, in which Apollodorus insists that he is “not unrehearsed” (οὐκ ἀμελέτητος: 172a1; cf. 173c1) in recounting the events at Agathon’s party. Hence: those at Socrates’ death scene should not be careless. They would do well both to rehearse and to practice the Symposium’s teaching about erôs.

IV. Is my revisionary reading of the Phaedo’s aims and arguments willfully perverse? No. (1) Again, by common consent, the Phaedo’s arguments for unqualified immortality all fail. Moreover, Plato himself seems to be aware of their failure. Lest we read Plato uncharitably, then, we should doubt that Plato himself accepts these arguments.25 (2) My approach does not attribute any excessively “esoteric” agenda...
to Plato. On the contrary, my approach holds that Plato accepts a certain view that Socrates explicitly expounds, viz., Diotima’s. The resourceful Socrates apparently accepts this view in the Symposium, which precedes the Phaedo dramatically, and which he might naturally have in mind as he faces his death. (3) My approach takes both the Phaedo and the Symposium seriously as sources for Platonic views of immortality. The Phaedo does accept what Cornford calls the “two pillars” of Platonism, viz., the Forms and the immortality of the soul. But the Phaedo reveals problems with a particular specification of the immortality pillar, and it invites us to rethink that pillar’s precise character. (4) Finally, if we are doubtful about the prospects of unqualified immortality, then an added advantage of my approach is that it need not saddle Plato with that view.

I. Trazo brevemente el contorno de una lectura revisionista de los objetivos del Fedón de Platón. En las lecturas tradicionales, el diálogo proporciona una defensa de la inmortalidad incondicional del alma, es decir, la capacidad del alma para la existencia eterna como un individuo numéricamente idéntico en la separación del cuerpo. Estoy de acuerdo en que el Fedón, a través de la figura de Sócrates, respalda la idea de que somos potencialmente inmortales. Pero el tipo de inmortalidad que Sócrates apoya en el Fedón, sostengo, es la inmortalidad calificada que defiende explícitamente en el Simposio, es decir, la capacidad de un alma mortal de persistir post-mortem en un sentido extendido a través de la reproducción (206e-208b). Los argumentos en el Fedón fallan, sugiero, porque Sócrates desea dirigir a sus interlocutores hacia, y porque Platón desea recordar a sus lectores de, este otro tipo de inmortalidad. En haber tomado medidas para inmortalizarse si mismo en este sentido, Sócrates tiene una ecuanimidad justificada en el rostro de la muerte.

II. En su discusión con Simmias y Cebes, Sócrates discute varios argumentos a favor de la inmortalidad del alma. Dadas las limitaciones de tiempo, no examino estos argumentos individualmente. Sin embargo, yo ofrezco una conjetura audaz: Sostengo que estos argumentos fallan, y que Platón es consciente de sus fracasos.

Supongamos, por los efectos del presente ensayo, que mi audaz conjetura es correcta. ¿Por qué, entonces, da Platón espacio a estos argumentos? En el contexto dramático del Fedón, Sócrates se enfrenta a la demanda para defender su ecuanimidad en el rostro de la muerte inminente (63a-b). Los ansiosos Simmias y Cebes asume que Sócrates puede justificar su ecuanimidad en el rostro de la muerte sólo si Sócrates puede demostrar que el alma es inmortal sin calificación (70a-b). A menos que uno tiene la prueba de la inmortalidad del alma sin calificación, sostienen, es una “tontería” que uno approxima la muerte con confianza (88b).

Esta suposición, sin embargo, es problemática. Se muestra, y está motivada por, un exceso de “aferrarse a la vida” (117a) y un temor infantil de la muerte (77d-e). Peor aún, si resulta que, como parece probable, que no podemos probar la inmortalidad sin calificación del alma, esta suposición amenaza para producir misología, el peor mal de todos (cf. 85c y 89d-e).

Con la presentación de estos argumentos a favor de la inmortalidad, Sócrates ofrece Simmias y Cebes una especie de espacio terapéutico en el que puedan comenzar (i) a examinar algunas de sus suposiciones acerca de cómo se puede

26 Cornford (1957: 2). Gallop (1975: 97) notes a problem with the “pillars” metaphor: the immortality pillar depends on the Forms pillar in a way that real pillars are not dependent.

27 I thank my Yale-NUS Philosophy colleagues for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
enfrentar adecuadamente la muerte con serenidad y con ello (ii) a calmar sus temores acerca de la muerte. Más específicamente, Sócrates pretende confrontar a Simmias y Cebes con la posibilidad liberadora de que los seres humanos no sean incondicionalmente inmortal.

III. Supongamos que, al contrario de los diversos argumentos en el Fedón, faltamos cualquier prueba de nuestra inmortalidad sin calificación. ¿Qué puede justificar nuestra ecuanimidad en el rostro de la muerte?

Mi propuesta: una vez liberado de una fijación en la inmortalidad sin calificación, Simmias y Cebes están abiertos a considerar y perseguir una inmortalidad calificada. Uno alcanza tal inmortalidad a través de la reproducción, que le permite a uno dejar atrás los reemplazos para uno mismo (Simposio 207d-208b). Tal es la inmortalidad que Diotima asegura a Sócrates es el único tipo disponible para los mortales. Tal concepción rechaza la inmortalidad sin calificación. Aún así, permite que los seres vivos puedan poseer lo bueno, inmortalmente y en la medida que puedan, mediante la generación de descendencia.

En el Fedón, Sócrates dice que “οἱ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντες ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσι” (67e; cf. 64a). Como señala Sócrates, sin embargo, esta descripción de los filósofos es ambigua (64b-c). En última instancia, lo que Sócrates piensa, sugiere, es la siguiente: Por un lado, los que filosofan correctamente, qua virtuoso y feliz, por lo tanto viven plenamente y bien en el tramo de tiempo que conduce a la muerte física. Por otra parte, la muerte física no constituye la extinción total del filósofo. Por el contrario, las características valiosas del filósofo persisten más allá de la muerte física en las virtudes que el filósofo genera en otros, y, a su vez, en las virtudes que estos otros generan en otros todavía. En ambos casos, el filósofo posee lo bueno, inmortalmente, en la medida de lo posible. Por lo tanto, el filósofo tiene la mejor justificación, de cualquier persona, de la ecuanimidad en el rostro de la muerte.

IV. ¿Es mi lectura revisionista de los objetivos y los argumentos del Fedón deliberadamente perversa? No. (1) Una vez más, de común acuerdo, los argumentos en el Fedón para la inmortalidad sin calificación todos fallan. Por otra parte, el propio Platón parece ser consciente de su fracaso. Para evitar a leer a Platón sin caridad, entonces, debemos dudar que el propio Platón acepta estos argumentos. (2) No atribuyo ninguna agenda excesivamente “esotérica” a Platón. Por el contrario, mi lectura sostiene que Platón acepta un cierto punto de vista que Sócrates expone explícitamente. Sócrates aparentemente acepta el concepto de la inmortalidad calificada en el Simposio, que precede el Fedón dramáticamente, y que Sócrates podría tener en cuenta, naturalmente, mientras se enfrenta a su muerte. (3) Mi enfoque toma en serio el Fedón y el Simposio, juntos, como fuentes de una concepción platónica de la inmortalidad. (4) Por último, si tenemos dudas sobre la posibilidad de la inmortalidad sin calificación, a continuación, una ventaja añadida de mi enfoque es que no atribuyo a Platón ese punto de vista.

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What is Socrates’ reason for not fearing death? How integral is his putative belief in the soul’s immortality to his cheerfulness and calm in the face of death, a phenomenon highlighted in the Phaedo but noted as well in the Apology and Crito? It will be argued below that Socrates’ remark in the Apology that neither he nor any other human being can know if death is a good thing or a bad (Ap. 29a-b) is in full force in the Phaedo, and that his sanguinity in the face of death is nearly entirely unrelated to the question of the soul’s immortality. It is not Socrates’ fear of death or his need for proof of the immortality of the soul that drives the dialogue, but rather his interlocutors’ fears and needs.

The final challenge Cebes sets for Socrates in the Phaedo (87b-88c) is to prove that the soul is not simply long-lasting but that it is immortal—that is, that it will outlive any body it inhabits. This challenge arises in reaction to Socrates’ description at 84a-b of the philosopher’s soul as one that has been freed of the tyranny of pleasure and pain, lives in accordance with reason, and gazes upon and is nurtured by the true and divine and objective. As a consequence of its freedom from pleasure and pain and its nurture by the true and divine, Socrates maintains, the philosopher’s soul believes that it ought to continue to live in this same way for as long as it is alive, and that after death it will join that to which it is akin, leaving behind human ills. A soul of this kind, nurtured in this way, he further contends, would hardly fear its dissipation or dispersion or nonexistence upon its separation from the body. What Cebes thinks, however, is that in the absence of proof of the soul’s immortality, it is foolish not to fear death (88b); indeed, in Socrates’ uncontested recapitulation of his view at 95b-e, the philosopher’s confidence that he will fare better in Hades as a result of the kind of life he has led in this world is misplaced if there are insufficient grounds for the belief that the soul lives on in Hades. The challenge to which Socrates responds in the Phaedo is thus interestingly different from the one with which he is presented in the Apology, where he takes it upon himself to reassure the members of the jury who voted for his acquittal that nothing bad will happen specifically to him post mortem (41c-d). Yet, in both dialogues, Socrates find himself having to comfort men who are afraid.

1 Note, first, the sign that fails to make an appearance is Socrates’ private sign; its silence can only signify that Socrates is not headed for something bad, that he is “about to do something good” (Ap. 40c3). Thus, when Socrates concludes from his sign’s absence that it is likely that those who assume that it is bad to be dead do not make the correct supposition, what he surely intends is that there are no grounds for the belief that to be dead is bad for everyone. Second, when Socrates describes life in Hades, he conjures up a world in which he would thrive, one that embodies his vision of “inconceivable happiness” amēchanon . . . eudaimonias (Ap. 41c3-4): who else would be encouraged by the prospect of (1) meeting dead men who were unjustly judged during their lifetimes, and (2) practicing elenchus to eternity? Socrates even says: “since especially for myself (emoige kai autōi), spending time there would be wondrous” (41a8-b1). And third, even the idea that the gods take care of good men likewise says more about how Socrates is likely to fare upon his death than about the effects of death generally.

2 Socrates refers both to the jurors who voted for his acquittal and to Simmias and Cebes as his “judges” (dikastai – Ap. 40a; Phaedo 63e).
In taking up Cebes’ challenge at *Phaedo* 96a, Socrates provides an autobiographical sketch in which he records his disappointment with Anaxagoras. As Socrates reports, Anaxagoras, despite having assigned to Nous the loftiest perch within his natural causal hierarchy, nevertheless fails to put it to use; all the real work, Socrates complains, is done in Anaxagoras’s scheme by such elements as air, ether, and water. Socrates, for his part, is convinced that there can be only one real cause, all other proposed causes being in effect only necessary conditions—things without which a cause could not be a cause. The sole genuine cause, he maintains, is “what is best” (97d). If only Anaxagoras had explained natural phenomena in terms of what is best, Socrates would have been satisfied; as things stand, however, he is compelled to look elsewhere. We might say, then, that what Socrates had hoped to find in Anaxagoras was lower-case *nous*, a kind of intelligence at work in the universe akin to that which guided Socrates in his decision to remain in prison, the kind that guided—or misguided—the Athenians in their decision to convict Socrates and put him to death.

The ensuing discussion is puzzling for several reasons, not least of which is that in providing his own account of causation Socrates utterly neglects the matter of “what is best.” There is no trace in what follows of lower-case *nous* as a cause, yet Socrates offers no explanation—beyond his personal frustration—for abandoning the search for a teleological cause in favor of what looks to be a purely formal one. He supplies “safe” causes and then somewhat more daring ones; but not a single cause that he advances has anything to do with either rationality or goodness. Although the first set of causes Socrates cites contains the Beautiful itself-by-itself paired with the Good, he immediately adds the Big (*mega*) along with “all the rest” (*talla panta*) (100b). If one expects Socrates to credit the Beautiful and Good with influencing the cosmos and its contents in accordance with “what is best” (as Socrates expected Anaxagoras to do with his Nous), one cannot but be deeply disappointed in Socrates—as Socrates was in Anaxagoras. Instead of air, ether, and water,3 we hear about a whole array of causes—from Beauty Itself, to the Big and the Small, to the Even and Twoness, to the Odd and three,4 to Heat and Cold, to fire and snow, and, finally, to Life and soul. Why is someone taller than someone else? Not, to be sure, because of “a head,” but also not because it is best that he be so; he is so because of Tallness. Why are there two when one thing is added to another? Not because of addition, but also not because of “what is best”; two arises because of Twoness. In this entire discussion, goodness and intelligence cause nothing.

It is true, of course, that Socrates introduces his formal causal account with the caveat that it is a *deuteros plous* (99d), a second sailing, a second-best.5 Interestingly, in so characterizing his view Socrates in effect pursues the course of inquiry Simmias had charted at 85b-d. Young Simmias, a person who is just about

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3 These elements resurface in the myth at the dialogue’s end.
4 There is a single mention of oneness in relation to the Odd at 105c.
the least likely—with the possible exception of Cebes—to succumb to misology, prefaces his presentation of his final criticism of Socrates’ defense of the immortality of the soul, as follows. No one, he says, can have precise knowledge in this matter—since such knowledge is impossible or exceedingly difficult to attain in the present life—but one must persist, testing proposed views in every way; one who abandons the search is malthakos, weak or soft. One must either learn, or discover, how things stand. If these prove impossible, one must select the best and most irrefutable of human logoi and, “embarking on this, sail through (diapleusai) the dangers of life as upon a raft.” It is surely this voyage that Socrates has in mind when he speaks of his own deuters plous, the one to which he has recourse when he, as he says, could neither learn from another nor discover on his own the teleological cause he sought (99c-d). For Simmias, however, even “the best and most irrefutable of human logoi” is no more secure than a flimsy raft, and hence not a reliable support as one navigates “the dangers of life.” His preference is for a divine logos, a firmer vessel on which one would make the journey more safely (asphalasteron) and less riskily (akindunoteron). Note, however, that the logos that Socrates touts as safest (at 100d, 100e) is the one he presents as his own, namely, the thesis that Forms are causes; it is this one, he thinks, in which the fearful inquirer takes refuge (101a, b, and c). Socrates deems safe as well even the “more refined” (kompoteran) causes that he subsequently identifies, such as snow and fire, two and three (105b)—even if they are not quite as safe as the first set of “safe and ignorant” causes (105c), such as cold, hot, odd, and even. If for Socrates it is his deuters plous that is safe, then for him this human logos is more secure than any alternative divine logos. Indeed, he explicitly casts doubt on the veracity of the divine tale of the afterlife invoked at the dialogue’s end: “No sensible man would insist on (diischurisasthai) these things’ being as I have described them” (114d).

But, how much more satisfying is Socrates’ account than Anaxagoras’ discredited one? Relinquishing, seemingly prematurely, his hope of finding the right sort of account—an account in terms of what is best—Socrates settles for

6 This term is reminiscent of the Meno’s malakoi (81d5), who find Meno’s “eristic” argument pleasing because it brings the search to a swift end.
7 This too is reminiscent of the Meno. One learns from another if there is someone who knows. Meno might have learned from Gorgias about virtue if virtue was something that could be known and taught. Otherwise, one searches on one’s own or jointly with another.
8 Socrates says that for the sake of learning how such a cause works he would “gladly become the puil of anyone” (99c).
9 The other mention of safety in the Phaedo is at 61a, where Socrates explains his composing of poetry as a way of playing it safe. Socrates also plays with this idea by speaking of the safe and sound (sōn) retreat of the uncold when it is attacked by fire (106a), and when he argues that the deathless soul departs “safe and sound” (sōn) at the onset of death (106e). Note as well Cebes’ weaver who would, if Socrates were correct, presumably outlive his cloak and would be, after death, “safe and sound” (sōs) somewhere (87b, c).
10 cf. Meno 86b, where Socrates uses the same term to demur at the conclusion of the geometry demonstration. Socrates uses it as well at Phaedo 63b-c to signal his uncertainty regarding entering the company of good men upon his death though not regarding entering the company of good gods. See, too, Phaedo 100d, where Socrates again uses this term, this time to express his diffidence with respect to the precise nature of the relationship between the Form and the corresponding particular, though not with respect to the claim that it is by the Beautiful that beautiful things are beautiful.
one that isn’t quite right, giving several indications that he is less than enamored of his own soon-to-be proposed thesis. First, as he introduces his foray into natural philosophy and his fruitless encounter with Anaxagoras, he characterizes his own view as “confused,” a “jumble” (phurō – 97b). And, by so designating it, Socrates anticipates that it will be guilty of the very misstep with which he is about to charge the antilogikoi at 101e, that of “jumbling together” (phuroio) a starting-point or principle or premise (archē) with what follows from it. In addition, as we noted, Socrates later says (at 105c1), of his explanation in terms of Forms, not merely that it is safe but that it is “safe and ignorant” (asphalē and amathē), an explanation he clings to “simply and artlessly” (haplōs and atechnōs). And, at the argument’s conclusion, when Cebes confesses to having some reservations about the argument, Socrates does not protest but rather approves (107b).

Socrates’ safe formal argument can, however, be faulted at almost every turn. Having secured his interlocutors’ agreement to the view that there are Forms (100b), Socrates proceeds to dismiss some of the more common explanations of, for example, a thing’s being beautiful: rather than account for its beauty in terms of, say, its color or shape, Socrates opts for the contentless and uninformative explanation that it is beautiful by sharing in the Beautiful. One wonders if this cause, though surely safe enough—and perhaps precisely because of its safeness—is itself anything more than a necessary condition, as were Anaxagoras’s air, water, and ether, and, for that matter, Socrates’ bones and sinews, without which his sitting in prison rather than escaping to Megara or Boeotia would not have been possible. For, to say that something is beautiful by the Beautiful is arguably not to explain at all why it is beautiful; it is only to specify that without which it could not be beautiful. To be sure, answers such as “by a head” to the question of what causes one person to be taller than another, or “by coming together” to what causes there to be two, generate contradictions, and so are worse answers than “by Tallness” or “by Twoness.” And color and shape are certainly worse accounts than “by the Beautiful” of why something is beautiful—because these fall short of supplying even necessary conditions. Nevertheless, to say “by Tallness” or “by Twoness” or “by the Beautiful” is not to explain anything.

Next, it appears that Socrates commits here something very like the fallacy with which he charges the antilogikoi, that of mixing together in discussion the starting-point with its consequences. For although Socrates concludes the first part of his argument with the statement that, “the opposite itself can never become its opposite, whether that in us11 or that in nature” (103b), which certainly seems to imply that the Forms in nature and their manifestations in us work on two distinct planes—just as the Form Tall does not admit the Form Short, so does the tallness in us not admit shortness—nevertheless, as Socrates proceeds, it appears that in some cases what instantiators of the Forms cannot admit is the Form that is the opposite of the Form they instantiate. In the case of fire, for example, which brings with it the Form Hot, what it cannot admit is not its opposite, for it has none, but the opposite of the Form Hot, namely, the Form Cold. And Two, which brings with it the Form Even cannot admit the opposite of the Form Even, namely, the Form Odd. Socrates, then, in discussing all these things together, seems to have mixed up the starting-point, that is, his two hypotheses concerning (1) the relationship between Forms and their instantiations, and (2) how the Forms and their particular instantiators each behave with respect to their own opposites, with its consequence, according to which some instantiators operate not with respect to their own Forms, and not with respect to their own opposites, but with respect to Forms that are the opposites of

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11 The tallness and shortness “in us” paves the way for the later introduction of a soul in a body.
the Forms they instantiate.\textsuperscript{12}

And there is yet another problem with Socrates’ argument: his shameless introduction of the “going away” (apercheisthai) option: what does it mean to say that an opposite, if it is not destroyed by the approach of its opposite, “goes away”? Where could it go? Two cannot accept oddness and remain two; but does it “go away”? Does snow “go away” when heat approaches, or is it eliminated? It is painfully evident that Socrates plants the going-away option so that he can conclude that the soul goes away when death approaches. And, conveniently, he even has a place, namely, awaiting the soul’s arrival (106e-107a).

Finally, one wonders if it is possible to take Socrates’ asking if a thing that is deathless is not also therefore indestructible as a genuine step in the argument as opposed to another set-up. Consider, for example, this passage from the Meno at 81b, which cites the words of certain priests and priestesses and of some poets: “They say that the human soul is immortal; at times it comes to an end, at times it weep, but is it never destroyed” (apollusthai d’ oudepote). Here, the immortality of the soul just is its indestructibility. And we note that Cebes sees no need for an argument to prove that the immortal is indestructible (106d).

To be sure, Socrates has a purpose in arguing for the immortality of the soul; but his purpose is not to prove the immortality of the soul. It is, rather, as he explicitly says, to encourage people to live right, that is, to become “as good and wise as possible” (107d).\textsuperscript{13} It would seem, then, that Socrates takes up the matter of causes in order to defend the immortality of the soul, but he defends immortality in order to promote a life of virtue.\textsuperscript{14} Why do people want to know if the soul is immortal? Because, as Socrates points out, “If death were escape from everything, it would be a great boon to the wicked to get rid of the body and of their wickedness together with their soul” (107c).

Neither Simmias nor Cebes, of course, is wicked. Their reason for raising the question of the immortality of the soul is not that they are hoping death is the end but because they are hoping it is not. Whereas in the Apology Socrates must comfort those who suspect death will not be the end, in the Phaedo, he must allay the fears of those who suspect that it will be. In the Apology, Socrates provides his judges with reason to hope that the good man will fare well in the afterlife; in the Phaedo, it is the philosopher whose happy fate needs to be assured. In the Apology, it is the anxiety of his supporters that Socrates seeks to alleviate; in the Phaedo he aims to refute Simmias’ and Cebes’ arguments: since it is they who believe that fear of death is rational unless one can prove that the soul is immortal (95b-c), Socrates offers

\textsuperscript{12} Another way in which the starting-point and its consequences may be construed as jumbled is by noticing that the argument might have proceeded just as well entirely without the starting-point. Indeed, Socrates regularly offers arguments concerning the soul, both in the Phaedo itself and elsewhere, without recourse to its connection to the particular Form, Life. See, e.g., the argument at Rep. 1.352d-354a, where Socrates uses the idea that (one of the) soul’s function(s) is to live, to argue that unless the soul is just a person cannot live well.

\textsuperscript{13} The same occurs in the Meno’s recollection thesis, where, after all is said and done, what Socrates admits he had hoped to accomplish is to encourage people to be active inquirers (and perhaps to live piously - 81b)—and not to prove either recollection or the immortality of the soul with which it is intertwined. One might argue that in our Phaedo passage the neglect of philosophy in Socrates’ summation shows Socrates’ recognition that Simmias and Cebes are no philosophers.

\textsuperscript{14} It seems evident that Socrates argues that the soul “departs” at the approach of death and enters Hades, in order to provide an incentive, to those who need one, to live justly. The is no comparable incentive for living philosophically.
arguments that have some chance of persuading them.

In the *Apology*, what Socrates fears is determined by which of two alternatives he judges worse: when he must choose between doing wrong and death—that is, between something he knows to be both bad and shameful and something whose badness is uncertain—the right choice, the best choice, the choice less to be feared, is the one whose badness is uncertain: death (29b). In the *Phaedo*, too, the right choice seems to be the one that is the better of the alternatives. Note the otherwise gratuitous point Socrates makes in connection with his search for the genuine cause of things. After he says, “On this reasoning, then, it is fitting for one to investigate only, about this and other things, what is best,” he continues: “Necessarily, the same man knows what is worse, for the same knowledge pertains to [both of] them” (97d). And he makes the identical point a bit later: “I eagerly seized his [Anaxagoras’s] books and read them as quickly as possible in order to know as quickly as possible the best and the worst” (98b). Socrates in the *Phaedo* (98d-99b) reminds his friends that he determines his course of action by weighing his alternatives: “acting with my nous,” I “chose the best” (99a-b; also, 98c). “What is best” is thus the cause of his being imprisoned now in Athens rather than free in Megara or Boeotia (98e-99a).

The implication in both dialogues seems to be that fear of death is trumped when there is something to be feared more—something worse—which is its (only) alternative. As far as Socrates is concerned, all one needs to know in order not to fear death is that it is the best of the available alternatives, or, in other words, that the other alternatives are worse. Once one knows that remaining alive is a worse option under the prevailing conditions, one knows to fear life rather than death.

Socrates' tranquility and good humor, then, in the face of death (*Phaedo* 58e) has little to do with a belief in immortality of the soul—though he expresses hope in this regard (63c, 64a, 67b-c, 68a, 70a). As we have seen, Socrates registers his misgivings about the argument he offers for the soul’s immortality and indestructibility even before he offers it. And, after his argument ends, he proceeds to consider the moral to be drawn “if the soul is immortal” (107c). Socrates has indeed warned his interlocutors—and Plato, his readers—in advance of the causation-arguments that no cause is a real cause unless it is a reasoned and thoughtful consideration of what is best under the circumstances. Thus, Socrates’ friends ought to be of good cheer about his death, not because Socrates’ soul is not about to meet its end, but because Socrates, recognizing what is worse, has chosen better.

When death, however, is not a choice, specifically, when it does not involve a choice between acting in accordance with the just and the right, on the one side, and avoiding death, on the other—in other words, when it is not the case that the price of avoiding death is doing wrong—is there not, as Cebes believes, good reason to fear death in such a case, in the absence of any definitive proof that death is not a bad thing? Would it not indeed be foolish not to fear it?

It is evident that for Socrates there is nothing that death could possibly be that would make it worthwhile to live in any way other than justly or philosophically. No matter what is on the other side of the equation, it is always worse to do wrong and to live an unexamined life (*Ap*. 38a). Indeed, the very fact that Socrates’ interlocutors raise the question of the fate of the soul after death reveals them to be both unphilosophical and less than thoroughly virtuous. Any philosopher or truly good man lives as he does because he believes it to be the best way to live.

15 Note the very last line of the *Apology*: “Which of us goes to a better thing”—I who am going to dying and you who are going to living—“is unclear to everyone except the god.” (42a).
16 Cf. *Ap*. 40c4: “how great a hope there is” that death is good; also 41c8.
17 Cf. *Ap*. 40e5-6, 41a8, 41c6-7, for similar “if”s.
If Simmias and Cebes were such men, they could not doubt the value of having lived philosophically regardless of whether their souls would live on and fare best in Hades. No true philosopher gives the matter of the afterlife a second thought. Consider what Socrates says about the true philosopher in the Republic: unlike the guardians of Book 3 who can be kept from cowardice only by being assured that Hades is not so bad (386a-b), a true philosopher, a person who has a genuinely philosophic nature, does not have so high a regard for human life that he would see death as something terrible (6.486a-b). In other words, for a true philosopher, the non-philosophical charms of human life hold no appeal, and so death represents no great loss. Indeed, Socrates describes himself in the Apology as one who, “not caring for the things that the many do” (Ap. 36b), does not “even care about death in any way at all” (Ap. 32d); death is simply of no consequence to a true philosopher. The philosopher's experience as Socrates describes it at 84a-b is one that fills him with confidence and precludes fear. Proof is not only impossible but irrelevant.

The Republic's Cephalus is instructive with regard to the difference between the attitude toward death of the genuinely just man and that of the spuriously just one. Coming rather belatedly to the belief that the afterlife may prove unforgiving to the wicked, Cephalus turns to prayer and sacrifice and attends to unpaid debts lest he enter Hades an unjust man who displeases the gods. The very fact that he is moved to sudden righteousness out of fear of the afterlife reveals the shallowness of his newfound justice. It is someone like Cephalus who is targeted in Socrates' remark in the Phaedo that it would be a great boon to the wicked were death the end. Yet what death is is unknown. How can the wicked then rest easy? The truly virtuous, however, having chosen as their course what is best, always rest easy.

It is in the end only those who are tethered to this world and its pleasures and rewards who are concerned about what happens afterwards. This is a persistent theme in the dialogue, variously expressed. (See, especially, 68b-c; but see also 64c-68b; 82b-84b.) To know the true cause of generation and destruction is to know that the only cause of faring well is living as one ought, in accordance with what is better as determined by lower-case nous. Socrates, as he says in the Crito (46b), does on every occasion what seems best to him upon reflection. Simmias and especially Cebes, however, despite their embrace of certain doctrines—the theory of Forms and the recollection thesis—and despite their obvious love of argument, are not sufficiently detached from the world to live truly philosophically and virtuously, and consequently to face death with equanimity. Like Evenus who would be in no great hurry to die (61c), Simmias and Cebes are not philosophers. In the final analysis, of all those gathered in Socrates' cell to witness his final moments on earth, the only genuine philosopher is Socrates.

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18 Socrates is apparently less convinced of the truth of these theses than Simmias and Cebes are. See Phaedo 76d-77a, where Socrates concludes that the soul exists before birth if the forms exist, something about which Simmias and Cebes register absolutely no misgivings. See, too, Phaedo 107b, where Socrates says with regard to the initial hypotheses: “even if you put your trust (pistai) in them, they should be examined more clearly.” Cf. Meno 86b-c, where, after having argued at length for the recollection thesis, Socrates concedes that the only thing he would “fight all out for” if he could, in both word and deed, is that we will be “more manly and less lazy” if we search than if we do not.

19 The true philosopher is detached: see 64c-67b.

20 The myth with which the dialogue closes presents philosophy as one step higher than extreme piety on a progressive ladder of ascent. Philosophy, however, is not just greater piety. Socrates says little here about how philosophy differs, arguably because he knows he is not speaking to true philosophers.
Quelle raison Socrate a-t-il de ne pas craindre la mort ? Nous montrerons que la remarque de Socrate dans l’Apologie, selon laquelle ni lui ni personne ne peut savoir si la mort est un bien ou un mal (Ap. 29a-b), prend toute sa force dans le Phèdon, et qu’il est confiant face à la mort parce qu’il a mené une vie philosophique et juste. Les arguments du Phèdon pour l’immortalité de l’âme résultent des craintes des interlocuteurs de Socrate, Simmias et Cébès, qui, quoiqu’aimant l’argumentation et consentant même à adopter la Théorie des Formes et la thèse de la réminiscence, ne sont pas véritablement philosophes comme l’est Socrate.

Le dernier défi que Cébès lance à Socrate dans le Phèdon (87b-88c) est de prouver que l’âme n’a pas seulement une existence durable mais qu’elle est immortelle – c’est à dire qu’elle survivra à tout corps qu’elle se trouve habiter. Ce défi apparaît en réaction à la description faite par Socrate en 84a-b de l’âme du philosophe comme celle qui a été libérée de la tyrannie du plaisir et de la douleur, vit selon la raison, et contemple ce qui est vrai et divin et objectif et s’en nourrit. Une telle âme, insiste Socrate, n’a guère à craindre être dissoute ou dispersée ou de cesser d’exister une fois séparée du corps. Cébès pense toutefois qu’en l’absence d’une preuve de l’immortalité de l’âme, ce qui est déraisonnable c’est de ne pas craindre la mort (88b). Comme dans l’Apologie, où Socrate se met en devoir de rassurer les membres du jury qui ont voté pour son acquittement quant au fait qu’il ne lui arrivera rien de mal après la mort (41c-d), Socrate se trouve à nouveau obligé dans le Phèdon de réconforter des hommes qui ont peur.

Quand il accepte le défi de Cébès à partir de Phèdon 96a, Socrate fournit une esquisse biographique dans laquelle il raconte sa déception au sujet d’Anaxagore. Ce que Socrate avait espéré trouver chez Anaxagore, peut-on dire, était en fait un nous en caractères minuscules, une sorte d’intelligence à l’œuvre dans l’univers semblable à celle qui a guidé Socrate dans sa décision de rester en prison. Contrairement à ce qu’on pouvait attendre, cependant, dans la discussion qui suit, Socrate néglige complètement la question du “meilleur”, remplaçant une explication téléologique par une explication causale purement formelle, et appelant celle-ci un deuterōs plous (99d), une deuxième sorte de navigation, une explication de deuxième ordre. L’argument qu’il avance s’avère déficient à bien des égards. En fin de compte, ce qu’il espère, ce n’est pas d’avoir prouvé l’immortalité de l’âme, mais d’en avoir dit assez pour encourager les gens à vivre bien, c’est à dire à devenir “aussi bons et sages que possible” (107d).

Ce qui semble sous-entendu aussi bien dans le Phèdon que dans l’Apologie, c’est que la crainte de la mort est surmontée quand il y a quelque chose qui est plus à craindre – quelque chose de pire – que la (seule) possibilité restante. Aux yeux de Socrate, tout ce que l’on a besoin de savoir pour ne pas craindre la mort est que celle-ci est la meilleure des solutions disponibles, en d’autres termes, que les autres solutions sont pires. Une fois que l’on sait que rester en vie est un choix pire dans les conditions données, on sait que l’on doit craindre la vie plutôt que la mort. Mais lorsque la mort n’est pas un choix, ce qui serait déraisonnable ne serait-ce pas, comme le croit Cébès, de ne pas la craindre ?

Il est évident que pour Socrate, quoi que la mort puisse être, cela ne pourrait faire qu’il ne vaille pas la peine de vivre autrement que d’une manière juste et philosophique. Tout philosophe ou homme vraiment bon vit comme il le fait parce qu’il croit que c’est la meilleure façon de vivre. Aucun philosophe véritable n’accorde une pensée à la question de l’au-delà. Si Simmias et Cébès étaient de vrais philosophes, ils ne pourraient douter – quoi qu’il arrive – de la valeur d’avoir vécu philosophiquement.